1994

Ancient Andean Headgear: Medium and Measure of Cultural Identity

Niki R. Clark
Jefferson County Historical Museum

Amy Oakland Rodman
California State University at Hayward

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/tsaconf

Part of the Art and Materials Conservation Commons, Art Practice Commons, Fashion Design Commons, Fiber, Textile, and Weaving Arts Commons, Fine Arts Commons, and the Museum Studies Commons

https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/tsaconf/1055

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Textile Society of America at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Textile Society of America Symposium Proceedings by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.
ANCIENT ANDEAN HEADGEAR;
MEDIUM AND MEASURE OF CULTURAL IDENTITY

Niki R. Clark
Jefferson County Historical Museum
210 Madison, Port Townsend, WA 98368

Amy Oakland Rodman
Art Dept., California State University
at Hayward, Hayward, CA 94542

Introduction
From the earliest recorded periods of southern Andean history, distinctive clothing styles have served to identify specific socio-cultural groups and provide clues about cultural origins. Unique environmental conditions, especially present along the arid Pacific coast of South America, have allowed the preservation of a vast archive of usually perishable material. From the far south coast of Peru to the northern desert regions of Chile, textiles, and especially headgear forms were worn to distinguish between the diverse populations who established permanent settlements along the narrow river valleys linking highland regions and the coast.

The south central Andes region has always known a considerable amount of cultural contact, and a similar widespread textile tradition developed within the area. In most archaeological collections, warp-faced woven camelid-fiber cloth predominates, created with 2-ply yarns first spun in the Z direction and plied S. It is generally assumed that during many periods highland cultures based around Lake Titicaca exerted considerable influence upon the coast, and this basic woven tradition may have originated there. However, the criteria used to identify highland and coastal traits remains elusive. Textiles, the artifacts most useful in discussing cultural and ethnic identity, are preserved only along the coast. Perishable materials are rarely found in highland contexts, where seasonal rains destroy organic artifacts. The most easily recognized highland traits are those found in designs which imitate images carved on highland stone sculptures or painted on ceramics. However, most textile remains are simple, unpatterned fabrics. Within archaeological collections, we must identify traits, other than design, which might be site- or region-specific, and which might suggest borrowing between regions, or blending of cultural groups; traits such as form, fiber, and structure.

In an attempt to read the message of cultural identity with the medium of archaeological textiles, we present data from collections excavated in two separate river valleys, representing two distinct periods in Andean cultural history. Evidence of an early coastal-related culture (dated 800 BC–AD 100) has been found at the Caserones site in the Tarapaca Valley of northern Chile, while the late prehistoric Estuquina site in the Moquegua Valley of far southern Peru (dated AD 1100–1450) is a small, locally-adapted mid-valley village with basic highland attributes. To illuminate the specific ways in which pre-conquest Andeans presented themselves to others, we have chosen to examine headgear or gorros, a traditional male Andean accessory and an object especially sensitive to ethnic identity.
Ethnohistory of Andean Headgear

The elaboration of headgear probably is, and always has been, the most universal means of visually communicating individual and group identity. While headgear may function basically as head protection, style, tradition, and social context determine the forms of headgear that evolve. Modern indigenous Andeans exhibit a great variety of headgear styles, which are typical of specific communities and larger ethnic groups. Ethnohistoric and archaeological evidence indicates that this pattern also prevailed in the past.

At the time of the conquest, Spanish chroniclers repeatedly commented upon the diversity of headdresses, worn by different groups subsumed under the Inca Empire, that made it easy to distinguish one group from another. Most groups wore some form of headband, but the Aymara-speaking men of the south central Andes highland were known for their camelid-fiber caps. And within this area, each group wore a distinctive style of cap. For example, Cieza de Leon in 1553 stated that “if they are Collas, they have wool bonnets made like mortars, and if they are Canas, they have larger bonnets which are much wider..., very round and tall” (1986 Bk. II, Ch. 23:68; Bk. I, Ch. 48:269). The Paria “used on their head as an ornament a hat like a small bonnet made of wool” (Ibid. Bk. I, Ch. 56:286), the Pacajes wore “a chuco, which was made in yellow to differentiate it from inhabitants of other provinces which used the same chuco” (Ibid. Bk. I, Ch. 50:274). Elsewhere, Collaguas Aymara headgear is described as “something called in their language chucos, like tall hats without a rim of any kind” (Relaciones Geograficas de Indias 1965 [1586] II., Vol. 183:327). In 1571, Pedro Pizarro described the gorros of the Colla from one part of the lake as “big bonnets more than one palm high, as wide at the top as at the bottom” [cylindrical], and from the other side of the lake as “big bonnets narrow at the top and wide at the bottom [conical] like little mortars of black wool”, and the gorros of the neighboring Carangas, Aullagas, and Quillacas as “little mortars worked in colored wools” (1986 [1571] Ch. 16:111).

One of the most valuable early historic sources, which details garment styles and cultural practices within the Inca Empire before, during, and just after the Spanish conquest, is found in the illustrations and accompanying text of Guaman Poma de Ayala, written in 1615. In Guaman Poma’s drawings, representatives of the four quarters of the Inca Empire are most clearly distinguished through headdress types than by any other garment form (Fig. 1a, b). The Colla of the Lake Titicaca district are generally depicted wearing conical hats. These descriptions, chronicalling early Andean history, parallel actual archaeological evidence. A wide variety of prehistoric headdress forms has been reported in archaeological collections from the southern Andes, including types like those described by Cieza, Pizarro, Guaman Poma, and others. Because many Andean textile collections contain no context information, the Caserones and Estuquina collections are especially important inventories of garment styles used in the Andes before the Spanish conquest.
Caserones Gorros

Excavations in the early agricultural village of Caserones (Fig. 2) have produced a sample of Andean textiles from very early periods, dating between 800 BC and AD 600. Importantly, Caserones textiles have been recovered from domestic contexts within houses, as well as more commonly-documented burial contexts. Yarns, cords, ropes, baskets, feathers, well-preserved food remains, and textile fragments, including a distinct gorro style, were recovered inside the Caserones village. Across the valley, the Caserones cemetery revealed the burials of two groups, separated culturally and temporally.

One group at Caserones was apparently allied with remnants of one of the earliest, clearly coastal manifestations in southern Peru and northern Chile, known as Faldas del Morro. Clothing often consisted of a string skirt and a thick turban created of fine camelid fiber cords wrapped around the head in skeins. Interestingly, items directly related to this early coastal manifestation defined in the Caserones cemetery are rarely present in the village refuse. No string skirts or intact turbans were recovered from excavations within the Caserones houses. Instead, the habitation area appears to be mostly connected to the later burial complex at Caserones (dated to AD 400-600). It is difficult to determine if this second set of inhabitants was somehow related to the first, but they apparently knew where the ancient cemetery was located, and buried their dead directly next to the earlier site. The second group is most clearly identified in a specific headdress form: a knotted, striped hat which covers a thick string turban (Fig. 3). This hat type was recovered in excavations both in Caserones houses and in the later part of the Caserones cemetery.

Among the ten fragments of striped and knotted headdresses collected in five Caserones houses, three almost complete examples were discovered. The wide, polychrome headdress cap (approx. 32 by 13 cm.) was formed with symmetrical square knots with asymmetrical faces in a knotted looping structure. Initially, a large rectangle was formed as knots were worked in colored, vertical rows, producing a wide center stripe (always bright yellow or gold) framed with six narrow stripes in colors mirrored from the center: brown or maroon, blue-green, red, blue, brown, and ending on the outside with blue-green. The hat also contains a relief pattern of concentric diamonds, which repeat across the stripes and throughout the headdress surface. The diamonds were formed by leaving spaces between knots. When the entire polychrome, knotted textile was complete, it was folded at the center and dark brown mound-shaped panels were knotted on each side. The same dark brown yarns were used in an edge finish around the hat bottom. These three hats are dated AD 445 to 580. Identical striped and knotted hats were included in the Caserones burials, where they were also constructed as miniature versions, placed as offerings with other miniature garment forms.

The distinct form and design of this knotted hat was almost certainly a Caserones emblem signifying the ethnic identity of the later inhabitants.
The knotting structure is identical to that of Tiwanaku four-pointed hats, and to hat centers (also Tiwanaku-related) from San Pedro de Atacama. But Caserones hats were worn with a thick string turban. This combination headdress, a hat of knotted, apparently highland structure worn with the coastal string turban, symbolically united the two geographic zones at Caserones, where marine and terrestrial items were regularly mixed. Another common item of mixed origin is made of brown pelican pelts sewn with camelid fiber yarns (Southon et al. n.d.). These were distributed throughout the Caserones site. The unusual striped and knotted hat of Caserones is readily identified as an intrusive article in other archaeological sites as distinct from local garments, and may have been buried with traders who were connected to both the altiplano and the coast.

It is clear that, although Caserones developed a very specific headdress form, the general trends in hat styles recognized in the two periods of Caserones occupation reflect regional traditions within the south central Andes. The use of turbans alone diminished at coastal sites following the introduction of altiplano-related hats. Caserones turbaned headdresses may represent a continued coastal tradition combined with specifically highland knotted forms. A popular reconstruction of the Andean past is included in the catalog Arica: Diez Mil Anos (1985), which illustrates coastal material culture found in northern Chile. The drawings by Perez are based on Ulloa's textile analyses. Textiles worn by almost all of the individuals illustrated for the Formative Period (1000 BC-AD 300), and the following Tiwanaku Period (AD 100-1100) were present at Caserones (Figs. 4a, b).

In the south central Andes, hats of the Tiwanaku and later groups continued to be culturally distinct and especially reflective of cultural and social group affiliation. From the Middle Horizon until the Spanish Conquest, hats of the zone followed a general trend toward smaller, fitted forms, constructed of camelid fiber, and probably altaiplano-derived. The best known headdress style of the Middle Horizon is the elaborate square-shaped, four-pointed hat, constructed with a fine knotted looping structure and decorated with geometric motifs (Fig. 5 left). This headdress form coincides with a strong altaiplano or highland presence and is probably related to classic Tiwanaku elite males.

During the early part of the Late Intermediate Period, following the dissolution of the Tiwanaku Empire and the emergence of regional kingdoms (c. AD 1000-1200) local gorro styles continued to be constructed in squarish shapes, using the knotted looping structure in squarish shapes using the knotted looping structure, but a new form of tall, cylindrical shape was added (Fig. 5 right). The four-corner projections continued, but in abbreviated form. The Middle Horizon polychrome designs were replaced with bichrome designs, or a monochrome relief decoration (zigzags, diamonds, and diagonal ridges) in dark brown, or blue with a red top. This tall gorro form has been recovered from early LIP sites in far southern Peru and northern Chile. A hemispherically-shaped gorro type
known from the Rio Loa area of northern Chile may have developed during this period as well (Ryden 1944:171, fig. 100). By the latter part of the LIP (c. AD 1200), the hemispherical, fitted gorro was the most prevalent form (Fig. 6). Some specimens have feather clusters attached to the top centers, some have simple bichrome designs, some only horizontal stripes, and many are undecorated, of dark brown to black camelid fiber. While Estuquina gorros are related to these general LIP regional styles, they include specific characteristics which stylistically identified the Estuquina villagers as a composite group with different, but merging traditions.

**Estuquina Gorros**

The unique combination at the Estuquina site (Fig. 7), of excellent preservation conditions, systematic excavation, and the consistent analysis and documentation of textile artifacts with associated human remains, permits the reconstruction of gender- and age-specific apparel. To an exceptional extent, we may deduce the appearance of individuals that lived in this small village more than 500 years ago. Two styles of cap-like gorros adorned the heads of some men, accentuating their elaborate, heavy coiffures of long, multiple, and interlaced braids. The gorros are associate exclusively with adult males or with adolescents and children, almost certainly also male. Estuquina gorros were used mainly as personal accessory items, and several were found in situ on the crania of interred individuals. Sometimes they also served to hold objects. One individual’s gorro contained several copper fragments and lithic flakes, as well as his head. In another case, a gorro was inverted in the base of a tomb and filled with a variety of offerings, including maiz, coca leaves, and cuy remains.

Considering the diversity of documented gorros, it was surprising to find a single headdress shape at Estuquina: the hemispherical cap. Three different structures were used to produce this basic shape: simple looping and knotted looping (using a single element), and looping-over-foundation (like coiled basketry, a complex structure using two elements) (Figs. 8, 9). Because of the structural contrast, each gorro form presented very different design options. Some of these were employed to create distinct sub-styles that may well have identified separate groups among the males of the Estuquina population. The two forms may have appeared to be similar superficially, but they developed from very different stylistic traditions.

The Estuquina textile collection includes three gorro specimens of simple structure, nineteen gorro specimens of complex structure, and one composite gorro that combines both the simple and complex structures that constitute the other gorros. All of the hats are constructed of naturally colored camelid fiber in dark brown and black. The gorros of simple knotted looping structure are all monochrome, and decorative embellishment was achieved texturally. Either the natural diagonal of the structure was emphasized, or the knot face direction was modified to create zigzags, or diamonds in relief (Fig. 10). The gorro specimens of looping, or of the looping-over-foundation complex structure, are mostly monochrome, but three have bichrome plied yarns, and four have designs in a contrasting
light brown or golden brown color. The designs are simple: horizontal lines and rows of triangles which ring the caps (Fig. 11). Four of the most complete _gorros_ were associated with the individual burials of adult males.

The simple knotted looping structure of _gorro_ #10072 is made of a dark brown to black yarn, which creates a zigzag design. Originally a topknot may have been formed to display feathers, which were associated with the cranial area. The structure and zigzag design of this _gorro_ are similar to those of specimens from northern Chile, but the hemispherical shape is distinct (Fig. 12a). _Gorro_ #6597 is comprised of two distinct structures (Fig. 12b). The top disc was constructed similar to the bottom of a "coiled" basket, with a looping-over-foundation structure. The foundation element is of dark brown yarn and the looping element is of reddish-brown yarn. The same dark brown yarn continues into the lower portion of this _gorro_, which was constructed with knotted looping, with the knot faces emphasizing diagonal relief lines. The two parts probably were made separately and sewed together.

_Gorro_ #3623 was also constructed with the upper disk separate from the lower portion, but this one is entirely of a looping-over-foundation structure, with both elements of a bichrome brown and black plied yarn (Fig. 112c). The two parts are sewn together with a heavy yarn in widely-spaced, simple overcast stitches, which may be a repair rather than original to the _gorro_ structure. Other repairs are apparent. This is the hat that was placed in the tomb as a container of offerings. _Gorro_ #7322 is similarly constructed, but of a continuous structure of looping-over-paired foundation elements (Fig. 12d). The foundation and looping elements are of dark brown to black yarn. The _gorro_ was found on the head of an adult male, with a sling wrapped around its base.

**Summary and Conclusions**

Variation in headgear is used to differentiate social groups in many cultures, and the _gorros_ worn by Estuquinans probably served this purpose as well. It is almost certain that they were worn only by males, but not by all males, and that the two different _gorro_ types (as defined by structure) were worn by men of separate social groups. Possession of the complex _gorro_ was not constrained by age, for it was found with children and adolescents, as well as with adult males. In fact, the decorated sub-style of this form may have been fabricated especially for children. The Estuquina _gorro_ sample includes the same three structures that are documented for the LIP elsewhere in the region. While the complex looping-over-foundation structure is a common one for late hats throughout the area, the simple knotted looping structure seems to be an archaism, carried over and adapted to the construction of forms popular in the later periods. It may be a local, transitional combination used by people with roots in the earlier Tiwanaku Empire. The composite _gorro_, which combines knotted looping with looping-over-foundation, may be a structural metaphor for merging cultural traditions, comparable to the composite headgear at the earlier Caserones site.
The Estuquina gorros, similar to those described and illustrated for the highlands at the time of the conquest, suggest that the site was occupied by a late, locally-adapted valley population of mixed highland affiliation. In contrast, the headgear worn by inhabitants of the Caserones village indicate both highland and coastal affiliations for this valley during early periods of Andean prehistory. Apparently, cultural groups, even from small, seemingly isolated villages within the south-central Andes, created textiles, and especially headdress forms, which indicate a knowledge of broader regional styles, while at the same time communicating specific community-based identities. The archaeological perspective in textile analysis permits a unique understanding of cultural contact, cross-over, and continuity as we explore the changing forms and structures of headgear styles that span more than 2000 years of prehistory within a single region.

References Cited

Bravo, Monica

Cieza de Leon, Pedro

Clark, Niki R.

Emery, Irene

Guaman Poma de Ayala, Felipe

Jimenez de la Espada, Marcos, ed.

Museo Chileno de Arte Precolombino

Oakland Rodman, Amy and Delbert L. True

Pizarro, Pedro

Ryden, Stig
1944 Contributions to the archaeology of the Rio Loa region. Elanders Boktryckeri Aktiebolag, Goteborg.

Southon, John, Amy Oakland Rodman, and Delbert L. True
n.d. Radiocarbon measurements of marine and terrestrial samples from northern Chile.
Fig. 1 a. The Inka and his leaders, b. Fiesta of Colla people (after Guaman Poma de Ayala 1980[1615], pp. 336, 299).

Fig. 2 Plan of the Caserones village (after Oakland Rodman and True 1993, Fig. 4).

Fig. 3 Caserones style knotted headdress (after Oakland Rodman and True 1993, Fig. 13).
Fig. 4 Typical attire of the early phases: a. El Laucho, Faldas del Morro and Alto Ramirez, b. Cabuza and Maitas-Chiribaya (after Museo Chileno de Arte Precolombino 1985, p. 36).

Fig. 5 Four-pointed hats; left: Early LIP tall, conical form, b. MH squarish form (after Museo Chileno de Arte Precolombino 1985, p. 36).

Fig. 6 Typical attire of the LIP phases San Miguel and Gentilar (after Museo Chileno de Arte Precolombino 1985, p. 36).
Fig. 7 Plan of the Estuquina site (after Clark 1993, Fig. 1.7).

Fig. 8 Structure: Looping a. Simple looping (after Emery 1966, Fig. 9), b. Knotted looping, alternate knots, diagonal pattern (after Bravo 1987, Fig. 18).

Fig. 9 Structure: Looping-over-foundation a. Simple looping-over-foundation (after Emery 1966, Fig. 59), b. Looping-over-paired-foundations (after Clark 1993, Fig. 3.6b).
Fig. 10 Design types: Knotted looping (after Clark 1993, Figs. 3.19, 3.20).

Fig. 11 Design types: Looping-over-foundation (after Clark 1993, Fig. 3.21).
Fig. 12 Estuquina hats  a. Gorro #10072, b. Gorro #6597, c. Gorro #3623, d. Gorro #7322
(after Clark 1993, Fig. 5.31).