



ORGANIZACION DE LOS ESTADOS AMERICANOS
ORGANIZAÇÃO DOS ESTADOS AMERICANOS
ORGANISATION DES ETATS AMERICAINS
ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES

FA
PER
01
SLIDE
C.01

17th Street and Constitution Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20006

123 - PERU

ALPACA WEAVINGS

Domesticated llama and alpaca were the primary sources of wool for the Indians of Peru. Highland Indians also hunted vicuñas, a smaller animal whose wool was considered more valuable as it is finer, softer and shorter, as well as more difficult to obtain because of its wild nature. Coastal tribes had to import their wool as they lacked grazing land for the animals.

In fabric designs, both naturalistic and depictive, four motifs generally appeared: the human figure, the bird, the fish and the puma. Most designs using the human figure represented it in a mythical capacity. In ancient cultures, symbolism was not born of abstract thought or simplification of theory, but of pure natural experience. Geometric design in many pleasing composition was used both symbolically and decoratively to fill in spaces and borders. Many weavings illustrate highly intricate combinations of pictorial and geometric patterns, alternating positions and repeating color sequences.

Precision and color mark various periods and localities of weaving. Many vegetables, minerals and animals, such as indigo plants, pepper, wood louse, etc., were employed in the making of dyes for the fabric. Predominating colors were red, yellow and dark brown, but as dyeing was highly specialized, not only were these basic colors used, but a wide variety of tones of one color was often found in one garment.

In various grave sites along the Pacific Coast of South America, examples of practically every basic weave and every basic method of fabric decoration known in every part of the world at any point in history have been found. Only those of India may be said to possess a richness of technique similar to that of Peru. Those weavings found in Peru show yarns representing the highest perfection of skill in spinning fiber. Some threads are known to be made of as many as 250 fibers or equal to 210,000 yards to one pound. Even today, only the Hindus are capable of competing with this effort in that they are known to have spun thread made of over 300 fibers.

The particular fibers used in Peru (cotton, wool of llama, alpaca and vicuña) play a large part in the quality of the weaving. The wool fibers did not appear until after the Chavin period and with the onset of the age of Solimar. No one tribe in particular is accredited with the innovation of weaving in Peru, but all indications do point to the woman as its initiator.

123 - PERU

ALPACA WEAVINGS

The Peruvian weaver employed a simple loom that is probably the most primitive, efficient and most ancient that exists in America. It was first put to use circa 3000 AD. This loom has certain disadvantages, of course, but it also has one definite advantage. It gives the weaver freedom to experiment with designs and to pass without difficulty from one technique to another without additional apparatus, substantial changes in the weaving pattern or the smaller parts that compose it. Even today, the woven material in Peru far surpasses the quality of that found in Central America, Mexico and farther to the north.

Slides:

A. The llamas and alpacas are accustomed to grazing in the highlands. They are protected from the intense cold by a thick coat of wool.

B, C & D.

The women of the Andes customarily weave their cloths outdoors, along the roadside, in order to attract tourists that may purchase their goods. The weavings are more or less primitive in design and technique. They are made with wooden poles, a method employed by their Inca ancestors.

E & F.

At times, the Indian women carry their works to the markets of the nearby villages. Here, they are selling their woven material in the village of Pisac.

G. In this location, a site for tourists outside of Cusco, the Indians distribute their products from their respective areas. In the background, one may see the city of Cusco.

H. Known as "chullo", this brightly colored wool bonnet made to cover the ears is found in the highlands of Bolivia and Peru.

I. An example of the many types of wool articles typical of Peru. The perfect combination and warmth of the colors used is admirable.

J. As illustrated in this tapestry, the flower is one of the many motifs used by the Indians of Peru.

Photographed by Angel Hurtado, Visual Arts Unit, Organization of American States. Please give credit if reproduced.