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Wrap the Dead : The funerary textile tradition from the Osmore Valley, South Peru, and its social-political implications

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I. Cornejo (1987):**La Horca site in coastal Camaná valley,
Middle Horizon**

The La Horca site lies in the outskirts of the modern port of Camaná, about 150 km to the north of the Osmore valley. Here, two collective tombs were found in 1984 that date from the Early Intermediate Period through to the Late Intermediate Period. One tomb contained 27 individuals, the other 35 individuals, including all ages and both genders. The latter tomb, or maybe both, appears to have functioned as burial room for secondary burials. Although collective burial was no longer practiced in the Osmore and Azapa regions after Formative times, the northern method of bundling of the dead in layers of cloth is quite similar for all regions (Cornejo 1987, 14-17, 86).

Only six textile specimens were analysed in Cornejo's thesis, which have been identified as Late-Nasca, Wari, and Ica-Chincha style textiles.

The warp and weft elements were plied in $2/2$ fashion like the southern textile tradition and the Nasca tradition further to the north. The interlocked tapestry structure may have been introduced by the Wari textile tradition that had strong impact on this region. The brocade structure, on the other hand, may have been introduced from the north coast (Cornejo 1987, 67-77).

The textile specimens from the latest period seem to have little in common with the Osmore specimens:

A ch'uspa has similar dimensions (22x19 cm) but is weft-faced, with cotton fibre for the hidden warp elements and dyed camelid fibre for the weft elements. It was decorated with a design that is typical of this region during Late Intermediate Period: the eight-pointed star (see *fig. 11.7a*). Another specimen is a manta that measures 130x115 cm, which is quite similar to the Osmore mantas. It is woven in weft-faced structure and decorated in brocade technique with similar eight-pointed stars plus ornitomorphic designs.

Similar eight-pointed star motif was observed by the author of this study in a Chiribaya-style ch'uspa in the Algarrobal Museum in the Osmore valley (see *fig. 11.7b*). The Ica Chincha culture flourished during the Late Intermediate Period and the Inca era and were known as powerful merchants. They built their fortune and esteem through far distance maritime trade covering the whole coastal area of modern Peru and Ecuador

(Moseley 1997, 42). Therefore, it is likely that their stylistic influence would have reached the Chiribaya culture by maritime trade.

II. Risco (1997): Acarí valley, Late Intermediate Period

Risco (1997, 5, 90, 135) analysed a textile collection from the coastal site of Huaca Juana 1 (= PV 74-89) in the Acarí valley, some 250 km to the north of Camaná. The ancient people were known in early colonial times as Acarí and had been related to the Ica-Chincha culture from the Late Intermediate Period.

Risco (1997) analysed 161 specimens from the domestic area of this site and found that camelid wool to have been the dominant fibre (70%), versus only 9% of cotton that could have been grown locally. Most yarn is $2/2$ plied and most fabrics are warp-faced woven, so that the choice of fibre and structure are comparable to the Osmore textile tradition (Risco 1997, 166, 173).

Like El Descanso's dry sieving samples from domestic areas, (fragments of) camisas were found to be rare (4%) in the domestic contexts. Apparently the camisas were destined to accompany the dead into their graves and rarely discarded in refuse middens.

All camisas had been made of camelid wool and ranged in size between 35 cm square for a child to 82.5x69 cm in rectangular shape, making it a rather small adult sized garment: in general, the bottom reached down to waist or slightly beyond. The camisas were made of two webs that were joined with a vertical seam in the centre and at the sides, with vertical openings spared for head and arms. All camisas were made in warp-faced structure in natural yellow to dark brown colour without further embellishment.

Ch'uspas and fajas were also rare (4% and 3%, respectively). Their decoration was unlike the Osmore tradition. Nonetheless, the basic features of Acarí's fajas resemble those from the faja specimens from La Cruz and El Descanso: weft elements were likewise extra thick plied, using wool yarn of mixed white and dark brown colour, while its width likewise ranged between 8 or 14.5 cm. On the contrary, cuerda (35%) and mantas (29%) are common (Risco 1997, 137-197).