

Basic Detail Report



Doll

Date

1000-1400

Medium

Llama wool

Description

This Chanca doll stands with outstretched arms. The geometric slit-woven tapestry face with a gold and red step-like pattern has woven-in eyes and an open mouth showing teeth done in the typical Chanca manner. The doll wears a coarsely woven diamond-patterned dark brown and white tunic dress wound around the waist with a very finely made reverse-weave gold and red jacquard belt. The doll also wears a woman's gauze openwork headcloth. Such headcloths were typically woven with designs of cats, snakes, or interlocking birds, which were

invisible after the gauzy web was removed from its maker's loom, and which remained invisible when worn. The doll's narrow arms and legs are constructed from bundled sticks or reeds wound with heavy thread or yarn. The doll's hair is made from dark yarn. Chanca dolls are frequently imitated; there is a flourishing business in making fakes using archaeological fabrics. Such dolls rarely have the woven-in facial features of original dolls such as this one, however. Authentic Chanca dolls have been found which use spun fibers and even spindles as stuffing materials. The purpose of these dolls-whether they were possessions buried with their owners, or were specifically made as grave goods-is unknown. Chanca Culture Roughly contemporary with the Chimu culture to the north, the Chanca style spread across the coastal valleys of Huaura, Chanca, Rimac, and Chillon during the Late Intermediate Period. The Chanca culture possessed a certain degree of political integration, but was not an organized state. Its architecture was undistinguished and produced in tapia (poured adobe). Chanca ceramics were distinct, but rough in execution. Vessels were often large and poorly made, and included egg-shaped jars and female effigies with short arms. They are usually characterized by black painting on a matte white slip with occasional red accents. The Chanca are known more for their magnificent textiles than for their ceramics. Textiles from elite Chanca tombs include elaborate gauzes, embroidery, painted plain weave and tapestry, and three-dimensional fiber sculptures such as dolls. Fine mesh-like openwork gauze achieved a new level of artistry and skill. Women wore head cloths with complex patterns of snakes and interlocked birds. Many thousands of Chanca textiles are preserved in museums around the world, attesting to their prolific artistic output.

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Pre-Columbian Textiles

The pre-Columbian textile traditions were the culmination of many hundreds of years of development, and were extremely technologically sophisticated. Along the coast of Peru, native cotton, *Gossypium barbadense*, was often incorporated into weavings, while in the highlands, fibers from the domesticated llama and alpaca (*Lama glama* and *Lama pacos*) and from the wild vicuna (*Vicugna vicugna*) were all spun and used in textiles. The finest, softest cloths were woven of pure vicuna wool, while domesticated llamas yielded the coarsest hairs and textiles and alpacas produced fiber of intermediate quality and softness. Wearing red and gold colors during Inca times was restricted to high-status individuals, although we cannot be certain that such sumptuary laws extended back into the pre-Inca past. It appears that specific uniforms for the military (warriors) were common in Inca times, and likely from at least Wari times onwards. Other kinds of special-use clothing were also standardized, with Wari bureaucrats or officials wearing distinctive tunics unlike those of the common people. The designs found on fabrics include elements from nature as well as the supernatural or mystical world, with intricate, abstract geometrics and interlocking tessellations which appear to be one thing, such as a series of birds, when viewed from one direction, and another, such as cat faces, when viewed from the opposite direction. Bird and fish motifs were common along the coast of Peru. Fibers were spun either "Z-twist" or "S-twist," terms referring to the directionality of twisting (clockwise or counterclockwise). The patterning in twist direction, coupled with numbers of fibers woven in each direction (the warp and the weft) offer clues to help us date textiles and to determine their geographic origin. Most pre-Columbian weaves were warp-faced, with coastal textiles usually having an invisible cotton weft understructure. Camelid fibers were preferred for the visible warp threads, since wools of all types take dye better than do cottons, and resist fading better, producing a more vividly-colored garment.

Textile colors

Native cotton, *Gossypium barbadense*, comes in several earth-tone colors ranging from creamy white to brown, as do the different kinds of camelid wools. All of these fibers were used in a variety of natural tones, but many were also dyed with a variety of natural dyestuffs to produce the glowing colors found in pre-Columbian textiles. Bright red dyes came from the cochineal insect, (*Dactylopius coccus*), which live on prickly-pear cactus or "tuna" (*Opuntia ficus-indica*) plants, while yellow colors came from a wide range of plants including pepper tree (*Schinus molle*) seeds. Blues were obtained from indigo (*Indigofera suffruticosa*). Farther north, in Ecuador and in Mesoamerica, purple dyes were obtained from several species of shellfish (*Purpura* spp., *Thais melones*, or *T. kioskiformis*). ref :Karen Stothert 2005: "Shellfish Purple in Coastal Ecuador," *Textile Museum Journal* 2003-2004, pp.98-107.

Suggestions for Further Reading about Andean Textiles:

Berenguer R., Jose (2000): *Awakhuni: Tejiendo la Historia Andina*. Museo Precolombino: Santiago. (text in Spanish)

Brugnoli Bailoni, Paulina, and Soledad Hoces de la Guardia (1995): Two options for achieving a visual image in Precolumbian textile art. In *Andean Art: Visual Expression and its relation to Andean Beliefs and Values*, edited by Penny Dransart. Worldwide Archaeology Series, Avebury: Aldershot, pp. 193-227. Commentary by weavers about how forming motifs using different methods may be related to intended meanings.

Cornejo B., Luis E. and Carole Sinclair A. (Eds.) (2005): *Chimú: Laberintos de un Traje Sagrado/Labyrinths of a Sacred Costume*, Museo Chileno de Arte Precolombino : Santiago. Text in both Spanish and English; excellent review of Chimú textiles.

Doyon-Bernard, S.J. (1990): "From twining to triple cloth: experimentation and innovation in ancient Peruvian

weaving (ca. 5000-400 BC)," in *American Antiquity* 55(1): 68-87. Feltham, Jane (1989): *Peruvian Textiles*. Shire Ethnography: Aylesbury. An excellent, short (circa 70-pages total) overview of techniques, materials, and the history of textiles in Peru, written for the non-specialist but with information useful to anyone.

Peters, Ann H. (1991): "Ecology and Society in Embroidered Images from the Paracas Necrópolis," in *Paracas Art and Architecture: Object and Context in South Coastal Peru*, Edited by Anne Paul. University of Iowa Press: Iowa City. Frank discussion of the difficulty in identifying decorative elements in pre-Columbian textiles, with extensive illustrations of many plants and animals purported to be portrayed in Paracas and Nasca pottery and textiles.

Reid, James W. (1986): *Textile Masterpieces of Ancient Peru*. Dover: New York. Short reference, well-illustrated in color. Also has illustrations of featherwork.

Rodman, Amy Oakland and Vicki Cassman (1995): "Andean tapestry: structure informs the surface," in *Art Journal* 54(2): 33-39.

Chancay (AD 1200-1470) Roughly contemporary with the Chimú culture to the north, the Chancay culture encompassed the central Peruvian coastal valleys of Huaura, Chancay, Rimac, and Chillón during the Late Intermediate Period. While the Chancay culture possessed a certain degree of political integration, it was not an organized state. Chancay ceramics are characterized by black painting on a rough matte white slip ground with occasional red accents; vessels are often large and poorly made. Typical ceramic shapes include egg-shaped jars, face-neck jars of figures holding drinking vessels called "chinas," and the short-armed female figures called "cuchimilcos." The dry coastal Peruvian desert climate allows for excellent preservation of otherwise perishable organic materials, and Chancay textiles are magnificent, especially in comparison to the rather rough ceramics. Textiles from elite Chancay tombs include elaborate gauzes, embroidery, painted plain weave and tapestry, and three-dimensional fiber sculptures such as dolls. Fine mesh-like openwork gauze achieved a new level of artistry and skill. Women wore head cloths with complex patterns of snakes and interlocked birds. Many thousands of Chancay textiles are preserved in museums around the world, attesting to their prolific artistic output.

Dimensions

Height: 13 inches (33 cm)