

## THE CHUSE: MEMORIES OF A "SACRED MANTLE"\*

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El chuse o chusi, es un textil de origen prehispánico. Realizado en telares de cuatro estacas, de factura gruesa y diseño simple, su uso se extiende por los andes centrales. En el ámbito doméstico, se utiliza a modo de frazada, y en el sagrado (dentro de los templos), cubriendo el piso o las gradas de los altares centrales. La mención de estos en inventarios durante el siglo XVIII, en templos andinos de Arica y Parinacota, dan cuenta del valor monetario y cultural, que le era otorgado.

El estado precario de conservación, la pérdida del oficio de su confección en el territorio chileno, fruto de la chilenización (postguerra del Pacífico), el despoblamiento, entre otros, abren la investigación de este textil, de uso común y generalizado en el ámbito andino, cuyo profundo significado cultural y ritual, contiene una riqueza excepcional. En este artículo intentaremos dar cuenta de estos aspectos, al alero de la metodología de los estudios de la cultura material, a partir de los vestigios de chuses en templos de los "altos de Arica", en particular, del pueblo de Pachama.

*Palabras Claves:* Chuse; Textiles prehispánicos; conservación; Arica y Parinacota

### THE CHUSE: MEMORIES OF A "SACRED MANTLE".

The chuse or chusi is a textile of pre-Hispanic origin. Made on four-stakes looms, thick and simple in design, its use extends throughout the central Andes. In the domestic environment, it is used as a blanket, and in the sacred (inside the temples), covering the floor or the steps of the central altars. The mention of these in inventories during the 18th century, in Andean temples of Arica and Parinacota, shows the monetary and cultural value that was given to them.

The precarious state of conservation, the loss of the craft of its manufacture in the Chilean territory as a result of the Chileanization (post Pacific War), depopulation, among others, open the investigation of this textile, of common and widespread use in the Andean area, whose deep cultural and ritual meaning, contains an exceptional wealth. In this article we will try to give an account of these aspects, based on the methodology of material culture studies, from the vestiges of chuses in temples in the "highlands of Arica", in particular, in the town of Pachama.

*Keywords:* Chuse; Prehispanic textiles; conservation; Arica and Parinacota

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## Introduction

**T**he existence of chuses covering the floor of altars in Andean Christian temples in Arica and Parinacota, both in use and in disuse, most of them deteriorated, shows a textile that was valued by the parishioners, and that fulfilled -or had fulfilled- a relevant function within the temples.

The discontinuity in its confection, as well as the lack of knowledge of some custodians, such as mayordomas and mayordomos; fabriqueras and fabriqueros, showed a textile that was preserved by tradition and custom, just like the other objects of sacred use in the temples, however, there was no clarity, among those responsible, about its use, confection and its continuity.

From the perspective of the research developed by Elvira Espejo, entitled: *The rebellion of objects*, 2017, we propose to integrate, in terms of a theoretical-practical framework, the complete process of making the chuse in the extreme north of Chile; considering all the elements involved in it: wool, tools, loom and clothing techniques, also considering the landscape and cultural context, the social networks of production and the original language. For this, we have used methodologies associated with historical and sociocultural research. On the one hand, we have reviewed documentary sources and bibliography related to textile practice in the context of the southern Andean sector, and, on the other hand, we have interviewed,

in depth, specialists in the weaving craft, especially Andean artisans from the region of Arica and Parinacota.

We have taken, as a case study, the chuses in use inside the temple of San Andrés in the town of Pachama, in the foothills of the Putre commune. From these, an analysis is attempted that, from different points of view, allows to obtain a "biography" of these and, especially, about how they are "lived". For this purpose, an analysis of the material culture is proposed in order to define the dimensions of function, technology and style. Likewise, the forms of valuation of these by the community of Pachama and commoners of the geographical area in which this town is inserted are analyzed, through the uses and meanings they give them, as well as through a material record of their uses, customs and rituals, functioning as the material and immaterial traces of their existence.<sup>1</sup>



Figure 1: Nave of the temple of San Andrés de Pachama, chuses on the support of the gospel wall.  
Fte: Altiplano Foundation Archive.

## Background

The chuse, or chusi, in the South Andean area (Peruvian and Bolivian highlands, northwestern Argentina and northern Chile) is generally made of llama or alpaca wool, and can also be made of sheep's wool, and is used as a blanket and rug.<sup>2</sup> According to the dictionary of Ludovico Betonio (XVII century):

*“Chusi” es una frezada de indios. + Apichuchusi: labrada a manera de ojos. + calluni: listada o entreverada de diverso color. + Ppaticalla: También entreverado de diversos colores, algo diferente que la pasada. + Tayca tayca: De listas mas anchas que la que llaman Calluni. Chusina hanakhatasitha, chuysitha.*

<sup>1</sup> Sanín Santamaria, J. D. ‘Estudios de la Cultura Material’, *Iconofacto*, 2, no. 3 (2006), p. 21, <https://repository.upb.edu.co/handle/20.500.11912/7094> (accessed December 17, 2023).

<sup>2</sup> McHugh, J. K., *Dressing Andean Spaces: Textiles, Painting, and Architecture in the Colonial Imagination*, Los Angeles : University of California, 2017, p. 50.

*Cubrirse con la frezada. Chusi ccuthapittatha, vel ccuthapittatha. Ponerse una frazada como se pone el indio la manta: Para andar o estar sentado. Chusi ccuthapittaathaa. Ponerla assi a otro*".<sup>3</sup>

We know of its use in pre-Hispanic times thanks to the chronicles written by the Jesuit missionary Bernabé Cobo, who describes the chusi as the coarsest of the fabrics produced by the Incas, as they were woven "as thick as a finger":

*"The coarsest and thickest cloth they made was called chusi; it was not for dressing themselves, but for frezadas, carpets and other uses: some were woven as thick as the finger, because the thread of the weft was a woolen rope of that thickness. Comparing this diversity of fabrics with ours, we can say that the clothes of abasca correspond to our woolen cloths; those of cumbi, to our silks; those of feather, to our silver fabrics; those of chaquira, to our brocades; the chuses, to the sayal, jergas and frisas; and, lately, the cotton clothes, to our linen".<sup>4</sup>*

The 1608 Quechua dictionary by Diego Gonzáles Holguín lists chusi with apa, defining it as a "frazada muy gruesa" (thick blanket). Apa however, is later defined as "cobija de la cama, frazada, manta o colcha" (bedding, blanket, or bedspread). From archival documents it is clear that a chusi is a thick woven mat, used as a rug, runner (for the floor or a bench), or as un chuse de tapar la cama (a bed covering). Between 1664 and 1751, chusi consistently appear in wills, inventories, and dowries in both natural and bright colors. Most chusi were made of cumbi, and these two categories are often very intertwined in archival documents: dos chuse de cumbi nuevos (1703; two new chusi of cumbi); un chuse grande manera de cumbe del colores (1714; a large colorful chusi in the form of cumbi); dos chuses de colores de cumbi (1725; two colorful cumbi chusi). A popular non-garment textile, the chusi is often listed with an accompanying rug, indicating their placement in the home. A 1737 listing includes un chusi grande entre negro, blanco y musgo, y otra alfombrita (a large chusi half white and half dark brownish-gray, and a small rug). Often these pieces are specifically listed as located in the estrado, such as the chuse de cumbe de estrado de colores (colorful cumbi chusi for the sitting room) in the 1712 dowry of

<sup>3</sup> Bertonio, L., *Vocabulario de la lengua aymara: Primera parte, donde por abecedario se ponen en primer lugar los vocablos de la lengua española para buscar los que les corresponden en la lengua aymara* (Tip. don Bosco, 1956); Juan Yapita, Denise Arnold, Elvira Espejo, *Los términos textiles aymaras de la región Asanaque: vocabulario semántico según la cadena productiva* (ILCA, Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Aymara, 2014), p. 42.

<sup>4</sup> Carmona Sciaraffia, G., "Caracterización de las prendas textiles incas presentes en sitios arqueológicos tardíos del extremo norte de Chile" (LIC. diss., Universidad de Chile, 2006), p. 70; E. M. Baker, *Technical Attributes as Cultural Choices: The Textiles Associated with an Inca Sacrifice at Cerro Esmeralda, Northern Chile*, MA diss., Trent University, 2001, p. 47; Y. Gomez Casaverde, *Los ychsma de la Huaca San Pedro de Armatambo durante el horizonte tardío (1476-1532 dC): una aproximación desde el material textil*, LIC. diss., UNSM, 2022, p. 28.

Doña Manuela de Saabedra Suniesa. Significantly, there are no imported chusi; this is a local textile type that persists throughout the colonial period, despite imported rugs and other items. In this manner, the chusi represents a unique textile category: an indigenous form that persisted despite global textile influence. In the Andean highlands today, many families own chusi that have been passed down from a previous generation. In the highland community of Chillca, a small Quechua-speaking community on the south side of Ausangate, chusi is the word used for a coarse, alpaca-fiber mat used for sitting on the ground or covering a bed. The use of this textile type in present-day Andean communities attests to its importance over the centuries. Given its distinct name in archival documents, the chusi is clearly different from the alfombra (rug) in shape, material, and location of fabrication.

Weaving looms are the basis of textile production in the South Andean region. Of various types, they allow the production of fabrics of diverse complexity. From blankets, clothes, ponchos, bags, tapestries, among others. The three basic forms of loom are:

- Horizontal: where the warp is tied to four stakes that are nailed to the ground.
- Vertical: in which two parallel timbers are nailed to the ground and at the top a pole is crossed, as a crossbeam, where the warp threads are placed. Two people can weave and make large and complex cloths.
- Waist loom: One end is attached to the weaver's waist.

During the colony, the pedal loom was imported, which was incorporated by the indigenous people, adapting their weavings to the new loom.

In the case of the chuse, the four-stakes loom is used, which has its roots in the pre-Hispanic tradition of making thick textiles in the altiplano area for flooring, shelter and bedding.<sup>5</sup> In the same sense, it is stated, in the case of the Colca: “They use looms for their work, which are composed of four stakes driven into the ground, and at their ends two sticks from which hangs the weft, which they raise and lower with cords by hand, the same serving as a comb to tighten the fabric, which they only use for the purpose of consuming it with their families, and the materials they obtain from the short herds of llama .

*Identification of chuses in bibliography and inventories of the Arica and Parinacota temples.*

The bibliography on Andean textiles is very extensive. Among the most outstanding names are the works of Teresa Gisbert, Silvia Arce and Martha Cajías in Bolivia, whose first edition, in 1988, focuses mainly on textiles such as llicllas, colonial transition tapestries, acsus, chuspas, uncus. On the other hand, there are the

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<sup>5</sup> Mujica, E., ( coord.), *Tejiendo nuestra historia*, Perú: Ministerio de cultura de Perú y Fundación Backus, 2016, p. 39; M. Malo Piedra, “Los textiles en el mundo andino”, *Revista Artesanías de América*, 74 (2015), pp. 81-87, pp. 85-87; M. J. Jiménez Díaz, “El tejido andino: tecnología y diseño de una tradición milenaria”, *Textil e indumentaria*,(2003), [https://www.geiic.com/files/Publicaciones/el\\_tejiendo\\_andino.pdf](https://www.geiic.com/files/Publicaciones/el_tejiendo_andino.pdf) (accessed December 17, 2023), p. 4.

publications of Denise Arnold, Juan Yapita and Elvira Espejo, who propose an investigation that incorporates the chain of tools and the processes of textile confection, language and dyes; this is entitled *Hilos sueltos: los Andes*, and appeared for the first time in 2007 with Plural Editoriales, with a third edition published in 2016 by ILCA.<sup>6</sup> In 2013, Xavier Albó, Arnold and Espejo, in collaboration with Freddy Luis Maidana, published *Tejiendo la Vida, La colección textil del Museo Nacional de Etnografía y Folklore, según la cadena de producción*, Banco Central de Bolivia, 2013, consolidating the socio-cultural vision of textiles, in connection with the exhibition at the same museum.<sup>7</sup> The catalog publishes the production chain of the different ecological levels of Bolivia, from regional resources, through shearing, dehairing and cleaning, spinning and twisting, spinning products, matting, dyeing, winding, warping and weaving. It also reviews the loom tools and finishing. In the classification, the Chusi or chuse is not found, since it is not part of the MUSEF collection.

In 2015 Arnold and Espejo published *The andean science of weaving, structures and techniques of warp-faced weaves*, Thames and Hudson. Elena Phipps and Maya Stanfield-Mazzi are two North American researchers who have delved, the former, into pre-Hispanic Mexican and Peruvian textiles.<sup>8</sup> The latter, in her text *Clothing the New World Church: Liturgical Textiles of Spanish America, 1520-1820*, makes a brief reference to the chuses, as part of the "carpets" found in Andean temples, emphasizing the idea that they are part of the appropriation of foreign uses with ancient techniques. However, it does not dwell on them, on their social and cultural function, nor on the role they may have in the Christian sacred space. In an article published by Vicente Gonzalez and Eliana Lopez, the will of Ana Cochauta is published, where it states:

*“Ítem declaro que tengo dos chumbes, una tejida y otra por tejer. Mando para mi hija Catalina.  
Ítem declaro que tengo tres ovillos de lana de la tierra, blanco negro bermejo, que son pa [sic] tres fajos. Mando se dé para Francisca mi hija que así es mi voluntad.  
Ítem declaro que tengo dos fresadas grandes que le llaman chuses. Mando se dé a mis hijos a cada una un chuse.  
Ítem declaro que tengo una tinaja grande. Mando se dé para mi hija la mayor porque así es mi voluntad.  
Ítem declaro que tengo otra tinajilla en casa de Pedro el sombrerero. Mando se dé para mi hija la menor.”<sup>9</sup>*

<sup>6</sup> Arnold, D., Yapita, J., Espejo, E., *Hilos sueltos: los Andes desde el textil*, La Paz: Plural e ILCA, 2007.

<sup>7</sup> Museo Nacional De Etnografía Y Folklore, *Tejiendo la vida: la colección textil del Museo Nacional de Etnografía y Folklore, según la cadena de producción*, Bolivia: Museo Nacional de Etnografía y Folklore, 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Phipps, E., Hecht, J., Martín, C.E., *The colonial andes: tapestries and silverwork: 1530-1830*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004.

<sup>9</sup> González, V. et al., “Preguntas e interpretaciones a partir del testamento e inventario de bienes de Ana Cochauto (1589): La emergencia de un nuevo sujeto social en Cuzco colonial temprano”, *Meridional. Revista Chilena de Estudios Latinoamericanos*, 8 (2017), pp. 217-229.

This tells us that the chuse was a very common element in the temples.

Other similar records include Fernández:(3)Yten en bernardino de Ateguen se rremato un chuse grande de colores biejo en doçe pessos [Roca 1656].(4)Me hago cargo de ochenta pesos en que se rremató una alfonbra y un chusi [Olmera 1691].(5)Una chuse muy apollillada [Torres 1703].

Initially, the chuse/chusi was a thick blanket (frezada) used by the Indians to sleep on the ground; this is attested by early seventeenth-century Peruvian texts collected by Bowman (Harris-Northall and Nitti 2003, s.v. chuse). Later they were also used as carpets or rugs for the floor of the house. It does not appear in any of the RAE dictionaries, but Alcedo (1789, s.v. chuce) does record it as "a kind of coarse and ordinary wool overbed that is made in the province of Aimaraes in the Kingdom of Peru".

We have identified the existence of chuses in a very poor state of conservation, some in use and others in disuse, covering benches, altar steps or stored in trunks, based on inventories carried out in Andean temples in the region of Arica and Parinacota. Local accounts indicate that, although there is still some knowledge of the weaving process and its use in ceremonial contexts, the practice of weaving this fabric has been largely lost. Moreover, there is a request from the Andean communities to restore the damaged chuses and recover the tradition of their manufacture.

However, a review of inventories related to communities of the southern Andean altiplano, especially from the 18th and 19th centuries, shows that this type of textile was still common, as can be seen in the following tables:

| Year | Town     | Temple                  | Quantity |
|------|----------|-------------------------|----------|
| 1778 | Belén    | San Santiago            | 3        |
|      |          | Virgen de la Candelaria | 1        |
|      | Socoroma | San Francisco de Asís   | 2        |
|      | Pachama  | San Andrés              | 3        |
| 1789 | Belén    | San Santiago            | 7        |
|      |          | Virgen de la Candelaria | 4        |
|      | Socoroma | San Francisco de Asís   | 2        |

|      |            |                                    |    |
|------|------------|------------------------------------|----|
|      |            | Santa Lucía                        | 1  |
|      | Guallatire | Virgen de la Inmaculada Concepción | 1  |
|      | Putre      | San Ildefonso                      | 10 |
|      | Pachama    | San Andrés                         | 3  |
|      | Parinacota | Virgen de la Natividad             | 3  |
| 1836 | Sora       |                                    | 4  |

**Table 2: Inventory of Codpa Doctrine 1792 (Archbishop's Archive of Arequipa, Codpa Doctrine, Presentation to oppositions, 1792).**

| Year | Town     | Temple                | Quantity |
|------|----------|-----------------------|----------|
| 1792 | Pachica  | San José              | 4        |
|      | Esquiña  | San Pedro             | 3        |
|      | Tímar    | San Juan Bautista     | 1        |
|      | Ticnámar | Virgen de la Asunción | 1        |
|      | Saxámar  | Santa Rosa de Lima    | 1        |
|      | Livícar  | San Bartolomé         | 2        |
|      | Humagata | Santiago Apóstol      | 1        |

**Table 3: Inventory of the Belén Doctrine 1871 (Archivo Histórico y Límites, Visita Pastoral Doctrina de Belén, 1871).**

| Year | Town  | Temple                  | Quantity |
|------|-------|-------------------------|----------|
| 1871 | Belén | San Santiago            | 13       |
|      |       | Virgen de la Candelaria | 3        |



|  |              |                                    |    |
|--|--------------|------------------------------------|----|
|  | Socoroma     | San Francisco de Asís              | 1  |
|  |              | Santa Lucía                        | 2  |
|  | Putre        | San Ildefonso                      | 1  |
|  | Pachama      | San Andrés                         | 2  |
|  | Guallatire   | Virgen de la Inmaculada Concepción | 3  |
|  | Choquelimpie | San Juan Bautista                  | 2  |
|  | Parinacota   | Virgen de la Natividad             | 10 |

Taking into account the background presented above, we believe that this research is relevant to expand the knowledge we have about the chuse, because from a preliminary literature review, we have not found documents that develop detailed descriptions of the techniques and actors involved in their production, as well as their uses and social meanings. It is possible to verify that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, all temples had chuses, some in greater quantity, which could be the cause of the above: the greater number of altars, as well as of mayordomas and mayordomos who donate chuses to each altar.

The shape of an object is conditioned by the technique, not only by the technical procedures, but also by the available materials.<sup>10</sup> The thick and heavy blankets are for rituals, laying on the floor or placing rods. They are different from the thinner ones that go to the body.

### 3.- About the Chuse and its uses: memory and rituality

Based on the interview with Elvira Espejo,<sup>11</sup> "there are sacred chuses and communal chuses. The one with the big rhombuses is of justice or the sacred one. The rhombuses should be checked if they are even, to establish their possible

<sup>10</sup> Mesa Jaramilla, M., *El objeto doméstico y su estética*, Medellín: Instituto Tecnológico Metropolitano, 2017, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Espejo, E., interviewed August 31, 2021

meaning.<sup>12</sup> There are 3 types of sacred chuses: one to place the rods of the authorities,<sup>13</sup> in the central part, which is made to stop at the ceremony, to make a call to the major forces. There is a second one, which will be used as the justiciary. The rod placed on the textile acquires the power of force, and this same rod will be used for justice.<sup>14</sup> The third is the properly sacred one, that of the temples.”<sup>15</sup>

Along the same lines, Javier Vilca points out that the chuse is a "Ceremonial Garment", when justice was administered. "When the *jilakata* and *mallku* met, it was used as a carpet. At the same time, he points out the organization of the indigenous society, that is, the way in which a community or communities were related, since in a *marka* there were four or two *ayllus* (hamlets of a territory).<sup>16</sup> In one *ayllu* there was a *jilakata* who was in charge of watching over what was going on and guiding the couples, young people and children, as an authority.<sup>17</sup> There were cases, where rebels harmed others and they intervened. Sometimes, the case was whether he hurt or stole. The care of not stealing is one of the fundamental principles in the Aymara culture. In a first, second or third time, it was considered a serious act that required another intervention. All the *jilakatas*, up to 24, would gather as a court. They would interrogate and the accused had to defend himself. If he refused, he had to go to the "Sacred Oath", the ultimate ceremony. The one who accused passed, they put on that carpet (chuse) all the "Tata kings". The accuser passed 12 times accusing. Then it was the turn of the accused, denying 12 times as well. The sanction was: the one who had lied, because the court did not know it, had outwitted the "Tata reyes" and within 24 hours he had to die, therefore, he paid with his life.

Generally, there was resistance, but at the 2nd or 3rd pass, he confessed and said everything, he knew that, when he confessed, he had to submit to another person, to a guardian, a person who took care of him: to live, to sleep, to work, together, during the time necessary for him to change. The one who did this work was someone who had previously "fallen into weakness".

"In the case of the one who paid with his life, his family was expelled, being that the sanction that the same wrongdoer placed when sentenced.

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<sup>12</sup> Arnold, D., "Los textiles andinos teñidos por amarras, el motivo del punto en el rombo y su patrón de difusión: felinos, serpientes y el cultivo del maíz en un mundo en transformación", in *Tejiendo imágenes. Homenaje a Victòria Solanilla Demestre*, eds. C. Simmons Caldas y M. Valls i García (Lincoln, Nebraska: Zea Books, 2023); Echazú Conitzer, A., "Textiles: signo táctil, memoria y oralidad", *Revista Ciencia y Cultura*, 24, no. 45 (2020), pp. 185-219.

<sup>13</sup> Huanca Condori, S., *El uso de símbolos e instrumentos en la aplicación de la justicia comunitaria en las provincias: Omasuyos, Pacajes y los Andes*, LIC. diss., UMSA, 2007, p. 50.

<sup>14</sup> Roque Santalla, A., *La filosofía y simbología del tejido aymara en la aplicación de justicia comunitaria de la comunidad de Lacoyo San Francisco*, PhD. diss., 2013, p. 38.

<sup>15</sup> Solórzano Gonzales, M., *El arte del tapiz andino colonial: Técnica, iconografía, usos y tejedores*, (2019).

<sup>16</sup> Alarcón, T. *Ayllu, The: The Basic Social Unit of the Aymara People*, *Thomas L. Rev.*, 14 (2001), pp. 449-57, p. 449.

<sup>17</sup> Indicep, I., "El *Jilakata*: Apuntes sobre el sistema político de los Aymaras", *Allpanchis*, 5, no. 5 (1973), pp. 33-44, <https://doi.org/10.36901/allpanchis.v5i5.374>. (accessed December 17, 2023); Zenteno, H., Brun, 'Acercamiento a la visión cósmica del mundo Andino', *Punto Cero. Universidad Católica Boliviana*, 14, no. 18 (2009), pp. 83-89.

For this "Sacred Oath", the carpet (chuse) was placed, when the strictest ceremonial rigor was made. Tata Rey, is the baton of command. Symbol of command that carries an authority."<sup>18</sup>

Those textiles, which were not made for the church, people probably considered them a gift for the church.

"The ceremony of justice, an old man told me that his father had told him about it. This kind of justice has not been done for more than 100 years. His father was a jilakata and participated in this."<sup>19</sup>

#### *Ritual of the chuwa*

According to Florencio Choque, the builder of the San Andrés de Pachama church, a ceremony called the chuwa is held prior to the patron saint festivities.<sup>20</sup> In other towns, in the interior of Tarapacá, Vivian Gavilán and Ana María Carrasco, describe this tradition as follows:

*"A table is offered with drinks (chuwa), incense (kopal), coca leaf, sweets, products associated with fertility. In this as in all the propitiatory festivities, it begins with the ceremony of the antevíspera in which the ancestors are remembered. This occurs with the new or full moon to invite them to the celebration with chicha and liquors to finish when the sun shines with the sacrifice or wilancha. The party continues for three days around the hill and the town square."<sup>21</sup>*

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<sup>18</sup>Nielsen, A.E., "Armas significantes: tramas culturales, guerra y cambio social en el sur andino prehispánico", *Boletín del museo chileno de arte precolombino*, 12, no. 1 (2007), p. 9-41.

<sup>19</sup> Vilva, J., interviewed June 6, 2020.

<sup>20</sup> Fernández Juárez, G., *Yatiris y chámakanis del altiplano aymara: sueños, testimonios y prácticas ceremoniales*, (2004).

<sup>21</sup> Gavilán, V., Carrasco, A.M., "Festividades andinas y religiosidad en el norte chileno", *Chungará* (Arica), 41, no. 1 (2009), pp. 101-12; Mansilla, C., "Mesas aymara-católicas en Cobija: La narrativa que presentan las ofrendas para negociar con los seres sagrados", *Diseña*, 10 (2016), pp. 196-207.



Figure 2: Grindstone, with remains of ground candy. Temple of San Pedro de Esquiña, Camarones, Arica and Parinacota.

Fte: Altiplano Foundation Archive

According to Choque, "the chuwa is a ceremony in which "a table" is prepared and inside that table 12 cups or jars with water are placed and at the head is the coca, the special kalatanta bread, without yeast or anything else. The 12 cups represent the 12 apostles. If the chuwa is for San Andres you buy cookies that are made in Bolivia in which the moon, the rain, the sun, or elements of nature are represented. The shapes that come in the cookies vary according to the saint to whom the chuwa is dedicated. The yatire grinds these cookies and pours them into each jar or cup as he makes the prayers. On the table is also the bread, where the yatiri nails the cross and it remains like that all night long. Next to the bread there are two glasses with wine and in front is the coca chilla with the vistalla, which I think they call it in Aymara."<sup>22</sup> This is how they proceed with the chuwa ceremony and that is the function of those little crosses. In this ceremony, the chuse also has functions.

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<sup>22</sup> Gavilán, V., Viguera Cherrés, P., "Temporalidades y memorias corporizadas en los rituales aymaras del norte de Chile", *Cultura y religión*, 14, no. 2 (2020), pp. 100-27.



Figure 3: "Sacrificial" crosses in the window of the presbytery of the temple of Pachama.  
Fte: Altiplano Foundation Archive

*"Once the ceremony is done by the yatiri, the cookies are ground and placed in the 12 jars that represent the apostles, the mayordomos and the alféreces enter to make the rogativa or forgiveness. The chuse is laid on the floor and the church authorities begin to make the coca piccha (chewing the coca) in a route. For example, the yatiri says: "this round is to ask for forgiveness, for San Andrés", then, the one who is with the bag of coca passes it to the side, and the round ends when the bag reaches me again. Then the yatiri says: "now, now the pardons for the alféreces", or "for the rain, the deceased, the sun, the moon, the Mallkus, etcetera". And the ensigns are sitting on the chuse".*



Figure 4: Don Florencio Choque showing the chuse to Javier Vilca, Pachama.  
Fte: Altiplano Foundation Archive



Figure 5: Detail of the ancient chuse of Pachama, it is possible to see diamonds and squares.  
Fte: Altiplano Foundation Archive

*"This ceremony is done without the public, because it is a week before the festivity begins and, in general, there are no people in town, and those interested are always the mayordomos, fabriqueros and alféreces."*

*"Once the ceremony is fulfilled, all the elements are left there until the next dawn, around five in the morning. There, the master of ceremony tells the participants that they must ask forgiveness to the church so that nothing bad happens in the party, then the participants go around the church three times, through the atrium, on their knees. After that, the church is entered and the chuse is collected, and before the sun rises, the master of ceremony leads the bloodshed, the wilancha.<sup>23</sup> Two lambs are offered and the master of ceremony goes spilling the blood around the church and the tower. Now, if the wilancha is done in the name of St. Andrew, one must go to the Calvary of St. Andrew, and then return to the church for the master of ceremony to pour the contents of the 12 vases."*

*"Also, with the sacrifice of the two lambs, the "puntacho" is taken out, which is a little piece of each part of the animal, the ears, the hooves, the hide, and that is burned by the master of ceremony together with all the parts that are left over. Afterwards, they go to the cemetery, in the "soul world", and ask permission for all the mayordomos who have passed and who are no longer here. Finally, they return to the church to drink the wine and eat the bread soaked in the wine". That is the end of the ceremony, which lasts from about 10 p.m. until noon the next day.*

*Don Florencio points out that his parents and grandparents had no problem sitting on the floor, cross-legged or kneeling. Nowadays people do have problems; "it*

<sup>23</sup> Van den Berg, H., "Capítulo 6: La valoración de la religión aymara", *Revista Ciencia y Cultura*, 12, no. 21 (2008), pp. 247-79

could be that now we are sicker, we are diabetic and everything, so they can't stand even 10 minutes sitting on the floor, so now we resort to chairs in some cases. Now there is more comfort; last year, in fact, I had to put chairs for everyone next to the chuse."

Don Florencio points out that *"the chuse is all deteriorated. It must measure 3 x 2.5 meters. It appears in an inventory of 1925, where three chuses are mentioned. The older inventories are not as complete, although chuses are still mentioned. The one that is more deteriorated has faced several plagues of mice"*. With the community they wanted to restore it, but they did not know where to leave it, now they want to leave it as a relic.

Don Florencio continues: *"the chuses also have the function of receiving the patrons (saints) when their clothes are changed; the patrons are never put on the ground. Another function is for Holy Week: the coffin or urn of Christ is also placed on the chuse and sometimes it is taken to the altars - although it has not been done for a long time - to rest in the procession. That is the tradition that our ancestors had of making the chuse and they knew that they had to be all-terrain. For Corpus Christi it is also used, because you know that the priest goes out with the Blessed Sacrament and should not step on the ground, so the chuse and blankets are laid out there. The chuse is spread inside the temple, up to the door of the church, and on the outside, the stewards are in charge of putting blankets and then they pick them up from the back to the front. In this way they go around the town during the procession"*.

Don Florencio saw in his town making blankets on four stakes and the women's cloths, or shawls: *"the men who wove came with another type of loom and wove two things: ponchos and shawls. Everyone had their shawls because they were multipurpose, they were used to carry things, such as firewood, and also to keep warm. The women who came to weave stayed in the village for two months. There were several women from the village who ordered blankets. The weavers ended up staying for a long time. The children were sometimes made to help, because they had the wool in a bolo that had to be thrown away, and they made them throw it away and bring it back, "and for us that was like a punishment!"*

### **The chuse making technique: tradition and memory**

Based on interviews with the continuators of the tradition, the weavers, the Gómez Mamani sisters from the Umirpa ranch and Javier Vilca from Lirima, in the interior of the Tarapacá region, we can establish that the chuses were made by both women and men. As was also the case in colonial times. As an example, in Maca, in 1819, a temple in the Colca Valley, Arequipa, Peru, in an inventory transcribed and published by Gauvin Bailey, it is recorded that it was a chucero who made the textile: *"Por 338 varas de chuce entre negro y amarillo que sirbeen el presviterio de esta asanta iglesia de Maca , a 6 reales la vara, importan 24 p 6r que no traiga piso no se sacó el peso de rebaja que hizo el chucero."*<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Bailey, G., *The Andean Hybrid Baroque, convergent cultures in the churches of colonial Peru* (University of Notre Dame, 2020), p. 439.

On the other hand, in Toledo, present-day Bolivian altiplano, a large number of chuches are mentioned in the San Agustín de Toledo temple, which are made by the priostes or mayordomas:

*“(...)en la dicha visita como todo consta del libro de dichas Cofradías , y del resumen que tengo formado respectivamente de cada una a fojas 22 buelta de dicho libro en que no se incluyeron los noventa bellones de lana que produjeron las ovejas de Ntra Señora de la Candelaria, que entregue a las **priostas para que tejiesen** dos chuses para Yglesa, de la cantidad de un mil quatrocientos treinta y cinco pesos y tres reales y la data de dos mil cincuenta y cinco pesos , dos reales en los precios y necesarios gastos de dicha Yglesia como consta de las cuentas de la vuelta(...)”<sup>25</sup>*

The chuse weavers, sisters of the Gómez Mamani family from the Umirpa ranch in Alto de Camarones, detail how they learned the trade and its stages:

*"My mother taught us how to make the chuse, we do not live in a village, we do not use it in the church because there is none, in our estancia there are 4 or 5 houses. The chuse is a blanket that my mother made for us to protect us from the cold. It is a weaving in 4 stakes, it is not like the weaving of the aguatao with the vichuña. It is different. The spinning is not done in the puska, it is spun differently. It is mismé. Mismir, is to spin the wool on a stick. It is not twisted, as for an aguayo, it is of a single strand. The loom does not have k'ata, which is for the aguayo, frazada, chuspa. It is woven with a wooden needle. It has to be soft because it is thick, that is the difference, the colors are natural, lead, brown, white, black, according to the flame, those colors are combined. My mother used to do it that way. My father made the chuse. My mother made the weaving of the aguayo, purcu, frezada, my father was the man who made the chuse. We use it to cover ourselves from the cold, to keep warm. We still do. The chuse is generally made of llama wool. The alpaca is finer, the chuse is more rustic. In addition, it has to be woven very soft, not like the lliclla that is made with hardness. For this we still have chuse in the Alto Camarones in the estancia of Huaicara. It is not like the frazada or lliclla, it is all different. We have old ones from grandparents' inheritance. As we live in the altiplano it is very cold, they made this fabric that is thicker than a blanket.*

*My grandparents come from Isluga, Alto Parajaya. Today we have llamas, we have always had the Aymara vision, we are cattle breeders, we have lllamos. We practice textile weaving. Parajaya, Vilacoyo. Sheared, vichurado (the wool is removed from the tip), walked, washed."*

## 5.-Conclusions

From the present investigation, we have been able to understand the dimensions of the chuse. First, in terms of its materiality: it is a particular textile, whose invoice has peculiarities that make it different, both in its design, thickness and

<sup>25</sup> Libro de Inventarios y Fábrica de San Agustín de Toledo, s. XIII.



texture, making it distinguishable from other Andean textiles. This is largely due to its functionality: it is not an element that is conceived as a shelter element. Nor is it only decorative. The symbology that characterizes it shows the depth of the Andean cosmovision in relation to its rituality and the expression of its faith, where tradition and, at the same time, Christianity's own contributions are combined. Thus, its function is strengthened in the ceremonial sphere, giving account of the sacred condition that invests it, and at the same time, it is an object appreciated in terms of its role in the temple. Protection, distinction of sacred areas, functionality in relation to the ceremonial, at the service of the patron saints, are some of the manifestations that the chuse represents, becoming, in this way, a true "sacred mantle" in the ritual and spiritual tradition of the Aymara communities.



Figure 5: Household blanket, Imaña family, Parinacota.  
Fte: Altiplano Foundation Archive



Figure 6: Chuses in the sacristy of the temple of Parinactota.  
Fte: Magdalena Pereira



Figura 7: Chuses del templo de Socoroma.  
Fte: Archivo Fundación Altiplano

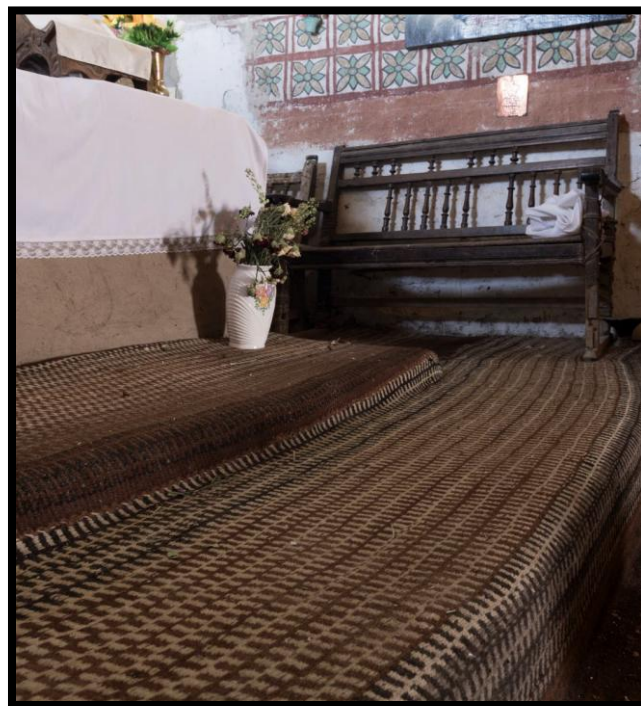


Figure 8: Chuse covering the steps of the presbytery of the temple of Parinacota.  
Fte: Altiplano Foundation Archive



Figure 9: Chuse in sacristy of the temple of Mulliri.

Fte: Magdalena Pereira



Figure 10. Carpet in Mulluri's presbytery

Fte: Altiplano Foundation Archive

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