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TEXTILES OF THE CHIMÚ AND CHANCAY CULTURES OF COASTAL PERU
WOVEN DURING THE LATE INTERMEDIATE PERIOD:
A COMPARISON OF PROCESSES AND TECHNIQUES

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Textiles of the Chimú and Chancay Cultures of Coastal Peru: A Comparison of Processes and Techniques.

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This paper explores spinning, dyeing, and weaving techniques utilized by Chimú and Chancay artisans during the Late Intermediate Period. After explaining the processes of both cultures, as well as introducing the gauze weave structure, unique only to the Chancay, similarities and differences are discussed. These cultures share many similarities in the area in which they lived, climatic conditions, materials in textiles and images depicted through cloth. However, differences do occur and I have found the Chancay artisans to be more investigational in their decorative processes and overall textile production. I argue that though much credit is given to the Inka for the beautiful textiles produced within their empire, it is in fact the craftsmanship of Chimú and Chancay artisans that should be praised. For in actuality, it is the talent and techniques of the Chimú and Chancay people that were used to weave the amazing textiles of the Inka.
GLOSSARY

Backstrap loom. A simple horizontal loom on which warp tension is maintained between a stationary object and the body of the weaver.

Basic weave. A specific system of yarn interlacement not derived from any other system. The basic weaves are usually considered to be plain weave, twill, and satin.

Bast fiber. A woody fiber from a plant such as jute, flax, sisal, or hemp.

Bobbin. A spool around which the weft yarn is wrapped for weaving. Often, the bobbin fits into a large shuttle. Also, a yarn-carrying tool for lacemaking, tapestry, and several other techniques.

Brocade. A three-element construction in which a decorative yarn is added to a plain-weave or other simple ground. Brocades can be loom-controlled or discontinuous.

Carding. The process of separating and partially aligning loose fibers in preparation of spinning.

Combing. A process by which loose fibers are straightened and sorted for length prior to spinning according to the worsted system.

Double weave. A weave that produces two distinct layers of cloth simultaneously, often connected or interpenetrating at some point.

Dyestuff. Any material, natural or synthetic, that can be used for imparting color to an absorptive subject, such as yarn.

Fabric. A construction made from fibers; a textile.

Finger weave. A weave created through the direct intervention of the by manipulation of individual warp yarns with the fingers or a pickup stick.

Gauze weave. A lace weave created by crossing or twisting selected warp yarns before inserting the weft.

Handspindle. The simplest spinning device consisting of a disc-shaped weight centered on a long notched shaft.

Heddle. A wire, strip of metal, or cord with an eye in the center. One (or more) warp yarns are threaded through each heddle to control the separation of the warp and create a shed.

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Lace. A decorative openwork fabric created by twisting fine threads together to form a pattern.

Loom. Any device used for weaving that performs the minimum function of holding the warp yarns taut and in their proper positions.

Mordant. A chemical substance that combines with a dyestuff to enhance absorption of color and to make the color fast.

Natural fiber. Any fiber derived from plant or animal sources. The four most common natural fibers are cotton, linen, wool, and silk.

Netting. A looping and knotting technique worked on a single continuous strand to produce openwork fabric.

Plain weave. A basic weave created consistently interlacing one warp yarn with one weft yarn.

Resist. Any material that is applied to a surface before dyeing or printing to prevent absorption of ink or dye in the area covered.

Roving. 1. An untwisted yarn. 2. A condensed mass of fibers ready for spinning into yarn.

Shed. The space between separated warp yarns through which the weft yarn is passed. A shed is created by raising one or more harnesses or heddles.

Slit tapestry. A form of tapestry in which long slits or openings are created in the fabric by weaving sections of the warp independently.

Spinning. The process of drawing out and twisting loose fibers to form a continuous strand of yarn.

Tapestry. A weft-faced plain-weave fabric in which the weft yarns are discontinuous; usually decorative or expressive.

Textile. A construction made from fibers; often used to refer specifically to woven fabric.

Twining. A two-element construction in which two or more weft yarns are twisted around one another as they interlace with the warp.

Warp. A set of yarns that are parallel to one another and to the selvedge or longer dimension of a woven fabric; the lengthwise element in a woven construction.
Warping. The process of preparing the warp yarns for the loom; measuring, establishing the cross, chaining.

Weave. A particular pattern or order of interlacement for warp and weft yarns.

Weaving. The process by which two sets of threads of any substance are interlaced at right angles to form a continuous web.

Weft. A set of yarns or other material perpendicular to the selvedge of longer dimension of a woven fabric; the crosswise element in a woven construction.

Yarn. A continuous strand of material spun from the drawn-out and twisted fibers.
Preface

One of the oldest crafts and art forms in the history of humankind, weaving has served many purposes since its invention. Satisfying three essential needs in the very early stages of civilization, clothing, shelter, and gathering of food, the utilitarian purposes for which weaving was first developed have evolved into an assortment of techniques in the execution, decoration, and intention of textiles. As all cultures throughout the world adapted themselves to their geographical location, climatic conditions, food sources, and events of daily life, so have they evolved distinct textiles. At first, textiles were made to simply help sustain life and were produced in the form of animal hide clothes and reed baskets, but as societies developed so did their need for comfort and decoration. The first woven textiles constructed by the twining method eventually evolved into the plain weave construction of cloth and led to the development of the loom.

Every culture in the world fashioned textiles in one form or another. Whether twined, felted, knitted, or woven, any and all remaining remnants of these fibers may help form a better understanding of societies that have since ceased to exist. Textiles are especially helpful when trying to comprehend how a culture, that never formed a written language, not only survived, but also lived their lives. Such is the case with the Chimú and Chancay cultures of Peru. All information about these two states and their citizens derives from analysis of archaeological findings, excavation of tombs, and other architectural ruins, and found art objects including ceramics, metallurgy, and textiles.

One can gain a great understanding about various aspects of a people’s daily life and common routines by studying their textiles alone. Examples of clothing show the
traditional style of dress, as well as the materials used, which can indicate the cultivation
of crops or domestication of animals. Images and patterns incorporated into fabric reveal
information about connections with natural surroundings or in a religious context, the
deities worshipped. Skill of execution in textiles, as well as the equipment developed and
utilized to spin and weave fibers help clarify the level of ingenuity within a society. For
all of these reasons and more, it is of great importance that the textiles of past cultures be
examined and researched to the fullest extent. That is why the Chimú and Chancay
cultures are compared here.

A Comparison of Textiles Woven
By the Chimú and Chancay Cultures
of Peru, 1000-1450

The Chimú Culture of the Northern Coast

The accomplishments of Andean culture are all the more remarkable given the
harsh natural environment in which it flourished. That the people of the Andes
survived and thrived in a geographical region marked by extremes says much
about their resourceful ingenuity and flexibility.¹

Peru is made up of three very different climatic regions that include diverse landforms
and varied ecosystems (see Figure 1):

the Andes mountains, surpassed in scale only by the Himalayas; the Amazonian
lowlands; and the arid Pacific coast. The sea off the coast of Peru moves
eastward, sliding under the westward moving continent at a rate of 3 to 12 inches
per year. This causes buckling at the continental margin, forming the rugged
Andes. The cold waters of the Humboldt current sweep northward from the
Antarctic along 2,000 miles of Peruvian coast, which supports one of the richest
food chains in the world. The cold Humboldt does not, however, bring moisture to
the air. As a result, what should be a tropical coast, given its proximity to the

¹ Frederico Kauffmann-Doig, Ancestors of the Incas, The Lost Civilizations of Peru, trans. Eulogio Guzmán
equator, is in fact the driest in the world, with most areas receiving little or no significant rainfall.²

Even with an arid climate, the coast was an appealing place for ancient Peruvians to settle due to its plentiful marine resources. It was not until after agriculture developed more than four thousand years ago, however, that stable cities appeared. The earliest people of Peru experimented with irrigation systems and created man-made canals to carry water throughout the coastal river valleys. With the region's moderate year-round temperatures, the fertile soils were conducive to farming and almost any crop could be grown. By 1,000 B.C.E. agricultural communities filled the coastal valleys, several of which were outstanding civilizations in regard to their complex political structure, city planning, ability to support growing populations, as well as the various art forms that were produced within each society. Among these civilizations were the Paracas (700 B.C.E.-1), Vicús (200 B.C.E.-200), Nazca (1-700), Moche (50-800), Chimú (1100-1450), and Chancay (1200-1450).³

The Chimú culture, centered in the Moche Valley on Peru's north coast, was a highly stratified society. The capital city, Chan Chan, was established on the coast after the Chimú conquered the Sican State. Here much of the valley's population was concentrated. Archeological findings posit that about 250,000 people who lived in crowded, irregularly planned housing in the Chimú capital. As one of the greatest capitals in the Americas, Chan Chan was "an imperial state with pyramids, noble's

² Ibid.
³ Ibid., 38.
estates, 10 *ciudadelas*, and thousands of residences of specialized craftsmen producing textiles and metals for the state."^4 Artisans were known to be both male and female.

The craft production of metal objects and textiles was emphasized because these art forms were used as, "commodities of wealth to confirm the status of the elite and to exchange through the long-distance trade system of the Chimú."^5 Within textile production of the Chimú culture, cotton was considered the most valuable material. This can be explained by the fact that cotton grew extremely well in the arid region of the northern coast, was easily accessible to agricultural societies, and was the first real suitable raw material for textile production. "There is evidence of the cultivation of cotton on the coast as early as c. 2,500 BC, long before the cultivation of food plants such as maize and beans."^6 Besides cotton's deep root system, which allows it to survive on the arid north coast of Peru, *algodón nativo* or the native cotton is naturally resistant to insects.^7 "In antiquity, Peruvians stored cotton seed so that crops could be replenished in the event of a disaster."^8 Not only was cotton valued because it was easily grown, but also because of its soft properties and its ability to keep a person cool in the hot regions of the Peruvian coast.

The purpose of weaving evolved as societies grew and developed in Peru, textiles were used for clothing, housing, and furnishing needs. The first known cotton textiles of the Andean people were twined and looped, which progressed to cotton plain weave fabrics. "Over the millennia the ancient Andeans had relied heavily on textiles for both

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^5 Ibid., 140.
^7 Angela M. H. Schuster, "Colorful Cotton!" *Archaeology* (July/August 1995): 42.
^8 Ibid., 44.
survival and artistic expression. In fact, fiber objects have been preserved archaeologically for nearly ten thousand years, that is, since the first evidence of human occupation in western South America. It can be determined that while humans adapted to their surroundings their use of textiles changed as well. According to Peruvian textile specialist Rebecca Stone-Miller, “In all three regions available fibers – with their natural abilities to warm, cool, protect, contain, and support – allowed people to invent products suited to the environment. Aesthetic explorations grew out of practical solutions to become the varied, magnificent fiber arts of the greater Andean region.”

In addition to the obvious reasons for textile production in all cultures, “it was custom of the people to mummify the dead, who were then buried in such costumes as they had worn during life, with their most precious possessions – weapons, implements, finery – and with vessels of food or drink.” The Chimú people shared this belief in the afterworld and continued the ritual to supply the dead with more clothes, fabrics, and furnishings, which in turn increased the time allocated for weaving. It was a task not limited to fulfilling the daily necessities of sustaining the culture, but also to assuring a pleasant afterlife to the departed. Along with burying the dead surrounded by extra clothes and furnishings, each body was wrapped in yards of material, usually cotton. Scholars refer to these as a “mummy bundle.” These bundles sometimes consisted of several hundred textiles. Woven fabrics were used in burials, religious rituals, and as ceremonial gifts.

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10 Ibid.
Even more importantly, much elaborate textile production was for the garments of the Chimú dignitaries and head of the state. "The quality of the fabric in the clothing Andean people wore, as well as the motifs and the iconography displayed on it, signified both social status and cultural identity." Only the very talented weavers worked to produce clothes for the nobility. Whole garments in matched sets and linked to high status men are the textiles best preserved from the Chimú culture (see Figure 2). These matched sets may include a tunic, loincloth, mantle, and a turban or a hat. Of the Peruvian textiles that still remain today, those found on the coast are the finest preserved due to the climate. The hot desert conditions have allowed these ancient fabrics to remain intact structurally and maintain their colors.

It is possible to recognize the great importance placed upon weaving in Andean cultures, not only for its necessity to sustain the people but also for the amount of society-wide labor assigned to fiber production. When broken down step-by-step, the jobs related to textile production in a pre-industrial culture are quite numerous. With the initial cultivation of cotton, irrigation and preparation of fields needed to be considered before planting. Once the fields were ready, farmers planted, tended, and harvested the cotton plants. The cotton fibers were picked and then the tedious task of seed removal was executed. After this step, the fibers needed to be cleaned and combed in a uniform direction, this process is known as carding. It was then that the cotton was ready to be spun, plied, dyed and woven. The procedure of dyeing the cotton yarn required an entirely different set of activities which included locating, picking, and extracting the dyes from the necessary plants and then wetting, steeping, and drying the skeins of yarn.

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13 Kauffmann-Doig, 108.
14 José Antonio de Lavalle and Rosario de Lavalle de Cárdenas, *Tejidos Milenarios del Peru* (Ausonia, 1999), 442.
While the artisans were busy with all of these tasks, prior to the actual weaving, another group of individuals were responsible for loom construction, the creation of simple combs, needles, spindles and bobbins as well as preparing the looms for weaving, a process known as warping. When a loom is warped, the warp threads are placed through the heddles and tied on to the loom.

Spinning, weaving, and other forms of artistic productions were carried out in the cramped quarters of the Chan Chan's commoners and in associated workshops. Weavers were also included among the retainers who occupied elevated living quarters associated with Chan Chan's great compounds. Chan Chan's weavers and spinners received their raw materials from the state; finished products were sent to the large walled compounds and then redistributed by the government authorities. The large number of textile specialists at Chan Chan suggests that the fabrics produced in the commoners quarters and workshops were destined for both export and local use.\(^\text{15}\)

The belief that the Chimú possibly exported fabric to other cultures of the Late Intermediate Period is supported by their use of camelid yarns. Camelid wool yarns were created from spun hair of the llama, alpaca, and vicuña, South American mammals related to the Asian camel. Chimú weavers used camelid yarn, primarily from alpacas, in their weaving for decorative purposes only. According to José Antonio de Lavalle and Rosario de Lavalle de Cárdenas, “It is believed that these yarns were not locally made because alpacas live in the highlands, suggesting that these yarns were mass-produced in the highlands and exported to the coast at this time.”\(^\text{16}\) Therefore, contact between the different regions of Peru is apparent.

Chimú weavers made use of very simple tools in the process of spinning yarn. Spinning is a necessary step for textile production because cotton fibers, in their natural

\(^{15}\) Stone-Miller, 45.
\(^{16}\) de Lavalle and de Lavalle de Cárdenas, 438.
state, are not long enough or strong enough to weave into fabric. According to fiber arts specialist Shirley E. Held,

Primitive peoples no doubt drew their inspiration for spinning from observing the natural twist of some vegetable fibers. Certain grasses and other cellulosic fibers have a tendency to twist as they dry and are thereby much stronger than in their original state. Increasing skill as the craft of weaving led artisans to seek both longer and more flexible materials. They soon learned to improve upon this natural twist and to introduce it when it was absent.¹⁷

Yarn was first spun with the hands only. The cotton fibers were, "drawn out between the fingers of one hand and rolled between the fingers of the other to insert the twist. After a length of yarn had been spun, it was wound onto a stick or stone."¹⁸ A spinner could also roll the fibers along his or her thigh with the palm of one hand, while controlling the drafting with the other hand (see Figure 3). Eventually people discovered that by adding a weight, called a whorl, to the stick used to hold the spun yarn, the yarn could be made to rotate itself, inserting a twist semi-automatically. As stated in Shirley E. Held’s book *Weaving: A Handbook of the Fiber Arts*, “Spindle whorls dating from the late Paleolithic Age have been found, so we know that early people had learned to spin fibers before about 8000 B.C.E.”¹⁹

Since the initial invention of spinning, the tools of a stick and a spindle whorl evolved into the handspindle, which Held defines as, “the simplest spinning device consisting of a disc-shaped weight centered on a long notched shaft.”²⁰ Peruvians transformed carded cotton fibers to yarn with the handspindle (see Figure 4). This tool may also be referred to as a drop spindle. Yarn can be spun one of two directions: S or Z

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¹⁸ Ibid.  
¹⁹ Ibid.  
²⁰ Ibid., 378.
(see Figure 5). The S is a left-hand twist spun counterclockwise, while the Z is a right-hand twist spun clockwise. To strengthen the yarn, two or more strands are plied together. "In plying two single yarns together, the ply may take the opposite direction from the single twist or it may be made in the same direction. The latter is sometimes referred to as cabling."²¹

In Chimú textiles made predominantly of cotton, the yarns are tightly twisted, usually in the S-direction, but are not plied. Commonly, the warp yarns are paired and the weft yarns are single, although examples with single warp and weft yarns do also occur. The use of paired warp yarns and single weft yarns is found in all types of predominantly cotton Chimú textiles, not only those in plain weave, but also warp-patterned examples. This configuration of yarn is not found in central or south coast textiles and if present guarantees that the textile is Chimú.²²

Paired yarns, instead of plied, also add strength to a finished woven fabric. A strong warp is particularly necessary in weaving because the warp is under greater tension than the weft.

After the yarn was spun and plied it was ready to be woven. However, it was common for the Chimú to dye their yarns with rich, intense colors before weaving. According to art historian Ferdinand Anton, there were almost two hundred colors and shades of colors within the textile arts of Peru between 1200 B.C.E. to 1500, shortly before the end of the Inka Empire.²³ These colors were created with dyestuff, which is, "any material, natural or synthetic, that can be used for imparting color to an absorptive subject, such as yarn."²⁴ Junius B. Bird first analyzed ancient Peruvian textiles in depth, and discovered that the source of the dyestuffs were from animals and vegetables, as well as other pigments.

²¹ Ibid., 269.
²² de Lavalle and de Lavalle de Cárdenas, 436.
²³ Anton, 13.
²⁴ Held, 378.
Though no particular dyestuff is attributed to the Chimú culture, the three main dyes identified with Peruvian textiles in general include:

- indigo, an unknown yellow-brown plant dye, and red, possibly from a species of *relibium*, *achiote* (*Bixa orellana*), or from cochineal. Cochineal has been found in south-coast Nazca textiles (c. 200 BC – AD 200) and later eleventh-century textiles of the north coast. It was widely use during the Inca period.\(^{25}\)

Although cochineal became an important export from the Americas to Europe in the 16\(^{th}\) century, according to Mary Schoeser, a recognized authority on the history of textiles, "it has been found in only three of some 150 Peruvian samples dating up to AD 100 and a handful more for the next 1,400 years."\(^{26}\) Schaefer acknowledges the use of *Relbunium*, a close relative of the European madder-root dye, in Peruvian textiles. This vegetable dyestuff can create red, orange, yellow, and brown hues dependent on the mordant(s) used. A mordant is, "a chemical substance that combines with a dyestuff to enhance absorption of the color and to make the color fast."\(^{27}\)

Once the yarn had been dyed and dried, the warp threads were ready to be placed on to the loom. Chimú weavers used the backstrap loom, which is sometimes referred to as the body-tension loom. This type of loom is the simplest of all loom constructions (see Figure 6).

Ancient in origin, it is still important in South and Central America and in many parts of South-East Asia. At one end the warps are attached to a fixed beam or post and at the other to a breast beam held to the weaver’s body by a belt or strap. The warp is held at an angle of about forty degrees to the ground, and the weaver controls the tension of the threads through the movement of his or her own body. Weaving proceeds away from the weaver towards the fixed warp beam. Cloth woven on a backstrap loom tends to be on a small scale since it is not possible to make a continuous length of cloth by rolling a long warp on the back beam.

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\(^{27}\) Held, 379.
Although simple, the backstrap loom has been used to produce an enormous variety of complex weave structures.\textsuperscript{28} Peruvian, “use of the backstrap loom dates back at least to the Moche,”\textsuperscript{29} which could be as early as the year 50. At first weaving, like handspinning, was done with the fingers only, but, “more advanced backstrap looms use heddle rods and separators to create the shed, as well as a beater stick to pack the weft yarns in to position.”\textsuperscript{30} Despite the fact that the weaving width can only be as long as the arm length of the weaver, it is possible to hand stitch more than one piece together constructing a larger piece or a few individuals can work together, sitting side by side and pass the weft yarn to one another.

Regardless of the simplistic construction of the backstrap loom, it has been utilized throughout history to produce a vast range of complex weave structures. All sources and archeological findings support that pre-Hispanic Peru developed and made use of every weaving technique known to date and that, “by 400 BC all the processes were fully developed.”\textsuperscript{31} The Chimú culture, however, did not make any advancement in the development of textile production but merely employed the weave structures already formulated by earlier peoples. These structures include plain cloth, tapestry, twills, double-weaves, brocades, fine gauzes, patterned nets, and pile fabrics.

A woven structure consists of two sets of threads, the warp and the weft, which are interlaced to form cloth. The warp threads are held parallel to each other and under tension; while the weft is worked over and under them, row by row. Weaving is the most universal construction method . . . \textsuperscript{32}

In her article “How Did Cloth Mean?” textile scholar, Lois Martin writes, “Although pre-Columbian artists excelled in the invention and depiction of complex fiber structures,
simple plainweave intrigued them as well.” The simplest of weave structures is plain weave, also known as tabby. Plain weave is a basic structure “created by consistently interlacing one warp yarn with one weft yarn.” This continual interlocking of threads, over under over under arrangement, creates fabric. When a third yarn is added to plain weave, for decorative purposes producing a three-element construction, it is described as brocade. The brocade structure was used intermittently in Chimú weaving. However, with the plain weave structure and tapestry technique the Chimú people created the majority of their known textiles.

Around 650, “tapestry began to replace embroidery as the dominant technique.” Tapestry is defined as “a weft-face plain-weave fabric in which the weft yarns are discontinuous; usually decorative or expressive.”

In tapestry weaving a single weft yarn seldom, if ever, travels the entire distance from selvedge to selvedge. Rather the weft yarns are built up in pattern areas, with color moving back and forth in its designated segment of the warp. For very intricate designs a single color of weft yarn might cover only one warp yarn, before disappearing on the back of the tapestry. There are two basic methods of accomplishing this buildup of pattern. You can work in regular horizontal rows, changing colors whenever the design requires it, or you can weave a whole pattern area in one color, working vertically, and then go back to fill in adjacent areas. However, an overhanging shape cannot be woven until the background area has been completed . . . A distinguishing feature of tapestries is the presence or absence of slits, vertical openings in the web that are created at the point of juncture between two patterned segments. Because the weft yarns move independently within specified areas vertical lines in the design will always cause slits, unless measures are taken to avoid them.

Chimú weavers at times allowed the slits between different colors to remain, which is known as slit tapestry, yet they also closed the slits with fine even stitches or wove in the

33 Martin, 8.
34 Held, 379.
35 Harris, 274.
36 Held, 381.
37 Ibid., 175.
technique of dovetailing. When sewn shut, the slits were closed with a needle made from bone and thread typically of the same material and weight as the weft. The stitches were overcast and run parallel to the weft, which made them nearly invisible. The practice of dovetailing requires that the weft yarns are wrapped around a common warp yarn, never allowing a slit to occur. The weavers of Chimú apparently exercised all three of these techniques (see Figure 7).

As with all traditional Pre-Hispanic Peruvian weavers, the Chimú people did not customize their clothes while weaving. Instead, “cloth was woven to size, with four uncut selvages, on a loom using a continuous warp.” This can be best visualized in the poncho or tunic, worn by Andean people. This article of clothing consists of a rectangular piece of fabric that has an open slit for the wearer’s head and neck. Slipped over the head, the tunic was open under the arms and therefore needed to be cinched with a belt or sash in cold weather. It was characteristic of Peruvians to use several techniques of decoration on a single garment, which could include the weave structure, embroidery, and/or the addition of shells, tassels, fringe, metal, etc. Also “Chimú textiles often make extensive use of fringe bands.”

Besides the addition of decoration to garments and cloth, Chimú weavers also incorporated specific iconographic details or images to their textiles through the use of tapestry technique and weft faced patterns or by painting the woven cloth. Three distinct images that occur in Chimú weaving are variations of, “an anthropomorphic figure with an elaborate headdress standing on a small platform holding a staff or other implement in

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38 Harris, 274.
40 de Lavalle and de Lavalle de Cárdenas, 440.
each hand, a breaking wave pattern used as an ornamental border that may be a personification of ocean waves, and small stylized animal figures. The inclusion of animals in Chimú iconography is not unusual in ancient Peruvian art because animals, according to Stone-Miller,

Often represent the powerful, desirable, superhuman qualities of the strength, size, ferocity, keen vision, flight, or fertility. Composite human-animals are common. Animal characteristics, like adjectives, represent both the essential qualities of humans – perhaps ferocity or keen-sightedness - and their aspirations to have these qualities.  

The use of an anthropomorphic figure wearing an elaborate headdress is common (see Figures 8 and 9). Although there are a variety of headdress designs, “frequently it is semicircular or crescent-shaped and has rayed elements.” The incorporation of the ocean in Chimú textiles is explained by the coastal location of this culture. The sea was an important deity in Chimú religion. Other ocean-related images include boats, fish, and seabirds such as the pelican.

Art historian Ferdinand Anton described the iconography of Chimú textiles,

In spite of different starting points and developments in the Late Intermediate Period, the overall picture of the coastal cultures remained relatively similar. By and large, we no longer find such high intellectual content in textile design, although many masterpieces may have been produce to glorify the rulers. The motifs used by Chimú artists are the main links with the earlier Mochica mythological concepts. The ancient gods and spirits, Oculate Beings, demons and priests, fertility symbols and sacrificial rites are recorded here and there in textiles, especially on the large painted cotton cloths, which presumably decorated the walls of religious buildings. But the spirit, which inspired earlier ages, the deep religiosity, the striving to incorporate the whole of a culture’s world-picture in textile patterns is no longer pronounced. In the Late Intermediate Period a more secular manner of representation replaced the supernatural in all the coastal styles. The arrangements in rows and multiple repetition of attractively stylized zoomorphic and anthropomorphic creatures obviously suited contemporary tastes;

41 Ibid., 428.
42 Stone-Miller, 22.
43 de Lavalle and de Lavalle de Cárdenas, 430.
even when supernatural beings are depicted they look more human rather than divine.\textsuperscript{44}

The Moche culture, called Mochica by Anton, and the Wari culture, both existed prior to the Chimú culture, and surely influenced the art of the Chimú people. However, if we accept Anton's hypothesis, we must recognize the Chimú's use of Moche inspired iconography outside of a spiritual context, and view their imagery as a product of change due to the secular beliefs of the Chimú.

Many scholars agree that the Moche, the immediate predecessors to the Chimú on Peru's North coast, were, "the most prolific and artistically gifted of all the central coast civilizations."\textsuperscript{45} Living between the years 50-800, Moche artists excelled in pottery and metalworking. Moche art has a strong thread of ritual and political themes that include burial, sacrifice, combat, and ritual dance. The diverse iconography of Moche art also depicts commonplace animals and plants.\textsuperscript{46} Moche and Chimú artists did share some motifs within their work: animals, princes, warriors, and erotic scenes, however, the Chimú never fully reached the level of art that the Moche culture did. This is because for the Chimú, "execution was deficient in artistic subtlety and technical skill."\textsuperscript{47} The Moche state collapsed in 800, due to several natural disasters and three hundred years passed before the beginning of the Chimú culture. These intervening centuries may also explain the loss of artistic integrity. The origin of the Chimú people is still under question. Either they were the descendents of the Moche who had survived all of the natural

\textsuperscript{44} Anton, 141.
\textsuperscript{45} Kauffmann-Doig, 38.
\textsuperscript{46} Sabloff, 107.
\textsuperscript{47} Ferdinand Anton and Fredrick J. Dockstader, Pre-Columbian Art and Later Indian Tribal Arts (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1967), 199.
disasters and continued to inhabit the area, only in smaller numbers, or they were a new people who moved in and established their state on Moche ruins.

The Wari state existed only 250 years, between 650-800, located in the central highlands of Peru. Wari artisans frequently used the tapestry technique in their textiles, which consisted of cotton warp and camelid-fiber weft. The same technique and use of materials is seen in Chimú textiles as well.48 There are similarities between the Wari agricultural god, who wears a rayed headdress and holds corn plants in its hand, and the common Chimú image of the anthropomorphic figure with an elaborate headdress that holds something in each hand. Although 300 years separate these two cultures, the similarities in both weave structures and iconography prove that at least a visual connection exists between Wari and Chimú textiles.

The centuries between the fall of the Tiwanaku and Wari empires and the rise of the Incas feature distinctive regional styles along the desert coast. By the end of the Late Intermediate Period, the Chimú held sway over the North and North-Central Coasts, subsuming the Lambayeque culture (also known as Sicán). On the Central Coast the Chancay and further south the Ica (not to be confused with the Inca) went their own artistic ways... The various peoples of this time period shared certain general political characteristics (an increased emphasis on secular hierarchy and the accumulation of wealth), artistic approaches (additive construction, mass production, and increased standardizations), general formal choices (particularly repetitive patterning related to textile design), and subject matter (often related to the sea and to a crescent-headdressed figure). Yet their individual styles nevertheless vary in important and recognizable ways. It was indeed a time of regionalism.49

The Chancay Culture of the Central Coast

The Chancay culture occupied the land between the Fortaleza River to the north and the Chillón River to the south.50 Between 1200-1450, the Chancay River valley was

48 Sabloff, 132.
home to an independent state that bears its name today. Like the Chimú culture to the north, the Chancay people benefited from abundant marine resources as well as open water that allowed for easy trade routes with distant settlements. According to Kauffmán-Doig, Chancay artisans were known for their, “ceramics, and especially a fine talent for textile weaving.” Even though their artwork varied in style from the Chimú culture, the, “Chancay may have fallen under the influence of the Chimú around 1400,” fifty years before the end of the Late Intermediate Period.

Similar to previous Andean cultures, the Chancay made use of spinning and weaving to produce a variety of utilitarian and protective objects: “simple cloths, mantles, shifts, nets, bags, ropes, girdles, caps and sashes.” Mummy wrappings, or bundles, were also made of woven cloth and comparable to those found in Chimú graves. However, Chancay weavers did create three woven items unique to their civilization: figural sculptures, a variety of samplers, and gauze headdresses. Although headdresses were worn by many different cultures in Peru, Chancay artisans were the first to develop and incorporate the reticular interlacing weave structure into these unique textiles.

Chancay mummy bundles were made of double cloth, which requires the use of two sets of warp and weft of contrasting value. Held defines double weave or cloth as, “a weave that produces two distinct layers of cloth simultaneously, often connected or interpenetrating at some point.” According to Stone-Miller, “Chancay weavers generally used cotton yarns for double cloth, either brown and white or sometimes blue and white. Chancay double cloth is primarily funerary in character; large shrouds and

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51 Kauffmán-Doig, 77.
52 Ibid.
53 de Lavalle and de Lavalle de Cárcenas, 526.
54 Held, 378.
long strips for winding around the bundle... While it was customary to wrap the dead in large pieces of fabric, according to Kauffmann-Doig, "the bodies of older males were wrapped in the most exquisite fabrics, indicating high status. Patterns and images of plants and animals may have conveyed information about the deceased’s lineage, role in society, and occupation." 

Woven figurative sculptures were also included in the burial traditions of the Chancay people. Small, doll-like figures were placed in the multiple woven layers of mummy bundles or were arranged in groups and set on cloth cushions within the tombs. Created entirely of reeds, spindles, yarn, and cloth, according to Stone-Miller these sculptures were, "a unique source of information on the use of Chancay textiles." She adds:

These sculptures, whose exact meaning remains unknown, were created with great care and skill. Their faces are usually woven of tapestry, and their garments are made of small cloths woven specifically for this purpose. Female dolls have complex facial patterns, and wear dresslike garments with horizontal arm and neck openings. They often have openwork cotton headcloths. Males have similar facial patterns and wear loincloths and shirts with vertical arm and neck openings.

In her book Art of the Andes, from Chavin to Inca, Stone-Miller features an illustration (see Figure 10) of a, "fiber sculpture of a mother teaching her daughter the art of weaving... This is one of the very few Andean images of the weaving process." It may, in fact, explain how the Chancay weaving tradition was passed on from one generation to the next. It is possible that these dolls portrayed the occupation of the deceased, were offerings to the gods, attendants of the deceased in the afterlife, or guardians of the soul.

55 Stone-Miller, 46.
56 Kauffmann-Doig, 108.
57 Stone-Miller, 46.
58 Ibid.
59 Stone-Miller, Art of the Andes, 176.
as it traveled to the afterlife. There is no evidence to indicate that these sculptures were ever used as toy dolls.

Archeologists have also unearthed Chancay textiles often referred to as “samplers.” These pieces help to elucidate the learning process for Chancay weavers. Without the convenience of paper and pencil to plan weave structures and placement of images before the production of a textile, Chancay artisans created “samplers” to experiment and practice techniques before the final production of textiles. Stone-Miller believes this to be the reasoning behind the “samplers.” They reveal a, “variety of motifs, weaving techniques, and selection of colors, and by their haphazard arrangement.”

Sampler strips are not incorporated into finished garments, and they are often incomplete. The samplers probably were not created by novice weavers but, rather, were built up over time as individuals practiced new techniques and designs. The completed pattern units then provided the weaver with a visual record for future reference.

Woven gauze head cloths were created and worn by Chancay people (see Figure 11). Although similar in nature to a present day scarf, which can be tied around a person’s head, the exact use of the gauze head cloths, whether for ritual or every day use, is still undetermined. In Ancient Peruvian Textiles, de Lavalle and de Lavalle de Cárdenas, argue that the true use of these textiles has been lost through destructive clandestine excavations. However, “Based on the data recovered regarding the findings in the excavated tombs, we learn that they appear as part of the funerary goods associated with the heads of the deceased. The lack of documentary evidence is partially resolved by examining the cloth dolls of the same origin.” Both male and female figural sculptures wear the woven head cloths, but in different ways. “In females, the lace serves

60 Stone-Miller, Weave for the Sun, 48.
61 Ibid.
62 de Lavalle and de Lavalle de Cárdenas, 558.
as a loose headdress attached at the back; in men, it is rolled, framing the face, with the ends tied under the chin.\textsuperscript{63} The fact that head cloths found in Chancay tombs lack the deterioration of those worn daily supports the De Lavalles' theory that the pieces were created especially for funerary purposes, yet it does not rule out that they were also used as every day attire.

The head cloths worn by women, as well as all utilitarian Chancay garments, were woven purely of cotton yarn. Resembling the Chimú in their use of materials, Chancay artisans only utilized camelid-fiber yarns for decorative purposes. Because these fibers were imported, in contrast to bountiful local cotton crops, camelid-fiber yarns were used sparingly. These fibers appear in Chancay textiles, "only as a colorful patterning element."\textsuperscript{64} de Lavalle and de Lavalle de Cárdenas state:

\begin{quote}
The ancient Chancay people had a millenary knowledge of fibers of vegetables and animal origin. These fibers were the raw materials used in the preparation of several types of textiles that they adapted for their individual and communal needs. Cotton of various colors, camelid fibers, as well as other vegetable elements such as maguey, efficiently served the ingenuity and industry of native textile work.\textsuperscript{65}
\end{quote}

Given that it was customary for Chancay weavers to decorate their textiles, but the supply of camelid fibers was limited, the culture developed different techniques to embellish their fabrics. The decorative practices of Chancay weavers differ from those of the Chimú. Chancay artisans appear to have experimented more with various media and means of execution in their textile decoration. As mentioned above, the double cloth used for mummy bundles employed warp and weft threads of contrasting value, which can be viewed as a decorative element. Chancay artisans often painted plain weave

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{64} Stone-Miller, 46.
\textsuperscript{65} de Lavalle and de Lavalle de Cárdenas, 506.
cotton cloth. Painted designs were applied with two different techniques: freehand and carved stamps (see Figure 12). The use of a stamp represents an early form of printmaking, and allowed the same image to be repeated again and again on cloth. The paints used as decoration, “are usually limited to shades of brown and yellow, but bright orange and yellow mineral pigments are found” as well.

Featherwork was another source of decoration that did not involve the use of camelid-fiber yarns. Once a cotton cloth garment was woven, Chancay weavers covered the plain fabric by sewing on rows of feathers. This type of decoration allowed for solid areas of color, as well as patterns and designs. Stone-Miller considers these feathered textiles to, “represent perhaps the most prestigious medium in the Andes.”

Some of the feathers applied to Late Intermediate Period textiles come from sea birds, although most are from parrots native to the eastern slopes of the Andes and Amazon basin. Feathered tunics reportedly have been found on the North, South, and Central coasts and may have been produced in all these regions.

However, many questions still remain unanswered in relationship to the production, distribution, and ownership of feather-decorated garments.

The equipment used to spin yarn in the Chancay culture also continues to be unclear. Though the hand spindle may have been employed, due to its popularity in other areas of Peru, there is little documentation on the matter. It is clear, however, that Chancay weavers were biased towards S-spun yarn. Textile specialist Rosa Fung Pineda explains,

Examination of ethno-historic documentary evidence sheds light on the customs and beliefs in the Andean area of the magic effects of lloque, an S-spun strand.

66 Stone-Miller, 46.
67 Stone-Miller, Art of the Andes, 173.
68 Stone-Miller, Weave for the Sun, 46.
69 Ibid.
Its virtues extend to the garments specially included S-spinning in their manufacture. The lloque both possesses and counteracts evil influences.\textsuperscript{70}

When used to produce the woven head cloths of the Chancay, the S-spun cotton yarn was slightly over spun to give the finished piece an elastic quality. Since these head cloths played an important role in the burial traditions of the Chancay, an easy association between their use and their believed magical powers can be formed. According to Pineda, the Chancay people may have used these S-spun woven head cloths to accompany, protect, and differentiate, “the dead in their existence in the domain or prodigious world of their ancestors and of the heroes who founded the culture.”\textsuperscript{71}

In contrast to Chimú artisans, who dyed yarn prior to weaving, Chancay weavers often produced textiles with yarns of natural color. After the fabric, whether intended for a head cloth, garment, or other use, was woven, the weaver would dye the natural fiber using a resist technique known as tie-dyeing. Held defines resist as, “any material that is applied to a surface before dyeing or printing to prevent absorption of ink or dye in the area covered.”\textsuperscript{72} Held also explains how the tie-dye method works. First the material is, “tied to create a resist, and then the entire piece of fabric (or a portion) is dip-dyed. To create the pattern areas, sections of the fabric are gathered, folded, pleated, or bunched together and then tied tightly with rubber bands.”\textsuperscript{73} Before the invention of rubber bands, many cultures throughout the world, including the Chancay, utilized pieces of twine to tie off the areas that were to be dyed. Wherever tied, the fabric does not absorb the dye, which creates positive and negative areas of color (see Figure 13).

\textsuperscript{70} de Lavalle and de Lavalle de Cárdenas, 560.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid, 562.
\textsuperscript{72} Held, 380.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid, 299.
To produce all of their textiles, the Chancay employed the same basic tools as other Peruvian cultures of the Late Intermediate Period and earlier: the back strap loom, needles, heddles, spindles and knitting needles. Though these weaving implements were made of wood and simple in construction, they still produced exceptional and complicated cloths. The elaborate textiles produced with these rudimentary tools reveal much about the ingenuity and craftsmanship of Chancay weavers.

Chancay weavers contributed greatly to the world of textiles through the development of an original weave structure during the Late Intermediate Period. The Chancay invented the reticular interlacing weave structure, which was utilized to create head cloths for funerary ritual and possibly daily attire. Stone-Miller states that this openwork, similar in nature to lace or netting, is the ultimate result of the ancient coastal fishing tradition of netmaking. According to de Lavalle and de Lavalle de Cárdenas, the Chancay people did not lag behind the Europeans of their time in the knowledge of textile techniques, and even managed to develop procedures unknown in the Old World. For this reason, it has been said that “All the techniques—twill weave, the different type of gauze weaving, the double-, triple-, or quadruple-faced cloths, the embroidery, the grooved weavings, etc.—had their equivalent in the Old World, except for one that is unique to Peru and specifically to the Chancay culture: that of reticular interlacing or knotted weaving.”

Reticular interlacing refers to the weave structure known as gauze. Held defines gauze weave as, “a lace weave created by crossing or twisting selected warp yarns before inserting the weft.” Lace weave is considered, “an openwork weave usually characterized by a distortion from the parallel of warp and weft yarns.” Due to the

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75 de Lavalle and de Lavalle de Cárdenas, 518. Though the word choice of “gauze” and “reticular interlacing” sound contradicting, these terms refer to the same technique which was created specifically by the Chancay culture during the Late Intermediate Period.
76 Held, 378.
77 Ibid., 379.
construction of both weave structures and their visual similarity, Chancay textiles are often referred to as gauze, lace, or reticular interlacing interchangeably (see Figures 14 and 15). These terms mean that the final woven product has open areas, or holes, throughout the surface and is created entirely by warp manipulation; not by tying knots between warp and weft, which is known as netting or filet.

Chancay weavers elaborated on the structure of netting by creating this technique that allowed them to weave the openwork directly on the loom, which required less time and effort. Also, instead of the monotonous square or diamond-shaped openings that remain in netting, through the reticular interlacing weave structure the Chancay artisans were able to incorporate distinct designs and patterns. However, these integrated images were only recognizable while the head cloth was still on the loom. Once the piece was complete and removed from the loom, the spring of the over spun yarn, caused the head cloth to curl up and distort the woven designs. Due to the weave structure and the fine white cotton yarn used to make Chancay head coverings, these textiles had, "an elastic quality, as well as lightness."

Of the incorporated iconography de Lavalle and de Lavalle de Cárdenas write:

Undoubtedly, the images were not just simple decorative elements devoid of meaning. In the case of the rolled headdresses, the designs remained hidden. It would have been the same to wear a simple headdress. Nevertheless, they were decorated with selected images that only the users knew were there — we assume — to invoke the protective forces of the deities depicted.

Although the head cloths of the Chancay people were limited to the color white, the overall palette of their textiles was extensive. Utilizing the natural colors of cotton: brown, tan, and white, Chancay artisans also dyed their fabrics yellow, red, black and

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78 de Lavalle and de Lavalle de Cárdenas, 560.
79 Ibid., 562.
blue. In *Art of the Andes*, Stone-Miller writes, "the Chancay palette features a softly harmonious combination of golds, browns, scarlet, white, and even lavender and olive green." Whether through natural occurrence or by the dye process, de Lavalle and de Lavalle de Cárdenas believe the brilliance of color help to distinguish Chancay textiles from others produced by Andean cultures.

According to Stone-Miller, the use of color within Chancay textiles is not limited to a "rigid system of color alternation... although color is frequently employed to create diagonals in large textiles." In general, repeated motifs are not associated with a standard color scheme and appear in a variety of hues, as the weaver chose to create each unique piece. Circumstances surrounding color selection may be availability, purpose of the textile, or the artisan's own personal preference. Certain images do appear repeatedly throughout Chancay textiles, like those of the Chimú. These distinct designs, patterns, and pictures were not limited to textiles and may be seen in all other art forms of the Chancay nation including ceramics and metallurgy.

According to Anton,

The main motif of this art, which has an underlying unity in spite of an extreme variety in details and colouring that demonstrates the weavers' tireless delight in experimentation, are human figures with raised hands, usually arranged in rows, and monkey-like creatures, fishes, snakes and frogs. The fierce spotted feline has become a harmless prettified cat. The favorite motif in the Late Intermediate Period seems to have been the bird pattern in the so-called Interlocking style.

The interlocking style, as mentioned by Anton, was,

first developed on the Central Coast during the Early Intermediate (Period)... it consists of geometrically stylized animal figures interlocking so skillfully that if you look at the fabric upside down the same pattern appears in another colour.

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80 Stone-Miller, 177.
81 de Lavalle and de Lavalle de Cárdenas, 554.
83 Anton, 142.
Although this device, which had obviously originated in earlier cultures, is mainly used with bird motifs, there are also many examples of interlocking snakes, tadpoles, fish and zoomorphic creatures.\(^4\)

Due to the coastal location of the Chancay culture, marine imagery played an important role in their textiles as well. In the same way that the Chimú utilized boats, fish and seabirds, the Chancay also incorporated abstractions of these images into their woven pieces, marine birds being the most popular. According to Stone-Miller,

The design principles of Chancay textiles are fairly simple and apply to all weaving techniques. Motifs are depicted according to standard conventions (for instance, human beings are shown frontally, while birds are typically depicted in profile) and are small in scale. Motifs are repeated in horizontal and vertical alignment throughout the decorative field.\(^5\)

In comparison to the iconographic details of Chimú textiles, no new images within Chancay weaving are documented. This may be attributed to the similarity between the two cultures' location, as well as the dominance of a more secular representation of all images throughout the coastal styles during the Late Intermediate Period.

Besides influences from the Chimú on the northern coast, and possibly the Ica, who inhabited the southern coast during the Late Intermediate Period, there is no substantial evidence that the Chancay relied on any other culture for their textile ideas. Prior to the rise of the Chancay state, the Tiwanaku culture existed in the south highlands of the Andes. This nation was centered around the capital city, located near Lake Titicaca in western Bolivia. At the same time, the Wari culture inhabited the south-central highlands of the Andes. The relationship between these two nations is still debated, though it is likely that they were hostile to one another. According to Stone-Miller, "later contacts and influences, and a pervasive difference in style characterize our

\(^4\) Ibid.

\(^5\) Stone-Miller, 46.
sense of these two interconnected empires. Ongoing archaeology and scholarly debate over how to interpret findings further complicates matters. In textiles, Tiwanaku and Wari weavers shared imagery (see Figures 16 and 17), yet the Wari abstracted all iconographic details to the point of illegibility. For this reason, no real influence upon Chancay textiles has been determined because of the lack of visual similarities.

The Chancay artisans developed a weave structure and overall style for their textiles that were distinctly their own, and any real similarities can only be seen with the Chimú and Ica. All three cultures wove simultaneously during the Late Intermediate Period on the Peruvian coast and shared comparable ideas concerning artistic approaches and subject matter. However, in this comparison of Chimú and Chancay textiles, woven between 1000-1450, similarities and differences do appear.

These cultures shared the basic utilitarian purposes of weaving: clothing, food collection, and funerary ritual. Because both states were located on the Peruvian coast, they also utilized the same materials in their textiles. Climatic conditions and the use of irrigation systems allowed the Chimú and the Chancay to cultivate cotton. This important crop served as the primary material source for both cultures fabrics and was weather appropriate for the hot temperatures of the coastal desert. Life by the ocean also created easy trade routes that provided the Chimú and the Chancay with camellid fibers from the alpaca, llama, and vicuña, which were domesticated and thrived in higher elevations.

Artisans of both cultures also employed the same equipment to spin yarn and weave textiles, during the Late Intermediate Period. Chimú and Chancay artisans all made use of the hand spindle to convert cotton fibers into miles of yarn, which was then

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tied on to looms of similar construction. The utilization of the ancient and rudimentary back strap loom, allowed weavers of both cultures to create their elaborate fabrics. This type of loom was popular prior to the Late Intermediate Period throughout areas of Peru and South America and still remains an important part of textile production there today.\(^7\)

Chimú weaving and decorative techniques mirror those of the Chancay, and employed all known weave structures up until this time. However, it is here that a difference can be seen between the two nations.

While the Chimú, though masterful weavers, made no advancements in textile production and the creation of weave structures; Chancay artisans invented the gauze structure, a unique and exquisite manipulation of warp threads that creates a lace-like fabric. Although this weave construction is similar to netting, it still proves that Chancay artisans were experimental and discovered different techniques to improve and enhance their textiles, especially because no weave structure of its kind existed in Europe before the Spanish arrived in South America. Though it is possible that Chimú weavers also experimented with the creation of new weave structures, none exist today. Given that so many Chimú textiles have survived and been located, if they had developed a new weave structure some documentation of its discovery would be available today.

Chimú and Chancay weavers also dyed their fabrics to produce brilliant colors. However, they applied color to the yarn differently. Each culture employed a process of color application that best suited the weave structure utilized in their textiles. While Chimú weavers dyed their yarn before the execution of weaving took place, Chancay artisans utilized yarns of natural colors and then created areas of color employing a technique of resist dying known as tie-dyeing. However both techniques of dying were

\(^7\) Harris, 16.
appropriate to the type of weave structure used in each culture. Because the Chimú artisans wove primarily in tapestry, an assortment of colorful yarn was needed to create the different images and patterns in their textiles. Each color, within the tapestry, needed to be on hand at the time of production, which allowed for easier execution of the planned design. The Chancay artisans, on the other hand, developed several different techniques in order to apply color to their textiles. Sometimes they painted plain weave cotton cloth, which acted as a painter's canvas. When Chancay weavers used the gauze structure, the intended design of the fabric was created by manipulation of the threads. Therefore, the tie-dyeing technique was used as a decorative element only to enhance the overall look of the fabric. These assorted dying techniques created visual difference in the distinct textiles of both cultures. Chimú and Chancay weavers used human hair, feathers, and occasionally metal plates to decorate the surfaces of their fabrics as well.

Colors, iconographic details, and patterns also appear in similar ways in the textiles of these two nations. Geographical location influenced and guided the images incorporated in the fabrics produced there. A range of ocean-related pictures appear most frequently in the art both cultures: abstracted ocean waves, boats, fish and seabirds. Though an anthropomorphic figure with an elaborate headdress appears most dominant in Chimú textiles, the ocean is still seen. In spite of the decline of a central religion and the emergence of a more secular imagery during the Late Intermediate Period, artisans of each culture included pictures that may be perceived as deities in their fabrics.

By about 1500 the Inka controlled a span of 3,400 miles, the largest territory in the world. Like all societies in western Peru before 1500, the Chimú and the Chancay nations saw their demise with the invasion of the Inka. Neither the Chimú nor the
Chancay nation survived as an independent state after the rise of the Inka Empire. The Chimú culture was the last to be absorbed into the empire. While the Inka employed artisans of the numerous cultures that they conquered, according to Stone-Miller they, “developed one of the most elegant, subtle, and recognizable art styles in history.” It is believed that as the Inka overtook smaller states, they employed or enslaved the various craftspeople of different media to produce their art. The various techniques of the Chimú and Chancay weavers were not forgotten, but merely adapted to suit the needs of new government leaders, who set the standards for art created within the Inkan Empire.

According to Stone-Miller,

> The Incas may have been consummate architects, but their artistic imprint extended into other media as well, notably textiles, metalwork, and ceramics. The same general approach can be traced – technical excellence, standardization, geometric organicism – although different media had noticeably different roles to play and imperial styles to project. Textiles were the most highly valued (they were the first gifts offered to the Spanish, not goldwork) as well as the most colorful and abstract...  

The weaving expertise of Chimú and Chancay artisans, who suddenly found themselves in a position to weave for the Inka helps to explain the continuation of textile excellence and splendor throughout the reign of this empire. It also accounts for the similarities that can be seen between Inka textiles and those of their predecessors. Though Chimú and Chancay artisans wove for the Inka, they still utilized the various known decorative techniques, weave structures, and skills acquired in their individual cultures.

The Inka Empire has been extensively researched and documented. Books and articles on all aspects of Inka life and government are in publication today. Throughout museums, displays, and exhibits help inform the public about the greatest nation of the

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88 Ibid., 180.
89 Ibid., 210.
Americas that survived roughly three hundred years before the Spanish conquered much of South America. Yet limited information is made available about the nations that thrived before the rise of the Inka, and whose integration within the Inka Empire assisted in the wealth of their art forms.

Current scholarship pertaining to the Chimú and Chancay cultures is lacking in comparison to that of the Inka. If these artisans made such great contributions to textile production before the Inka, why are they overlooked? Not only should this discrepancy between Chimú, Chancay, and the Inka scholarship be questioned, but also the lack of research about the Chancay when compared to the Chimú should be addressed as well.

The number of scholars on Peruvian textiles is growing. Junius B. Bird, one of the first to explore and research textiles of Andean cultures in the 1940s, helped incite interest in the topic, and from there the numbers have grown steadily to include the textile specialists cited in this paper, Ferdinand Anton, Raoul D’Harcourt, José de Lavalle and Rosario de Lavalle de Cárdenas, Frederico Kauffmann-Doig, Anne Pollard Rowe, and Rebecca Stone-Miller. While the number of textile experts increases, the fabrics of many nations go unresearched. Even the scholarship of the Chancay, who invented a new weave structure adding to those already developed throughout the world, falls short. Possible explanations for this gap could be a lack of funding for archeological research, limited interest in the individual cultures less known than the Inka, or a shortage of labor and skill to perform the investigation needed to further develop an understanding of these nations.

Whatever the case may be, the fact that there is still much to know about Chimú and Chancay artisans, as well as their individual techniques of spinning, dyeing, and
weaving remains. Through the examination and continual investigation of these cultures, much can be learned about the way they lived, interacted, and perceived the world around them. Due to the fact that neither of these cultures ever developed a written language, their ideas and stories are held within the art they created. Attention must be given to the Chimú and Chancay cultures of Peru. Research and analysis of textiles produced in both cultures will help extract the necessary information needed to piece their stories together.
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Figure 3. Creation of roving, drafting, and spinning. Held, page 266.
Figure 4. Handspindle and demonstration of handspindle. Held, page 268.
Figure 5. S and Z spin of yarn. Plying. Held, page 269.
Figure 6. Backstrap loom. Held, page 212.
Figure 7. Tapestry techniques. Held, page 176.
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Figure 11. Chancay woman’s head cloth. Late Intermediate Period. Stone-Miller, page 177.
Figure 12. Chancay, central coast. Cotton painted in brown and sepia. Checkerboard with monkeys and other zoomorphic figures. Measurements: 104 x 73 cm. Private Collection. de Lavalle and de Lavalle de Cárdenas, page 529.
Figure 15. Chancay, central coast, cotton. Lace gauze with design of two different-sized triangles with circles of two sizes. Measurements: 89 x 74 cm. Mueso Amano Collection, Lima. de Lavalle and de Lavalle de Cárdenas, page 563.
Figure 16. Tapestry fragments with variations on the diagonal motif. South Coast, Tiwanaku-Wari style, c. 600-900. Anton, page 125.
Figure 17. Slit tapestry decorated in various weaving techniques. Tiwanaku-Wari style, c. 700-1000. Anton, page 31.