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Interweaving Ethical Practices

Shared Guardianship of Andean Textiles at MUDEC between Intangible Heritage and Intellectual Property

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Abstract

This study unfolds at the intersection of museum and heritage studies, engaging with ethics and intellectual property in a circular process that begins with the museum, moves to source communities, and returns. Over the last fifty years, museums holding so-called ethnographic collections have attempted to distance themselves from their colonial legacy, often with uneven results. This doctoral research originates in this framework and is part of MUDEC's continuous self-reflection efforts. The management of Indigenous traditional cultural expressions raises ethical and practical concerns, and post-museums, which possess and utilise intellectual property, must recognise their moral agency while addressing enduring power disparities with source communities.
Focusing on a select group of ethnographic textiles from the Cusco region, now in MUDEC's collection, I followed their biographies, tracing their tournaments of value across different epistemological regimes, each reshaping their agency. A multi-sited ethnographic strategy was used to conduct fieldwork, involving government agencies, collectors, merchants, museum staff, and weavers in particular. In a form of reverse ethnography, I traced the villages of origin and established direct dialogue with source communities. Short-term research in various communities supplemented Pitumarca as the primary focus. This allowed multiple conversations and a nuanced understanding of the ontological entanglements shaping contemporary Andean textiles.

The making of these textiles, understood through the concept of *crianza mutua*, relies on intergenerational care, weaving humans, materials, and environments together, thought with emotion, body with mind. Such a perspective resists the division between tangible and intangible heritage and complicates the application of conventional intellectual property frameworks that rely on Western notions of authorship and originality. However, these textiles are no longer part of exclusive Indigenous knowledge systems, but rather function in a variety of overlapping realms: as national symbols, commodities affected by market and tourism, repositories of traditional knowledge, and institutionalised museum heritage. Both their meanings and their creators' goals have changed as a result of their

circulation throughout these global networks. Using MUDEC's object images, I initiated conversations to explore community perspectives on their textiles and their museum representation.

Weavers expressed pride in seeing their textiles abroad, with distance mitigating concerns over cultural appropriation and competition. Museums were seen as spaces to enhance Indigenous cultural visibility and attract potential visitors. While they did not perceive this condition as cultural loss, expectations were primarily moral rather than financial, emphasising recognition of collective attribution and requiring protection from misrepresentation or exploitation. Recognising the complexity and symbolic significance of these textiles, while avoiding overly decolonial approaches that risk essentialising Andean identities, this research suggests extending moral rights beyond conventional copyright limits. I believe that museums can develop more comprehensive moral-rights frameworks that are in line with Indigenous beliefs and customs by aiming at cultural equity and radical transparency in their practices. As a result, I propose an ethical protocol based on shared guardianship and on the idea that collections are not merely repositories but catalysts for the emergence of new paradigms of knowledge.

Table of Contents

Aknowledgments 2

Abstract 5

Table of Contents 7

List of Figures 11

Author's note 14

INTRODUCTION 17

Theoretical Framework 17

Approach 22

Methodology 24

PART ONE: A theoretical framework 40

CHAPTER ONE. Rethinking the Other: Museum in Transition From Colonial Legacies to Post-Modern Accountability 40

1.1 Collecting Others and Defining Selves 41

1.2 The Colonial Museum and Museum-Based Anthropology 44

1.3 The Post-Colonial Museum and Museum Anthropology 49

1.4 Decolonial Museums and Advocacy Anthropology 54

1.5 The Post-Museum of World Cultures and Its Ethics 60

CHAPTER TWO. Cultural Heritage and Cultural Rights: Authentic tangible and Intangible forms of Memory and Identity 67

2.1 Heritage at the Intersection Between Memory and Identity 68

2.1.1 Social memory and identity 68

2.1.2 Memory and identity through heritage 70

2.2 The Ideal of an Authentic Tradition 74

2.2.1 Authenticity in the Heritage Discourse 75

2.3 Evolving Heritage: From Tangible to Intangible 80

2.4 Intangible Heritage and Cultural Rights 86

2.4.1 Cultural Diversity Through Heritage 88

2.4.2 Cultural and Property Rights 89

CHAPTER THREE. Museums as places of heritage: Centring the Intangible and Reconfiguring Power Relations 98

3.1 Intangible Cultural Heritage and Museums 102

3.1.1 Collecting and Documenting ICH within the Museum 103

3.2 The Role of Communities in ICH Safeguard 105

3.2.1 Communities' Involvement in Museums ICH Management 108

3.3 Whose Collections? Cultural Property in Museums 111

3.4 Whose Knowledge? ICH and IP Rights in Practice.................................... 117

3.4.1 IP Rights in Museums 119

PART TWO: A case study 125

CHAPTER FOUR. The Museum of World Cultures of Milan: Origins and Politics between Self-reflection and Participation 125

4.1 The Origins of non-European Civic Collections in Milan............................127

4.2 A New Perspective on the non-European Collections: From the Centre for Extra European Cultures to the MUDEC 137

4.3 The Museum of Cultures of Milan: From the Opening until Now..............145

4.3.1 Exhibiting Milan through the Other..145

4.4 Participatory processes: Milano Città Mondo..154

4.5 Self-reflecting Practice and Ethical Debates 164

CHAPTER FIVE. Woven Identities: The Life of Andean Textiles from Ancient Threads to Market Demands 169

5.1 Adean Textiles as Ethnographic Fragments 169

5.2 Andean Textiles as Subjects..172

5.3 Historical Paths for Andean Textiles 174

5.3.1 Ancient Central Andes 175

5.3.2 Late Ica Empire and the Viceroyalty 177
5.3.3 The Republican Period 180
5.3.4 Collecting Andean Biographies 183
5.4 Traditional Textiles in Modern Worlds 186
5.4.1 Revitalisation: Concerns over Modernity and Tourism 186
5.4.2 Tourism In Cusco: Marketing Authentic Andean Culture 193
5.4.3 The Condition of Weavers Within the Tourism Economy 199
5.5 Contemporary Life for Andean Textiles 204
5.5.1 Textiles to sell and textiles to use 211
CHAPTER SIX. Threads of Equity: Museums' Ethical Stewardship of Andean Textile Heritages 219
6.1 Andean Textiles as Peruvian Heritage 221
6.1.1 Andean Textiles as Tangible Heritage 222
6.1.2 Andean Textiles as Intangible Heritage 226
6.2 Intertwining Heritage Safeguard and Economic Support 228
6.2.1 Andean textile between safeguard and protection 230
6.2.2 Limits and possibilities of Peruvian IP legal framework 235
6.3 Protecting Tri-Dimensional Textiles Through Visual Iconography 239
6.3.1 Different Perceptions over Cultural Appropriation 242
6.3.2 Andean epistemologies and Western cultural rights in museums 248
6.4 What can MUDEC do to preserve TCEs? A theoretical and fieldwork informed analysis 255
6.4.1 Managing knowledge within MUDEC's cataloguing system 259
6.4.2 An ethics proposal for managing TCEs within MUDEC's practice 263
CONCLUSION 268
Looking Ahead 278
BIBLIOGRAPHY 282

Appendix One 325
Apppendix Two 345
Appendix Three 390

List of Figures

Figure 1: Participating in the weaving activities in Munay Ticlla, Pitumarca..........16
Figure 2: Working on one of the Andean textiles that underwent conservation interventions 26
Figure 3: A view from Chillca, 4400 mslm. 32
Figure 4: Weavers at the association Munay Ticlla discussing about one of MUDEC textiles, Pitumarca 34
Figure 5: Attempting to learn weaving with Ruth, Calca 35
Figure 6: Participating in the dyeing process in the association Munay Ticlla, Pitumarca 36
Figure 7: Participatin in the dyeing process in the association Munay Ticlla, Pitumarca 37
Figure 8: A montera almost identical to the one hold by MUDEC, Raqcchi 38
Figure 9: Hall 3 (now changed) of the current semi-permanent exhibition Global Milan (2021 ongoing). The two video installations depicted were realised with different participative methods. ©Museo delle Culture © Comune di Milano all rights reserved 64
Figure 10: Examining the materiality of one of the considered Andean textiles, MUDEC 66
Figure 11: Local weavers performing their "authentic traditional" knowledge for judges during a fair, Pitumarca 80
Figure 12: Ruth weaving a small double-sided band, Calca 86
Figure 13: PAM 01435 displayed in the exhibition Libertad!, MUDEC (10/2024 - /02/2025) ©Museo delle Culture © Comune di Milano all rights reserved 101
Figure 14: PAM 01427 displayed in the exhibition Qhapac ñan (02/2021-06/2021), MUDEC @ Mudec. Photo by Francesca Ariatta 101
Figure 15: The image of an archaeological textiles from the MUDEC's collection was used to communicate the IX International Conference on Andean Textile held at the museum in 2022 122
Figure 16: Chinese and Japanese objects were part of this Bronze display at the Castello Sforzesco opening (Frova, 1096, tav. 37) 131

Figure 17: Catalog Terrecorre del Perù Precolombiano (Aimi & Laurencich Milenni, 1991) 136
Figure 18: Chipperfield's projects according to his proposal for the Spazio Ansaldo international contest @Mudec Archive 138
Figure 19: The first semi-permanent Objects of Encounter (2015-2021). @Mudec. Photo by Fallani........147
Figure 20: First hall of the second semi-permanent exhibition Global Milan (2021 ongoing). @Mudec. Photu by Aleph 149
Figure 21: Third hall of the semi-permanent exhibition Global Milan (2021 ongoing). CamerAnebbia and MCM's installation on the left. @Mudec. Photo by Aleph........ 151
Figure 22: Adrian Paci's installation "Il vostro cielo fu mare, il vostro mare fu cielo" in the Mudec's agora (11/2024 - 09/2025). @Mudec. Photo by Sara Rizzo........153
Figure 23: One of the BAMS sessions, MUDEC. @Mudec. Photo by Susanna Yu Bai 159
Figure 24: A weaver using a backstrap loom. From Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala (1615). Primer nueva crónica y buen gobierno. 176
Figure 25: Josefina Olivera's shop in Cusco central square 184
Figure 26: A day of dyeing in Munay Ticlla, Pitumarca 202
Figure 27: Antonia, independent weaver, showing me her work........204
Figure 28: Streets in Cahuaytire. 207
Figure 29: The main square of Pitumarca, after the Fiestas Patrias celebration..209
Figure 30: A competition for guinea pigs dressed up with traditional clothes during a regional fair in Pitumarca........209
Figure 31: Pitumarca people celebrating the arrival of two tractors donated to the village........ 210
Figure 32: Selling mantas and polleras in the Sunday market, Pitumarca........ 214
Figure 33: Checacupe using textile symbols to promote tourism in the village ... 233
Figure 34: An unkuña from Accha Alta. In the circle the symbol "sirena" 241
Figure 35: A model wearing an Andean chumpi refashioned by Olga Zaferson, on the right. @ Photo courtesy of Olga Zaferson........246
Figure 36: During an interview with Antonia, Pitumarca........251

Figure 37: Textile symbols appearing in Checacupe's streets and Pitumarca's trash bins 253
Figure 38: A children's set up for play using mantas and unkuñas, Lares 274
Figure 39: An actual shared lunch at Munay Ticlla, Pitumarca 274

Author’s note

It is important to consider that, being this thesis a contribution to an ethical debate, this note is necessary. This research was carried out within the institutional framework of the University of Milano-Bicocca and therefore referred to the ethical guidelines provided by the University. For this reason, the project and the methods for its implementation were submitted to the University Ethics Committee and the privacy guarantor.

At the same time, we must consider that it was the host institution's collections that provided the basis for the field research itself. The Mudec is currently developing internal protocols to serve as a practical corollary to the moral code currently under approval. In light of the museum's commitment to ethical principles, I believe that the MUDEC should consider working on an ethical protocol for managing research conducted within the institution and on its collections. The elaboration of an ethical protocol regarding research methods is fundamental once the museum moves beyond the idea of research carried out solely on collections or in a historical and archival sense. Opening up to the participation of other agents and stakeholders, contemporary ethical research carried out for the museum should value of social inclusion and transparency (see e.g. Bounia, 2014).

In conducting my ethnographic fieldwork, all individuals involved were informed in advance about the aim of this study and my affiliations; also, photography was always overt. In the case of interviews, when possible, I intended to submit all the appropriate information forms to participants for their informed consent to participate in the research, for approval to acquire images and recordings, as well as authorisation to process their data. Despite my best efforts to utilise straightforward language and to translate them, the forms in question are still rather complex, detailed and extensive in nature. It is important to note that the weavers from the source communities with whom I interacted, a group without which the realisation of this research would not have been possible, were in many cases unable to read or write, even in Spanish. Furthermore, filling in this type of form inevitably creates an initial sense of distance, and sometimes mistrust, even among people familiar with bureaucracy. For this reason, when conducting

interviews with indigenous Quechua speakers who were illiterate or unfamiliar with this type of activity, I decided to avoid the official forms and instead start recording and explicitly asking if they agreed to participate in the research, to be recorded and to share their data. In general, in this thesis, I chose not to include the surnames of my interlocutors who gave their consent in this way, unless they were public figures. Due to my limited Quechua skills, I commissioned professional mediators and anthropologists who are native Quechua speakers to transcribe some of the recordings.

During fieldwork in Peru, working with source communities, I was aware that I could not offer a relationship of equal reciprocity. Thus, during the meetings and visits I made, I always brought food or drinks with me to offer, trying to adapt them to what I learned over time to be their tastes. In certain instances, I proposed serving as an intermediary between the weavers and retailers in Lima with whom I had built a connection. The objectives of this arrangement would be to facilitate the transport of raw materials, initiate new collaborations, conduct product photography and facilitate their incorporation into retail outlets. However, it is unfortunate that in none of these cases did a productive agreement come about, confirming a mismatch between the interests of the market and what most of these weavers produced for the market itself. On occasion, I consented to participate in activities specifically designed for tourists, such as weaving workshops that were offered at a fee. These activities provided me with the opportunity to interact with weavers and arrange additional meetings. It was not common for me to purchase goods from the individuals with whom I was working, but it was sometimes the only way to compensate them for their time. Only once I was asked to pay for an interview, and I did so.

In light of the international scope of this research and its potential relevance in both Italy and Peru, it has been decided that it would be written in English[1]. In the future, I will work towards ensuring that the publications produced based on this research are in Italian, Spanish and English and open access, considering the

[1] As English is not my mother tongue, I used online tools to improve my syntax and grammar.

importance of the movement for free access to research and knowledge in Latin America (Salatino, 2020).

Figure 1: Participating in the weaving activities in Munay Ticlla, Pitumarca

INTRODUCTION

This research project is part of the doctoral programme in Intangible Heritage in Socio-Cultural Innovation and originated from the interest of the Museum of Cultures of Milan (MUDEC) to focus on the ethical treatment of ethnographic collections in relation to the intellectual property rights of Indigenous people through internationally participatory methodologies and aiming at developing an ethical *vademecum* for the management of both tangible and intangible heritage. Considering the inevitable diversity of Indigenous perspective over their cultural expressions, creative processes and their expectations over their musealized heritage, it was necessary narrow the field. Starting from the collection preserved by the institution I was collaborating with, the Mudec, I selected a lot of ethnographic textiles from the Andean region, Cusco in particular. Starting however from the wider picture, to look into these many complex and entangled topics, this research theoretical framework lies at the intersection between museum studies and heritage studies, touching on topics such as museum ethics and intellectual property.

Theoretical Framework

From the moment museums opened to the public, they were invested with both the political and epistemological authority to preserve their collections for the sake of the community, and to establish a narrative that came to define the museum's cognitive boundaries. In the context of the transformation undergone by museums with ethnographic collections, whose historical evolution has defined their political role, the pivotal contribution of anthropology is evident in the redefining of their functions and responsibilities. When post-colonial theory challenged Western historiography, the museum was recognised as an emblematic bearer of this narrative and a gradual process of transformation exposed the Western structures inherent in its established knowledge management methodologies, thus engendering more inclusive practices. These new approaches have been seeking to provide a meaningful platform to those individuals and groups that have historically been marginalised within the museum's narrative discourse. In this gradual and complex transition from a repository of objects to a space for dialogue,

decolonial criticism has reignited criticism on museums. While these debates pushed some institutions to address urgent social issues, others, while acknowledging the intellectual and moral necessity of decolonial criticism, have questioned their ability to align with the idea of dismantling Western systems of knowledge from within institutions based on these systems. Moreover, the monolithic opposition between the West and the non-West runs a twofold risk of essentialising both: museums, the product of specific national historical processes, are reduced to a single colonial image, while non-Western epistemologies are crystalized. This research is part of a growing trend in world culture museums, that has greatly influenced the work carried out at the MUDEC, where there has been a move towards self-reflective practices and a relational perspective on global histories to address exchange, migration and imperialism. Shifting away from the focus on objects to look at people, this new post-modern approach includes a multivocal, dialogical approach and a commitment to rethink the museum's political and social role by including non-Western views and engaging in ethical discourses. It is noteworthy that while the museum's function research and education remain, the post-museum role is understood to be one in which social well-being, equity and fairness are recognised as integral to its mission. Thus, museum's work is regarded as a potential catalyst for social inclusion and human rights promotion. Once moral concerns became a priority in museological discourse, museum ethics emerged as a distinct and significant field of discussion. The fruitful creation of codes of ethics as self-regulating sets of professional standards and norms is the practical reflection of this debate and the expected result of this doctoral research. Bearing in mind that contemporary museums continue to hold the deep traces of their colonial origins and often struggle to dismantle their knowledge infrastructures, the ethical reflections on which this work is based remain inscribed within Western frameworks of thought and are to be applied within those frameworks. Rather that claiming a radically decolonial delink, I try and adopt a holistic perspective on the lot of Andean textiles I look into. Despite recognising an inevitable incompleteness, I attempt to integrate an assessment of their significance as expressions of Western processes of acquisition and reconfiguration, and also a recognition of the agency of the people who originally created these objects and those groups that still operate within Andean

textile worlds and weave for purposes entirely different from those that led to the inclusion of the considered lot in today's post-museum. By centring people, museums would move beyond an oppositional perception between the material and immaterial of cultural expressions, opening the door to intangible heritage.

The intertwining of memory and identity is closely linked to the creation of heritage, as both justify its existence and find materialisation in it. Just as tangible heritage materialises memory and identity, social memory practices and multilayered identity constructions are interdependent intangible processes that are essential for intangible heritage to exist, which ultimately is what gives significance to tangible cultural expressions. Considering the inextricable relationship between the tangible and intangible elements that contribute to heritage-making, heritage itself can be perceived as an active process. The progressive decentring of the Eurocentric material conception of heritage was a composite process in which the heritage legitimizing concept of authenticity was central. While acknowledging heritage's authentic value simultaneously serves to consolidate and legitimise memory and identity, authenticity is not static but rather a continuous negotiation within specific cultural contexts, thereby reflecting the values and ideologies of the individuals who interpret and engage with it. Furthermore, discussions about authenticity for the first acknowledged the diversity of cultural expressions and promoting community involvement. Overcoming the Western monolithic idea of authenticity, as much as contrasting nationalisms and globalisations, was pivotal in promoting a shift towards Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). Post-colonial approaches have also challenged the established narratives and Western conceptions of heritage, emphasising subaltern perspectives that do not necessarily contribute to nation-building. This has led to a re-evaluation of the limited Western approach to heritage, aiming for a more inclusive perspective. This change and its paradoxes can be observed through the progressive inclusion of intangible forms of heritage within the previously exclusively material institutionalised discourse. For the scope of this research within the case of Andean textile practices, it is particularly relevant to note that materiality and immateriality are deeply intertwined and cannot be separated, with the former (among other things) being an essential medium for transmitting

traditional knowledge from generation to generation. Following the recognition of heritage as a fundamental factor in shaping collective identity and, consequently, cultural diversity, human rights became a central theme in the discourse, particularly with regard to creators and bearers of traditional knowledge, who sought to exercise control over their own heritage. This is particularly relevant given the historical tendency to dismiss, appropriate or redefine their cultural expressions. In the contemporary globalised world where heritage has become a marker of cultural value, the struggle to control it has evolved into a conflict over ownership and property rights. The loss of agency that culture bearers experience thus can result in market exclusion, exploitation and misrepresentation, as well as the commodification of cultural minorities. Andean textiles are a great example of this phenomenon: while their aesthetic have become a visual identity marker for Peruvian image abroad, local indigenous campesinos are commonly discriminated for using their traditional clothing. Moreover, when considering the economic implications of the rights held by tradition-bearers over the expressions and practices that constitute their own ICH, the intersection with the protection of intellectual property becomes clear. This nexus has been extensively discussed by both UNESCO and WIPO, which have not yet reached a practical solution. However, this complex debate brought to light the significant divergence between Eurocentric knowledge systems and non-Western cultural expression, shedding light on a multifaceted issue encompassing legal and historical injustices that inevitably involve museums.

Following the process of deconstruction of the modernist authoritarian and nationalistic museum, identity formation and memory construction became pressing contemporary concerns for the post-museum. In the context of growing global concern regarding the impact of globalisation on the preservation of "authentic" traditions, museums have emerged as a paradigmatic institution for their preservation. Clearly connected to the broader debates surrounding cultural heritage, museums' role and practices frequently aim at aligning with international discourses on cultural diversity, indigenous rights, and sustainable development. This significant conceptual shift found resonance with, and was further entrenched by, the prevailing post-colonial discourses that were beginning to take shape

during that period. The integration of intangible heritage into the museum's scope represents a significant opportunity for these institutions to broaden their work by engaging with living memories and evolving identities. Consequently, this integration led to a re-evaluation of preservation and exhibition methodologies and a shift away from stationary traditional Western museological ideas of revered masterpiece to be preserved toward a more anthropological understanding of heritage as a living, symbolic space shaped and maintained by communities. While highlighting some complexities, the most significant shift marked by the introduction of Intangible Cultura Heritage (ICH) in museums was the fostering of a more inclusive approach to community participation motivated by UNESCO's recognition of the responsibility of practitioners in the safeguarding of their cultural expressions. However, institutional rigidity and traditional conventions frequently made interaction with source communities difficult, preventing museum to foster social practices informed by a different epistemic perspective. At the same time, museums entrusted with conserving, exhibiting, and interpreting cultural material from contexts other than their own started to be compelled to consider the issues regarding the legal ownership over traditional cultural expressions source communities completely lost control over. In this regard, and in the context of this research, I advocate for the principle of "cultural equity" as an ethical framework stemmed from the debate on restitutions. While accepting Indigenous people have moral rights over their material culture, even if museums may have legal ownership of artifacts, this approach also recognise that diverse cultural groups can engage with and value material culture differently than museum professionals with Western training. Taking a step forward, in the last few decades, the debate over cultural ownership has evolved encompassing ICH resulting in a substantial overlap of discussions concerning intellectual property rights and cultural ownership that pose difficult ethical and legal issues around control, and access. As museums are both Intellectual Property (IP) users in terms of the collections they research, preserve and communicate and holders for the knowledge they elaborate, produce, display and publish, they found themselves balancing the interest of the creator and the benefit of the public. Considering that museums' duty to ensure the viability of ICH cannot be provided if not by recognising source communities' cultural rights over their own heritage, debates

over IP rights are relevant in the redefinition of museum missions toward the application of "cultural equity". For the aim set for this research, I suggest MUDEC decentre from the Western conception over authorship and creativity that are at the base of IP regulations in order to extend moral rights to its collections, even when they are legally not copyright protected. Moral rights have indeed demonstrated respond to most Indigenous claims, from proper recognition to restriction of disrespectful usage and illicit appropriation, to the right to disclosure or withdrawal their heritage to and from the public.

Approach

Within this theoretical framework which is extensively delineated and referenced in the first three chapters of this dissertation, in consideration of the objectives of this project, and despite not having a specialisation on anthropology, I tried to look at the objects of my research "anthropologically".

As a complex institution shaped by historical and political contingencies, the MUDEC has developed to be a complex and dynamic field (and object) of investigation where multilayered intentions and diverse expectations have pushed and pulled to give the museum its everchanging form. With the aim of contributing to this ongoing adjustment that characterise this quite young institution, I attempt at observing at MUDEC's work, considering it is unequivocally shaped by the interaction between the agencies of people and collections, staff and communities, the political class and citizens (see Herle, 2023 [2016]; Gosden & Larson, 2007). Within the directions imparted by the museum's mission itself, this research "take inspiration from the civic ethnographic collections and in partnership with [...] communities, [...] intend to create a place where to dialogue on contemporary themes" which, in this specific case, are ethic related and regard source communities' cultural rights. The Cusco region's Andean textiles make for a particularly interesting case study because of their relevance not just as utilitarian artefacts but because of the recognised richness in symbolic stratification, before and after entering different ontological regimes (see Holdbraad & Petersen, 2017). In our Western anthropological perception, objects can be compared to language as they are not merely reflective of reality but actively

shape it as they are continually created and redefined through human action and symbolic meaning (Pearce, 1995: 14), within Andean conception on the other hand, textiles are embedded in an intergenerational process of reciprocal care that binds humans, materials, and environments (*crianza mutua*, in Espejo Ayca, 2022) through intertwining thought and feeling, body and mind (*sentipensar* in de Sousa Santos, 2018; Espejo Ayca, 2022). Observing the ways in which Andean textiles originated within an Andean cosmopraxis (Arnold, 2019) and entered Western cosmovision to be completely re-signified, allows for a more extensive and multilayered comprehension of the historical ontological entanglements that Andean textiles in general have undergone and still undergo. This attempt at understanding this cultural expression was fundamental to better interact with contemporary source communities, understand their needs, respect their agency and then assume the essential role of mediator to "translate" (Latour, 2005) those meanings for them to be heard and applied within the museum space. In this sense, the primary focus of this study was not the conservative or technical aspects of the materials and the techniques employed to create the considered Andean textiles, but rather the manner in which they have been perceived, with particular attention to the influence of their agency on these perceptions and in the construction of networks between humans and artefacts (ibid.). Considered as living being within Andean weaving knowledge (Arnold & Espejo Ayca, 2013), applying a biography (Kopytoff, 1986) analysis to the results particularly straightforward as much as effective to look into the "tournaments of value" (Appadurai, 1986) they underwent when they were attributed market value, and the "singularization" (ibid.) occasioned by entering a museum collection thus being invested with the idea of authenticity that forms inalienable heritage. The moment these objects are separated from their original context, they became "ethnographic fragments" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1991) along with the arbitrary selected information that accompany them. These textiles thus not only reflect their original meaning but also embody past interactions and transmit cultural images of "the other" that are inevitably filtered exclusively through Western epistemologies (Kreps, 2015). Frequently reduced to aesthetic or cultural pieces, they also convey imposed stereotype, influencing our "idea of Latin America" (Mignolo, 2005). While most of them have become "dormant" (Kummels, 2018)

once they entered MUDEC collections, as they have never been exhibited, the considered textiles became “objects of knowledge” (da Costa Oliveira & Scholz, 2025), instrumental for institutional practices on many levels (Dudley, 2010). Entering the museum realm as high impact “visual signs” (Classen & Howes, 2006) and being themselves objects with a great visual component even in their original context (see e.g. Franquemont & Franquemont, 2004), Andean textiles have trigger preoccupations over the possibility of illicit appropriation of their aesthetic and symbolic components. As previously stated, this research originated from these issues and, considering that Andean weavers have created and recreated their practice to face and adapt to different cultural and economic conditions, their agency must be acknowledged in this matter (see Morphy & Perkins, 2006).

Methodology

Informed by this approach, I thus applied an ethnographic (multi-sited) methodology (see Marcus, 1995; Falzon, 2016). The ethnographic work was conducted in two distinct “fields” and with two different “communities”. Firstly, the professional museum community that makes the metabolism of the MUDEC "complex body" (Deliss, 2020), whose work was instrumental in the collection, cataloguing and conservation of the considered textiles. Secondly, the source communities and individuals who contributed to the first part of the biography of these objects, before they were considered to be of museum value, singularized, and thus became part of the MUDEC collections. Aware of the critical issues that have been raised about the term "source community" (see e.g. Clette-Gakuma & Jamar, 2024), and aware of the intrinsic limitations of this term[2], in the context of this research it will be used to refer to the contemporary communities of weavers from which the objects currently preserved at MUDEC originate (see Peers & Brown, 2003: 2).

As previously mentioned, this research was developed in collaboration with MUDEC. Throughout the three-year period of this doctoral programme, a nine-month research period was undertaken at the museum, in particular during the

[2] Some proposed alternatives are “originating communities” or “descendant communities”.

initial year of research. While my presence at the museum was a prerequisite for undertaking the research, it also constituted a pivotal moment in comprehending the internal dynamics in which the project was situated and investigate not only expectations regarding my work but also perceptions of the relative roles of museums and communities. During my time at MUDEC, I was able to carry out bibliographic research in their specialist library, investigate the collection, and, after selecting the lot that would form my case study, examine it closely. Firstly, archival research was conducted on the collection's inventory registers, as well as the files and dossiers of the pieces of interest. As these donations were recent and had a relatively short ownership history, it was not necessary to carry out an in-depth provenance search. However, the documentation accompanying these objects upon their accession to the collections was analysed, a process which proved to be of value in the second phase of field research, which was conducted in Peru. The approach adopted towards the Andean textiles, which were identified as the subject of investigation, also involved handling them. The extraction of the textiles from their drawers was facilitated by the museum staff, in particular Rossella Di Marco, the deposit supervisor who helped throughout this process. A thorough observation of the textiles revealed that, despite the preventive measures implemented by the museum for every material entering its collections, they had been subject to damage from pests. Consequently, a portion of the artefacts were subjected to conservation treatment, a process entailing their isolation with camphor, with the objective of eradicating the threat entirely. Subsequently, any residue of the infestation was removed using tweezers.

Figure 2: Working on one of the Andean textiles that underwent conservation interventions

The most significant contribution to the success of this research during my time at MUDEC was my collaboration within the museum's activities. My involvement in the proceedings of the IX Jornadas de Textiles Tradicionales Andinos conference in 2022, for which I worked as scientific secretary, marked the initial phase of my engagement with the curatorial team. This role afforded me the opportunity to start and active and participate observation of the internal dynamics for the museum's overall activities. Notably, during the course of my doctoral research, the museum have embarked on a series of activities pertinent to the broader themes I have been exploring, fostered by a certain degree of introspective reflection and giving rise to stimulating discourse on the management of collections and the establishment of meaningful connections with communities. Confirming that this research is part of a broader interest shared by the curatorial team, MUDEC decided to participate in or directly promote a number of joint actions that would bring together institutions and specialists. In 2023, I participated directly in the inaugural meeting of what would subsequently become the Mipam network. During this meeting, numerous representatives from 20 Italian museums that preserve collections from non-European contexts came together for the first time. This meeting highlighted a series of shared management issues due to a lack of both a support network between museums and legislative gaps. Furthermore, the establishment of the ICOM Working Group on Provenance,

has been particularly noteworthy to observe during my research period at MUDEC as the curatorial staff of MUDEC participated in its establishment since the beginning. Commencing in October 2024, I was presented with the opportunity to engage in a series of meetings that took place predominantly online and focused, amongst other things, on the drafting of a manifesto for the group. In an inclusive and participatory manner, all members who expressed a desire to contribute to the meetings were engaged in the process of defining the values that underpin the group and its objectives. This engagement included the identification of a series of keywords that accurately represented the group's mission. Taking part in these meetings served to underscore the intricacies inherent in such deliberative processes when executed in a fully participatory manner. In this perspective, it is my view that the ethical protocol proposal that I am formulating as a result of my doctoral research, which will subsequently be submitted to the curatorial staff and management of MUDEC, must necessarily be discussed in its entirety. This was the case for the approval of the ethical manifesto on which the staff and management of MUDEC have been working for the past year and a half, in which, unfortunately, I have only participated marginally. During the final stages of my research work at Mudec, I also conducted a number of short, targeted interviews with staff from the conservation office and the Networks Office, which is responsible for the management of community engagement. These interviews were instrumental in complementing my overview of the activities undertaken within the institution by providing a more comprehensive understanding of the expectations of its staff, and the intricacies of the intentions and future vision for the museum, its collections, and the relationship with its stakeholders. With the understanding that these observations are made in the period subsequent to November 2024, during which the interviews were conducted, it is imperative to acknowledge a considerable shift in my position towards the museum. After my recruitment on a permanent basis by the Municipality of Milan (Libraries and Culture sectors) and more specifically within the MUDEC staff, I took a leave of absence in order to complete this academic programme. Consequently, this transition has inevitably had an impact on my relationship with the personnel and with the institution as a whole, especially considering that I was assigned the role, within the Networks Office, to

support in resuming the collaborative work with the community that has been neglected over the past three years.

In the second year of my doctoral research programme, I conducted fieldwork in Peru. The primary objective of the study was to investigate the realm of textile production within the Andean context, with a specific focus on the Cuzco region. A central aim was to forge productive connections with a diverse range of interlocutors that would revolve around Andean textiles: from merchants, to collectors, to museum professional and ministry staff and most importantly the source communities associated with the collection under scrutiny. The objective of this investigation on the field was multilayered: first, to solicit the perspectives and testimonies of the source communities with regard to the presence of their textiles in the museum; secondly, to ascertain their requests and expectations so that these could be integrated into future collection management practices. Finally, to understand more widely the conditions in which Andean textiles are produced, used or sold, and circulate currently. In this phase of research, which developed specifically from the case study I selected through my analysis of the MUDEC collections, I drew upon the methodology of multi-sited ethnography, as defined by Marcus: "*Multi-sited research is designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some form of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites that in fact defines the argument of the ethnography*" (Marcus, 1995: 105).

It is important to mention that the six-month period abroad expected for by the doctoral programme in which this project is included was made possible thanks to the support of the Pontifical Catholic University of Lima, which welcomed me as a visiting student and provided me with the support and documentation necessary to obtain a student visa that allowed me to complete the planned months of research. Within the university, I received considerable support from Professor Marco Curatola, who was able to provide me with both advice and guidance, directing me to relevant specialists and professors, both within and outside the institution. These individuals consistently demonstrated a willingness to engage in constructive dialogue regarding my research themes. The aforementioned

contacts, in conjunction with my experiences on campus during the initial two months of my stay in Peru, constituted a "concatenation of legs" (Faubion, 2009: 163), namely a series of actions that extend beyond the realm of research that are "*no less integral a part of the project itself, passed at the library or in conversation with students and colleagues, legs in which the primary but still altogether integral activity is not that of encounter but instead that of the evaluation, articulation, thinking, and rethinking of what one has already encountered and what one is likely to encounter on the next go*". Moreover, the contacts I had established during the period of working as scientific secretary for the IX Jornadas Internacionales de Textiles Andinos in 2022 proved to be of significant value at this research stage, particularly in the context of professional networking. This was the case, for example, with Yuki Seo, an expert in ancient weaving techniques, who provided enthusiastic support and facilitated introductions to numerous contacts in Lima and outside. During my stay in Lima, I concentrated on a specific dimension of the Andean textile world, namely its collection practices, market systems, and institutional patrimonialisation. My work situated within the broader landscape of museums, private collectors, trade fairs and the Ministries of Tourism and Culture. In this phase, I conducted semi-structured interviews with key interlocutors, visited both public museums and private collections, and engaged in conversations with curators and specialists in Andean textile traditions. In addition to this, the research brought me to visit high-end craft shops and participate in the major events dedicated to artisan networking, which offered me the opportunity to engage in conversation also with those weavers whose work was institutionally recognised.

The following four months were then spent in the southern Andean region, from where the textiles in the Mudec collection originated and where I already spent a few days in 2023 to do pre-fieldwork activities such as building contacts. From mid-May to mid-September 2024, I was based in the city of Cusco itself, in the pursuit of following the objects as part of my multi-sited ethnography. This approach was designed to track "the circulation through different contexts of a manifestly material object of study (at least as initially conceived), such as commodities, gifts, money works of art, and intellectual property" (Marcus, 1995:

106-107). In this sense, the method was found to be the most effective for exploring my case study on multiple levels. Considered an effective approach to the "ethnographic study of processes in the capitalist world system" (ibid.), it allowed me to gain insight into the various contexts in which textiles moved as a cultural expression and as commodity: from the weavers affiliated with a centre to the independent ones, from the mediator to the trader, to those responsible for the Centro de Textiles Tradicionales del Cusco (CTTC) and important collectors and museum curators. My involvement wasn't even in all these contexts but still caused the sensation of a "condition of shifting personal positions" (Marcus 1995: 113-114) which is typical in multi-sited ethnography. Concurrently, it facilitated my engagement with the biographies of the artefacts in the Mudec, enabling me to explore "the shifting status of objects as commodities, gifts, and resources in their circulation through diverse contexts" (ibid.). This investigation allowed me to examine their transition through various spheres of meaning and value, ultimately contributing to their incorporation into the collection under examination. Moreover, through multi-sited ethnographic research, it was possible to follow the MUDEC pieces geographically in a more concrete way, in a sort of (simplified) "reverse fieldwork", namely a retrospective examination of the "relations among participants at each moment of acquisition and map the cartography of object circulation" (Bruchac, 2018: 183-188). It is evident that the identification of the provenience of the majority of the textiles in the Mudec collection was facilitated by continuous field research and, most significantly, by the insights of numerous interlocutors who offered their expertise in determining the precise origin of the fabrics. This was made possible despite the initial paucity and/or imprecision of the information initially available. The subsequent phase of the research involved site visits to the villages.

During my time in Cusco, my research progressed gradually as I uncovered more information about local textile worlds. In Cusco itself, I had the opportunity to speak with local expert Nathalie Santisteban who showed me a different side to the city historically using clothing as a form of expression. I was fortunate enough to witness the vibrant array of festivities concentrated in June, accompanied by the traditional *passacalle* processions. These celebrations begin with the day dedicated

to Pachamama, continue with Corpus Christi, and culminated in the renowned Inti Raymi festival. During these events, schools and dance companies perform in the city centre wearing *trajes tradicionales*, often rented from the numerous shops dedicated to this business, which can satisfy any requirement; children from local schools flood the streets wearing their uniform-red ponchos that have become emblematic of Cusco; large crowds gather on the streets to watch the performances, even buying plastic chairs for the occasion from street vendors. In all these situations, traditional textiles, in the form of clothing, plays a pivotal role in the manifestation of collective identity and social memory. While the tourist, be them national or international, is invariably captivated, Rosie Barnes and Walter Rodriguez, who manage the *Arte Antropología* shop in the city centre, argue that the traditional handmade attire that distinctly identified the village of origin had become a thing of the past. I engaged in frequent, regular, and sustained discourse with them about textiles and their work with artisans. This took place on at least a weekly basis throughout the period of my stay and resulted in a very pleasant and productive personal relationship. This was also the case with Pablo, who is the manager of his mother Josefina Olivera's famous shop in the Plaza de Armas de Cusco. On a weekly basis, he awaited an update on the progress of my research and provided information regarding the incredible collection that his mother had assembled. In relation to the exploration of rural centres beyond the confines of the city, these journeys were of variable durations and always undertaken by utilising the local informal means of transportation. The options available to me, namely buses, *combis* or *compartidos*, provided opportunities to travel with locals (and their chickens): from schoolkids to workers, from women continuously immersed in the practice of spinning alpaca wool and heading to the nearest town to sell their products, to exhibitors returning from local fairs. It is evident that, having to rely solely on this form of transportation, it significantly impacted how my work was organised and how it developed with the different communities, depending on how I reached them and thus impacting the duration of my stays. These variations were primarily influenced by the length of the journeys and the conditions and frequency of transportation, especially in cases where interviews had to be conducted in particularly isolated villages, where there was no telephone line, viability was limited, and the climate was extremely cold. In consideration of

the fact that I always travelled alone, issues of personal safety were a factor that, on occasion, led me to decide not to proceed along certain directions.

Figure 3: A view from Chillca, 4400 mslm.

In the majority of my interactions with associations and independent weavers, I proceeded independently, lacking an introduction by a real gatekeeper that would present me personally. Instead, I established contacts through networks, word of mouth, by sharing contacts, or by approaching their shops or stalls at trade fairs. The initial approach, particularly in the context of a fair, was predominantly characterised by a dynamic interaction wherein interlocutors sought to sell their products to me. It was evident that a significant number of individuals experienced disappointment and declined to engage in conversation with me upon realising that I was not there to purchase from them. Those who, after I explained my research, consented to engage in conversation or invited me to participate in their weekly association meetings became my interlocutors for this research. Thereafter, I made a conscious effort to be present at their meetings on a regular basis to make them accustomed to my presence and develop sufficient trust in me to engage in conversation and let me participate in their activities. It was often observed that a

particularly effective method of encouraging dialogue was to present to the weavers the photographic documentation of the fabrics on display at the Mudec. This methodology cannot strictly be associated to experiences of visual repatriation (see e.g. Edwards, 2003; Peers & Brown, 2003) in terms of the restitution of ethnographic archival images to the communities depicted (or their descendants), nor to digital repatriation in the sense of using more advanced techniques such as augmented reality or virtual reality to reproduce museum objects (see e.g. Brown, 2007). More accurately, the pictures functioned as a trigger for conversation in a sort of "photo-elicitation" that didn't aim at extracting information but rather at evoking "a different kind of information" (Harper, 2002: 13) and "inviting, co-creating and making knowledge" (Pink, 2013: 92-94). The images evoked a sufficient level of curiosity to facilitate a dialogue that extended beyond the identification of the provenience of the fabrics and the iconography represented. This enabled the conduction of semi-structured interviews, which were tailored to each interlocutor from some guiding questions I formulated to keep in mind the main aim of these conversations: understanding source communities' feelings and expectations regarding their rights over their textiles held in Italy. Essentially, (the images of) the textiles from the MUDEC collections functioned "as 'contact zones' - as sources of knowledge and as catalysts for new relationships -" (Peers & Brown, 2003: 4) between the museum community and the source community, while I mediated between the two.

Figure 4: Weavers at the association Munay Ticlla discussing about one of MUDEC textiles, Pitumarca

In general, and particularly in the early stages of my ethnographic fieldwork with source communities, a degree of mistrust was evident. This was primarily attributable to two factors: firstly, my condition of being an outsider from the community, and most importantly my status as a foreigner. This sensation was subsequently corroborated by Yaneth, my tenant in Pitumarca, and confirmed by what happened to Gabriel, a student who was conducting research in the same area, who was assaulted for being foreign while participating in the Qoyllur Rit'i celebrations as part of a dancing company. Furthermore, while Rosie Barnes had previously cautioned me regarding weavers' reticence to share information, I was informed by more than one person of a deep-rooted gender-based mistrust, so much that it is said that seeing a woman first thing in the morning when leaving the house brings bad luck. On multiple occasions, I also encountered a linguistic barrier, particularly when engaging with older women who could understand Spanish but only express themselves in Quechua. Thus, during my research and despite my attempts at learning Quechua, I frequently found myself posing questions in Spanish and receiving responses in Quechua that I would need translation for. This process was facilitated by the assistance of other younger weavers or acquaintances present, who either assisted on the spot or helped later

on, listening to the recordings. In general, the assertions put forward by Franquemont and Franquemont (2004: 209) were found to be accurate by my experience on the field: "*Because the principles of fiber arts are based on visual, haptic, and kinetic activity more than on language, weavers do not express these ideas in words often, and it has been difficult for those outside the system to appreciate this truly impressive intellectual undertaking*". Although this research was not carried out in the field according to the terms of so-called "sensory ethnography" as theorised by Pink (2015), "sensory learning" was still involved. The occasions on which I had the opportunity to attempt to learn the manual skills required to spin and twist yarn with the *pushka*, clean alpaca wool, dye and weave clearly impacted my relationship with Andean textiles, allowing me to perceive their materiality in a different way. This change became apparent when, upon returning to Mudec and conducting a subsequent photoshoot on the considered lot, I spontaneously handled the fabrics without the cotton gloves that had been routinely employed prior to my departure.

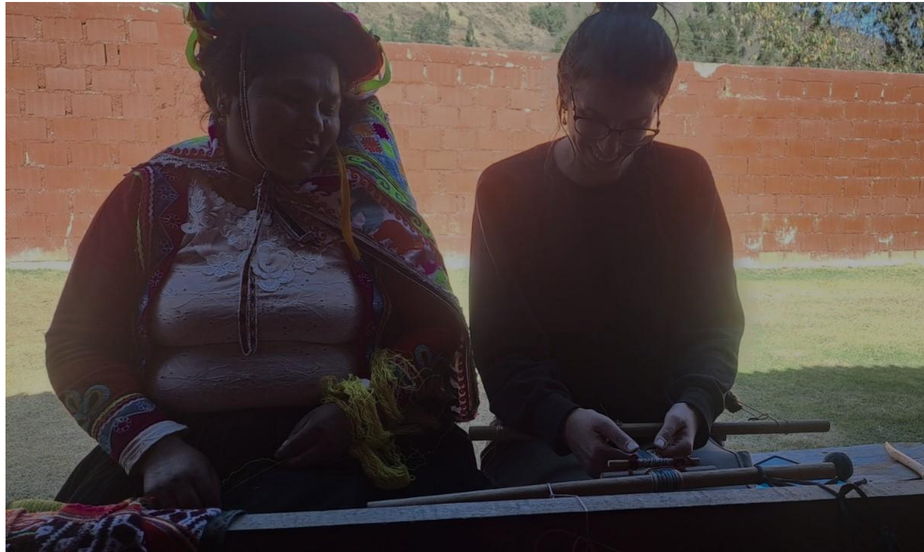

Figure 5: Attempting to learn weaving with Ruth, Calca

Among the communities I visited during my fieldwork, the one in which I spent the most time was Pitumarca. This choice was made on the basis of the clearer archive information available at MUDEC regarding the Pitumarca textiles in the collection, which enabled the identification of the object's origin through the analysis of purchase tags. During the days spent in Pitumarca, a minimum of three days per week, I became acquainted with the village. I visited markets and fairs, observed

festivities and celebrations and participated in the weekly meeting of some of the more than twenty textile associations in the area, talking about their work, preparing pachamanca, watching them weave, letting girls braid my hairs and most importantly supporting them in their work the best I could, when they allowed me. The Munay Ticlla association, affiliated with the Centro de Textiles Tradicionales Del Cusco, was selected for a more consistent observation due to its organisational structure, which ensured the meeting attendance of a diverse demographic, ranging from children to the elderly, at its weekly Saturday meetings.

Figure 6: Participating in the dyeing process in the association Munay Ticlla, Pitumarca

Figure 7: Participatin in the dyeing process in the association Munay Ticlla, Pitumarca

Indeed, the weavers were frequently unable to attend due to other commitments, including the management of their *chakra* (fields), the drying of the *chuno*, and the production of *moray* (potatoes dried in the sun using various methods for long-term preservation) and the participation in the city's celebrations. By attending all the Saturday meetings during my four-month stay, I was able to gain valuable insights through participant observation. This allowed me not only to learn about the techniques and colours used but mainly to understand the group's organisational dynamics and hierarchies. I also had the opportunity to meet with a woman whose family owned on of the MUDEC's textiles. This type of participation allowed me to compare my understanding and expectations with those of different generations of Pitumarca inhabitants regarding textile practices.

In order to complement the knowledge I gained in Pitumarca, I expanded my research to include other centres. I continued to "follow the objects" through targeted and short-term ethnographic fieldwork in other parts of the region. I was therefore able to travel to, meet, talk to and interview people from the following provinces: Calca (in particular Calca itself, Pisac, Sacaca, Cuyo Grande, Chahuaytire, Lares, Choquecancha, Ccachin, Tambo Huella, Amaru), Paucartambo (in particular Q'ero and Parubamba), Urubamba (in particular Chinchero and

Yanacona) and Canchis (in particular Raqcchi and Chillca). Considering that full time ethnographic research is increasingly difficult to practice within bureaucratic, time management and economic constraints (see Kwame Harrison, 2018: 63) that in my case consisted of the limits imposed by the doctorate programme and my visa, this methodological choice was deliberate and depended on the research defined focus and on the moral incentive to include the perspective of the biggest possible number of individuals from MUDEC collections' source communities.

Figure 8: A montera almost identical to the one hold by MUDEC, Raqcchi

It is however inevitable to consider the framework of incompleteness within which this research is developed. On the one hand, the fundamental challenge of fieldwork is the inherent incompleteness that is intrinsic to any ethnographic research undertaking (see Clifford, 1986), challenge that is often disproportionate to the time and resources available. In addition, this work is then carried out in accordance with the "known and carefully conceived" norm of incompleteness for contextualising multi-sited fieldwork that is inherited in this method (Marcus, 2007: 356) , and finally a level of incompleteness that is projected onto the expected results of this work, on the basis of which the partial results of the fieldwork are specifically argued. The creation of an ethical protocol that is specifically tailored to the needs and context of the MUDEC, while still ensuring its

effective application to the museum's entire collection, constitutes a complex endeavour. In order to address this complexity, it is necessary, as previously specified, for the proposal to be discussed openly with all staff. Moreover, I argue no protocol that falls within the general and institutionally approved rules of the manifesto should be considered a closed document, but rather a work in progress and a guide within which individual contingencies are discussed on a case-by-case basis.

PART ONE: A theoretical framework

CHAPTER ONE. Rethinking the Other: Museum in Transition From Colonial Legacies to Post-Modern Accountability

"Collection, noun. (1) a group of objects of one type that have been collected by one person or in one place; (2) the act of taking something away from a place" (Cambridge Dictionary)[3]" Collecting is a human prerogative that many scholars have tried to tackle from different perspectives and thus discerning different facets of it (see e.g. Pearce, 1995; Belk, 1995) ; this definition from the Cambridge Dictionary highlight how collecting comprise both an idea of gathering and separating at the same time. First of all, "to collect is to gather objects belonging to a particular category the collector happens to fancy" and "a collection is what has been gathered" (Alsop, 1982: 70). Differing from accumulating, collecting is driven by "obsession" and organisation (Aristides 1988: 330). The intrinsic value of the things (or ideas, or beings) collected is almost irrelevant to the collector drive to completion, to the point that their predominant value and meaning depends on them being interrelated part of the collection. In this sense, the collection is more than the sum of its parts (Belk, 1995: 8). At the same time, both Pearce (1995: 20-

[3] See https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/collection (accessed on June 12th, 2025)

35) and Belk (1995: 67) investigated the main principles that make a collection, and both highlighted the originating act of separation from the ordinary. Substantially, collections consist of different objects actively and selectively set apart from ordinary commodities, perceived by their owners as having special—almost sacred—significance.

1.1 Collecting Others and Defining Selves

Nor the premises or the effects of collecting are neutral or fixed. According to Pearce (1995: 27, 33) collections are individual or collective social constructs that serve as metaphors, help shape personal identity and worldview and play a key role in the creation of value, which is largely driven by imagination. For such object grouping to be considered a collection, it must be intentionally formed to serve a specific social and psychological function—one recognized as appropriate by the surrounding society (idem). The individual or institutional systems of arbitrary meanings in which the practice is developed have changes historically, have been influences and at the same time produced hierarchies of value through which identities are confined. Since the first explorative and commercial voyages of the Modern Ages, selecting, ordering and classifying objects as well as information about the non-European reality has supported the portrayal of the European self by contrast. Imposing a strict knowledge system when encountering and describing the other and its material culture would build an opposing self-perception and reinforce political, cultural and aesthetic consciousness (see e.g. Bunn, 1980; Defert 1982).

The act of collecting, categorizing, and assigning value to cultural objects is not unique to the West (Belke, 1995: 22-65); however, Western traditions of cultural collection have emerged from a specific historical context, shaped by European ideas of time and order. The typically Western ideas that self-identity is somehow cumulative entailed that the action of collecting is connected to the construction of the self, as act of collecting ultimately reflects the collector's own identity (Stewart, 1984; Clifford, 1985, 1988; Pearce, 1995). Consequently, if the gathering of foreign material culture around oneself was originally a way of observing, understanding and describing the cultures from which those objects originated, instead served primarily to self-define, self-construct, and self-express by revealing insights about

the collector, and delineate Europe’s identity. The social relations that are inherent in an exchange-based economy—where objects circulate, acquire new meanings, and ultimately undergo transformation through the act of collection itself—are reflected in collections. Indeed, examining the history of collections sheds light on how societies (and specifically those groups that gave rise to anthropological discipline and modernist art practice for a certain period) have actively appropriated cultural objects and knowledge from other traditions. This process of appropriation, however, is not neutral; it is shaped by mechanisms that selectively determine which artifacts are to be considered valuable and how they are positioned within a broader system of objects. These mechanisms reflect underlying power structures that have historically governed the circulation and interpretation of cultural materials. Grasping this historical context is essential, as it hinge many of the assumptions that contemporary theories of practice, process, and historicity aim to question and reinterpret. Acknowledging how Western ambitions are embedded in the creation of material narratives—shaped by Western understanding of the exotic—reveals how these narratives have consistently reinforced Europe's self-image. Through a deeper reflection and critical examination on the broader implications of these practices we can better grasp how these inherited perspectives continue to influence the way cultures are studied, preserved, and interpreted today (Stewart, 1984; Clifford, 1988; Pearce, 1995). Historically, universalism has been the philosophical reference used in Europe to address the problem of interacting with cultural differences. It was relevant to define a "universal" human nature in accordance with European values in order to dismiss non-European cultures as inferior. Colonial museums’ collections were historically put together between around 1500 and 1950 under a framework of a rudimentary form of universalism that provided justification for the acquisition and exhibition of cultural items in ways that supported European worldviews. More recently, these same collections have been being re-examined through a relativist perspective, frequently in an effort to give the communities from where these artifacts originated their cultural agency. Indeed, relativism denies the existence of a universal human nature and holds that all cultural customs are equally legitimate in their settings. The underlying conflict between

these two perspectives is especially noticeable in the current interpretation of museum collections of non-European artefacts (Pearce, 1995: 410).
For a great part of history, anthropologists have been shaping museum collections as much as museum institutions have been shaping anthropological theory. The history of anthropology must be understood as deeply intertwined with the practice of collecting, which functions both as an expression of Western subjectivity and as a dynamic set of institutional practices that have evolved over time. Even though a rigid "art-culture system" has emerged over time, regulating the authenticity, value, and circulation of artifacts and cultural materials, during the last century, large-scale collections representing "Mankind" were strictly embedded in anthropology as an academic field (see Clifford, 1988). Sturtevant's position is that the relationship between museums and anthropology has undergone several phases, evolving in accordance with changes in the perception of the relevance and importance of material culture for understanding the Other. During the 19th century, in what he refers to as the "Museum Period of anthropology" (1969: 622–623), the collecting mindset of the museum anthropologist significantly impacted anthropological paradigms. This was due to the converging of object-based and cultural understandings and interpretations, with a pronounced orientation towards the classification and typology of objects. Within the museum framework, the world is represented by gathered artifacts that, simply by virtue of their existence, are considered a “symbolic agent” within a cosmology where everything can be fitted. As a result, historically, cultural goods were frequently transferred from a particular culture to another's, where their original cultural context is purposefully suppressed. Decontextualized artworks in a museum setting undergoes abstraction and gains more, often ambiguous layers of meaning, which allow for an almost infinite number of alternative configurations and reinterpretations. Collections would be a medium for the symbolic representation of the world though either a process of metonymic shift, whereby individual items represent broader cultural wholes, substituting the isolated importance they get in the collection for their original settings; or by creating an organized worldview from the perspective of the collection through the development of a system of classification in time and space.

Considering that these systems and practices have strongly been influenced by racial and evolutionary ideas, the ethnographic museums at its beginning was an object-oriented institution that inevitably contributed to the objectification and alienation of the cultures they aimed to depict. A hierarchical and demeaning viewpoint toward the cultures that made these objects was reinforced when these people, turned into living artefacts, started to be displayed in dehumanising spectacles such as human zoos, which were a clear extension of the museum of the colonial era. As a result, whole civilizations were viewed as immobile, fixed things to be sectioned, categorized and collected as they could be perfectly described and kept in a timeless format (see Fabian, 1983). This method presented cultural traditions as unchangeable and comprehensive, ignoring their dynamic and changing nature.

Objectified cultures were thus framed as fragile and at risk of disappearance, requiring intervention to be safeguarded, restored, or preserved. In the end, this view strengthened the notion that cultures ought to be controlled and safeguarded by tangible and immaterial heritage regulations, which further influenced how they were viewed and portrayed in institutional settings and, conversely, perceived outside. Indeed, even when the museum entered the discourse of cultural heritage, even when community concerns redefined research, collection and display methodologies, the museum still contributed to defining the image of the other via recontextualization on many levels. Discursive practices about material -or immaterial- culture have been adapting to changing social and political constraints as collector, curators, anthropologists and lately stakeholders or artists, have been participating to different extent in a continuous process of storytelling that, through negotiations, have been reinterpreting cultural heritage in light of contemporary concerns (see Bargna, 2020).

1.2 The Colonial Museum and Museum-Based Anthropology

Throughout history, from Assyrian rulers to the Catholic church, from Chinese emperors to European nobility, collectors have longed and accumulated sensational objects: owning and showing unusual, exotic and precious rarities had always been a sign of power as well as the response of an impulse toward allure (see e.g. Bracken, Gáldy & Turpin, 2013). With the opening to the public, these

collections have also developed a political and social role. Indeed, if the adage "knowledge is power" were to be applied to museums as institution of knowledge formation, then they automatically became places of power exertion. Since the interest in alterity was mediated by material culture and museums opened to the public, exhibitions were arranged, objects were collected, and collections were assembled to convey certain specific messages.

Nature and men's uncommon and beautiful creations crammed in modern age cabinets of curiosities were not appreciated for their historical nor cultural meaning, nor they were judges or supporters of a specific scientific of political theory, being valued for the astonishment they caused to the observer. The access to these collections shifted from private to public when capitalist modern nations were developing, and imperialism was shaping the new global dynamics of the 19th century. In this context, world fairs and international exhibitions became occasions for displaying interlacing implications of technological advances, cultural novelties, economic improvements and political ideas. Inseparable from nationalism, these events answered to the needs of encyclopaedic knowledge and unusual amusement for a new a public of consumers while, at the same time, being expression of colonial prestige.

While in the first centuries of the modern era, correspondents, agents and dealers had a significant role in satisfying this collecting impulse toward what came from afar (see e.g. Impey, 1977), with the surge of the 19th century world exhibition mania, the practice of collecting became institutionalised and internationalised much like culture itself. During the Crystal-Palace period, many colonial officials created private collections as if they needed to foster an illusion of authority, both material and moral, over their otherwise disorienting experience of the colonies. Absorbed by public institutions, these collections became enduring symbols of imperial order and contrasting colonial exoticism. This phenomenon found expression in a range of showing spanning various disciplines such as archaeology, zoology, and geology in distinct yet public venues, including exhibitions, museums, royal receptions, archives and libraries. These new and accessible forms (and practices) of knowledge production and control progressively defined the boundaries within which what was deemed acceptable or unacceptable was continuously negotiated and the power of the state-nation was expressed. In the

same period, imperialist ideology imbued with social Darwinism was served to the public gaze through zoological-anthropological exhibitions as well. Presenting the idea of "primitive" incarnated also drove the scientific urge to measure, file, collect the "primitive" bodies for the natural history museums. Moreover, moral inferiority of colonial natives displayed in missionary exhibition would justify the Church interest in the colonial endeavour (see Benedict, 1983; Beckenridge, 1989; Corbey, 1993).
From a historical standpoint, museums can be viewed as the successors of Europe's revered repositories such as royal treasuries, temples, churches, and burial grounds which have been used to protect, conserve, and most of the time, exhibit items of significant public value, true "factory of [national] identity" (Kaplan, 1994; see Steiner, 1995). Since the shift from private cabinet of curiosities to public exhibitions, museums, galleries, and similar institutions had evolved into Bennett's Foucaultian category of "exhibitionary complex" and have functioned as "machinery of modernity". Once museums became publicly funded, their collections started to be expected to be of use of society which, on the other hand started to regard at the presented objects and ideas as statements of truth. In European tradition, which constructs knowledge on the interactions between objects, museums function as 'heterotopias of indefinitely accumulating time" -a place of all times, beyond time- (Foucault, 1986: 7) as present their holdings as concrete evidence of humanity's capacity to classify, comprehend, and govern the world. By showcasing these things museums not only demonstrate this power over time and space, but they also strengthen their authority. Museums, as rhetorical devices, have significantly influenced our perceptions of time, the self, and society by being essential to the development, structuring, distribution, and absorption of the concepts that characterize modernity. They began to exercise power through the administration of knowledge, becoming tools for education and nation-building (Bennett, 1995, 2018; Pearce, 1995).
The English officer Pitt Rivers (1827-1900), influenced by Darwin's evolutionism and the changes in archaeological theory that characterized the 19th century, posited that material culture was an instrumental tool to analyse the progressive transformations of societies over time and particularly valuable for explaining the relationships between different stages of the evolutionary ladder. Consequently, a

natural history of humanity could be reconstructed by collecting and displaying exotic artefacts. The late nineteenth-century ethnographic museums were thus designed to reinforce a linear and predetermined model of social development in line with the evolutionist paradigm (Chapman 1985). In Pitt Rivers' description of his ideal museum, the educational purpose for the "ignorant masses" in whose hands "we have thought proper to place power" isn't just clearly stated but also strictly connected to politics. Indeed, a clear typological display would have supported the idea that just like "the law that Nature makes no jumps" the public should have been cautious about "how they listen to scatter-brained revolutionary suggestions" (Pitt Rivers, 1891). Pitt Rivers' theorical framework for representing human antiquity ultimately contributed to the formation of a European collective memory; its materialisation in the museum ad a place of science, promoted a defined version of historical past[4].
As much as Pitt Rivers and his contemporaries participated in the debate about human origins and evolution, they were also interested in the racial implications of human history. From these assumptions, colonial imperialism recognised the relevance of anthropological research as a means of establishing and justifying Eurocentric ideas of superiority. During colonialism, any endorsement of anthropological research was underpinned by the political need to justify colonial endeavours in terms of capitalist investment and aimed at defining the most efficient strategies for managing indigenous populations (Stocking, 1985). Colonial ethnology and the subsequent collections of material culture from subjugated regions were used to support anthropological theories that subsequently favoured certain political narratives; Indeed, the reason why so many collections from this era are so similar is because the same types of objects were carefully selected from local material culture and collected to make the same points and support Western social values (Pearce, 1995: 339-341). Thus, the museums that displayed these collections were imbued with supremacist ideologies as well and aimed to reflect and reinforce the power dynamics of imperial superiority.[5] This museum-applied

[4] Pitt-Rivers, his collection and his legacy are not neutral, but the result of a extensive colonial process. This is thoroughly analysed in terms of its contemporary effects and through a decolonial lens in Hicks (2025).
[5] See Barringer & Flynn (1998), Groten (2022) or the special issue "Anthropology, Collecting and Colonial Governmentalities", History and Anthropology, Volume 25, Issue 2 (2014) for an overview

anthropological practice somehow brought the empire home in a convenient way: the exhibition of the objectified Other in museums (and in human zoos) was a spectacle for the public, a justification for the politics a source of practical information for the colonial entrepreneur or settler.

Historically, anthropologists have strenuously tried to demonstrate the relevance and social applicability of the discipline. However, its focus on a non-specifically applicable knowledge about humanity through the understanding of "otherness" have never attracted a great amount of fundings[6]. The production of anthropological knowledge was thus inevitably shaped by often constrained resources. Considering that these fundings were frequently intended for other purposes than the "discourse on mankind", this mediation has resulted in a complex negotiation of overlapping objectives. As a result, during the colonial period, when European imperial powers were actively looking for ways to justify their expansion, anthropological theory often ended up being aligned with these objectives.

At the turn of the 20th century, the institutionally driven intellectual orientation toward the study of human past framed anthropological fieldwork within the scope of biological sciences rather than social studies. Indeed, the major interest toward archaeology influenced the discipline of anthropology out of its focus on contemporary behaviour. At the time[7], philanthropists and museums were the main sources of economic support for ad hoc anthropological research, particularly on topics that were less marketable. In this context, the theoretical knowledge recorded during travel and could be capitalised through the collection of tangible objects, becoming a medium of exchange within the realm of commodities. Even if considered aesthetically unappealing by contemporary standards, the material culture of marginalised peoples was still regarded as a physical manifestation of cultural expression and could generate a return for museums that invested in field research (Stocking, 1985). A notable example of this dynamic was the installation

about the role of museums in the governance of colonized populations during the early fieldwork phase of anthropology's development (Bennett, Dibley & Harrison, 2014).

[6] See Stocking (1985) for a deeper analysis of this aspect of anthropological studies development.

[7] Sturtevant (1968: 623-625) describes the period between 1890 and 1920 as the Museum-University Period for anthropology, describing the moment when anthropology started to be formally taught in academic settings while museum collections still maintained their centrality.

of the Northwest Coast Hall at the American Museum of Natural History in 1899, displaying material collected by Franz Boas during the renowned Jesup expedition. Between 1895 and 1905, Boas held parallel positions at the American Museum of Natural History and Columbia University, using the museum as a financial and operational base for his own research (Sturtevant, 1969: 623-625). By the beginning of the 20th century, the discipline of anthropology started to reject racial theories and, by stepping away from the evolutionist approach, anthropologist of the calibre of Boas himself and Malinowski (1884-1942) deviated from the object-oriented view and highlighted the limits of the museum dynamic (see Jacknis, 1985). Boas noticed in 1907, the cultural significance of any material specimen depends on the "the thoughts that cluster around them" as "the psychological as well as the historical relations of culture" cannot be represented by material residue. At the same time, Malinowski's description of his ethnographic fieldwork methodology in the Trobriand islands (1922), that would be later defined as participant observation, pointed out the shortcoming of studying and pretending to understand a specific community or cultural group. In the following decades, anthropology would definitely shift from the museum object-based practice to a social-scientific based discipline. In this period, as anthropology has moved into the university setting, museums have gradually lost their central function. Most anthropologists have moved to academia, with universities taking on the main role of funding field research (Sturtevant, 1968: 625-627)

1.3 The Post-Colonial Museum and Museum Anthropology

As decolonial processes gradually unfolded, the imperial relations that had long been taken for granted began to be questioned, along with the social and political assumptions of inherited European superiority. Ethnographic museums also started to be impacted by this change, going through a gradual and intricate process of redefining themselves and critically analysing their practices.
Based on the principle of auto-determination as mentioned in the 1960 Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, the wave of political independence that many colonial nations achieved from Europe in the 1950s was played a crucial role in advancing this process. On both local and global scales, the rise of social and subaltern movements of marginalized

people started to oppose European colonial agendas and challenge Western hegemonic narratives. In other words, communities traditionally represented and spoken for colonial representatives started to assert their own agency and voices on the global stage. It became increasingly difficult to confine them to the roles and identities that were traditionally assigned to them (Clifford, 1988). Amidst this crisis, the importance of museums in categorizing otherness and forming specific values and ideologies was recognised and questioned. Through an epistemological analysis of their historical foundation and social role, European ethnographic museums initiated a challenging and continuous process of rethinking their own collections.

During the historical period following the dismantling of colonial powers, political mobilizations were accompanied by a new body of theoretical contributions emerged from literary and cultural studies, and gained prominence in universities, especially in the United States and the United Kingdom. Starting by investigated colonial dynamics and their effects on subjected people, post-colonial thinkers such as Franz Fanon triggered a debate that decentred reflections on the construction of the colonial identity of the West in opposition to the Other (see Said, 1978). Within the discussion raised from Southeast Asia by the Subaltern Studies group, the debate was brought further. The assumed universality of European historical experiences and models was being challenged (Chakrabarty, 2000) and renovated attention was drawn on the relevance of colonized views. While recognising how colonial power have constructed Wester hegemonic epistemologies that have been silencing subaltern's voices (Spivak, 1988), the dynamics between coloniser and colonized were considered a two-way negotiation that formed hierarchies and knowledge (Prakash, 1995). Bhabha (1994) emphasizes that colonialism must not be understood as a concluded episode in global history, but rather as a persistent and integral dimension of the contemporary world. The "painful re-membering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present" (ibid.: 64) denotes a necessary yet complex and non-linear process of engaging with the ongoing legacies of colonialism and racism, in order to grasp their enduring impact on current social and political realities. This is a dynamic and unsettling attempt to put together a fractured past, not just a nostalgic act of remembering or retroactive

reflection. In this context, postcolonial theory exposes the shortcomings of linear Western forms of historiography by critically examining prevailing historical narratives.

This new framework sparked a renovated view on anthropological theory and the development of new approaches in ethnographic research (see, among others, Marcus & Fisher, 1986; Clifford & Marcus, 1986) favouring considerations on the changing role of those people that were once subjects of anthropological and ethnographic studies (see e.g. Sahlins, 1999) and their right to take part into the knowledge formation process (De la Cadena, 2005a). This cultural critique on the authority of anthropology and ethnography worked toward the realisation that they were anything but impartial. These disciplines' theory and practice provided a scientific rationale for cultural categorization being indeed both an instrument for political oppression and means for pigeonholing the Other into colonial epistemological categories. The debates surrounding cultural interpretation and the critique of biased ethnographic perspectives directly involved museum professionals, involved in practices of institutionalized anthropological representation (see Karp & Lavine, 1991).
The emerging post-colonial studies and the claims of minorities and subaltern groups that prompted harsh scrutiny on museums policies and practices fell within the context of a general debate on the established social role of museums and their position as impartial institutions of knowledge (see e.g. Cameron, 1971). On the one hand, for the first time the political role of these institutions was exposed, on the other, museums were progressively adapting to the evolving social context. Originally static authoritative repositories, almost untouched sacred places, museums' aim, and structure have inevitably been adapting to the changing global situation, being influenced not just by the advent of consumer society but also by the progressive democratisation of their accessibility (Ames, 1992; Durrans, 1993). For the first time in 1974, ICOM defined museums as "non-profit making, permanent institution[s] in the service of the society and its development", challenging museums to focus on serving the public rather than just conserving and studying collections. As might be expected, this change in emphasis has had important consequences in both museum internal structure, practices and their

ramification toward the public and stakeholders, including those source communities from which the ethnographic collections originated. Conversely, marginalised groups that were progressively regaining their voice, turned to museums to claim control back not simply over their material culture but mainly over to those illicitly appropriated narratives about their own cultures that have being presented as both entertainment for western publics and tools of subjugation.

Within this dynamic, and due to the geopolitical changes previously mentioned, while museums were reassessing their relationship with the "Other", anthropologists were also questioning not just otherness as a legitimate subject of study and discourse but also their positioning toward the institution and those collections that were created by and conversely supported the developing of anthropology as a discipline (see e.g. Ames, 1992)[8]. While museums were addressing the voices of to the silenced communities, anthropologists turned again their attention toward the museum and their presumption of being able to appropriately represent the world by recontextualizing objects within new semiotic frameworks. Since the interpretation of museum objects as simple metonymic symbols (Stewarts 1984) of their cultural origin was overcome, and collections started to be considered as witnesses of changing practices of cultural depiction, issues related to the right of representation came up (see e.g. Karp & Lavine, 1991). Thus, a critical revaluation of how anthropologists portray varied identities—across race, class, ethnicity, gender, and group dynamics—in museums, spurred. Relationships between researchers and the people they study have been questioned, reflecting a general trend in the social sciences. This scrutiny has extended to the interactions between museums and those communities from which museum collections come from. A growing number of scholars have acknowledged the necessity of transitioning from practices rooted in colonial power dynamics to those in which power is more equitably distributed. In this context, anthropology has emerged as a central discipline for such investigations (see Lattanzi 2012, 2021; Schorch, 2023; Clemente, 2024). As a result, anthropologists turned toward the museum as a field where knowledge is performed (Bargna, 2020: 93) an

[8] In the US, Museum Anthropology was being recognised following the foundation of the Council for Museum Anthropology (1974) and Stocking's volume (1985).

anthropology of museum has emerged as a separate but related field that informs and complements anthropological practice in museums and museum studies to reinterpret disciplinary narratives within these distinctively Western-born cultural organizations (Kaplan, 1996: 816). A comprehensive re-evaluation of the museum and its intrinsically Eurocentric structure became unavoidable, and a contemporary anthropological approach favoured the reinterpretation of museum practices through a renovating perspective of inclusion (see Kreps, 2003a; Lavine, 1992). Before that, the positivistic approach of the ethnographic museum could not allow the museum itself to be the object of research, reflection and auto-investigation (Amselle, 2016: 23). This fundamental shift in the nature of the relationships between museums and the source communities, was one of the most significant changes in museum history, as it progressively transformed the previously established power dynamics. Museums mission of "acquiring [...] material evidence of people and their environment"[9] progressively outgrew the one-way flow of artifacts and information from communities to museums. Indeed, source communities have increasingly asserted that their participation in research and exhibition initiatives should be based upon mutually agreed-upon frameworks, objectives, and outcomes that can result in new discoveries as well as possible disputes (see Peers & Brown, 2003).

As the museum, finally recognised as a "factory of representation" (Preciado, 2018:101 in Deliss, 2020: 16) legitimating limited realities, became started aiming at becoming a forum for contact and exchange (Clifford, 1997), curatorial practices and politics thus entered the heat of the debate (Clifford, 1988). In an effort to emancipate from its narrowly defined application within Western museological practice, the role of curators was being questioned and reformed toward a social turn (Kreps 2003a, 2003b; Peters, 2008). Driven by the growing call to represent diverse histories and perspectives—particularly those voiced by contemporary descendants of the creators of cultural objects—curators have begun to reconsider the identities of their institutions. Various forms of participatory and collaborative research entered the museum workspace (see e.g. Hall, 1979; Ryan & Robinson, 1990) and shaped this change through co-curatorship projects and consultations,

[9] As mentioned in the ICOM definitions of museums in 1974, 1989, 1995, 2001.

as well as by negotiating requests from source communities and stakeholders. Such demands frequently cover various issues, such as managing and displaying sensitive objects, cultural property and restitution, and the framing of narratives and representations. Such processes have frequently involved complex negotiations between museum professionals and source communities. These negotiations are not always successful and are often shaped by not only logistical and institutional constraints, but also by fundamentally different interpretive frameworks (see e.g. Sleeper-Smith, 2009; Chambers et al., 2014). Due to intentionality discrepancies or misunderstanding, as a result of the temporal - and often geographical - distance between source communities and institutions and, most of all, because of the intrinsic Eurocentric nature of museums and their historical significance in defining knowledge through a colonial perspective, the aim of changing their political instance by inclusion of marginalised voices through bottom-up approach and peer collaborations has been a multifaceted challenge since when postcolonial theories first entered the museological debate (see e.g. Herle, 2023 [2016]; Levitt, 2014).

In short, post-colonial approaches in museums emphasize the need to recognize and represent the voices and perspectives of communities that have historically been marginalized. They work to promote more inclusive and accurate depictions of history and culture, dismantle colonial memory, and reinterpret and reframe colonial narratives. By doing so, these methods seek to challenge and defy the perpetuation of colonial ideology in museum management. Despite this, the postcolonial approach has been criticised because of its fundamental Eurocentric premises in terms of knowledge systems[10]. Thus, some voices have been rising stronger and louder to make a step forward and put a decolonial effort into museum practice (Lonetree, 2009).

1.4 Decolonial Museums and Advocacy Anthropology

In open critic toward the post-colonial movement, the debate took a radical step during the 90s in South America, where the Modernity/Coloniality Group introduced the "decolonial turn". This new epistemological movement

[10] See Amselle (2009) for an overview of postcolonial thoughts.

distinguished between colonialism and coloniality: the first one being the historical phenomenon of dominance, the second being the subsequent and recurring pattern of power and knowledge that persists. Decolonial theorists recognised the existence of a colonial "world-system" by acknowledging the close relationship between modernity and colonial experience and seek to eradicate the structural effects of colonialism by critically renewing social sciences and challenging the Eurocentric viewpoint that frames European and North American history as universal (Quijano, 2000; Walsh & Mignolo, 2018). Decolonial thinkers advocate for the development of knowledge systems that represent the way of thinking and lived realities of formerly colonized peoples by calling for a deliberate break from Western forms of knowing. In order to provide room for alternative, the idea of "delinking" was introduced, namely a process that entails actively moving away from colonial institutions and norms toward "pluriversality", which emphasizes the importance of embracing multiple and diverse epistemic traditions, rather than privileging a single, universalized Western perspective. "Decoloniality" would follow through "gnoseological and aesthesic reconstitutions" (Mignolo, 2021). Accordingly, decolonial philosophy calls for a fundamental reorientation of the epistemological foundations of knowledge in the West and requires more than just the integration of non-Western viewpoints.

Applying this approach to museums has brought to complex debates as theorists and professionals started to question museums' ability to align with the decolonial framework while operating within the same knowledge systems that have contributed to the very injustices they are now trying to address. The act of telling others' stories itself, which has been central to museum practice, carries the risk of cognitive injustice. While museums have developed expertise in presenting narratives about diverse cultures, they often do so by assuming the position of author and spokesperson. This authority can privilege certain ways of knowing over others, potentially marginalizing the voices and epistemologies of the very communities being represented. Thus, museums had to rigorously examine the philosophical roots that have influenced their activities by recognizing how they are intertwined with colonial and restrictive structures in order to make a

conscious effort to include a variety of perspectives and knowledge that have been marginalized or ignored in the past.

As previously discussed, museums have never been neutral places as they are the ‘very tangible evidence of how a society, at a given point in time, organizes its knowledge and the principles behind it’ (Sandhal, 2019). In recent years, by refocusing their attention from objects to people, museums have taken on an increasingly prominent role in conversations around culture and diversity. As global social inequalities and unrest continue to grow, museums have also been called upon to reconsider their responsibilities—not just as cultural institutions, but as spaces with the potential of addressing urgent social issues through a more explicitly political lens. Even when contentious, museums are now being called upon to take clear and public positions on matters such as social injustice, human rights violations, and the erosion of civil liberties, as well as to confront challenging topics like racism, discrimination, and systemic bias. In response, museum theorists have begun to consider the museum's role in society as a potential catalyst for social change and education. With this reassessing, the museum stands out as an intermediary between the state and civil society, or even as an active force that can influence public opinion, strengthen underrepresented groups, and encourage civic engagement. According to this changing paradigm, museums are expected to support social justice and human rights by embracing various forms of knowledge and serving as spaces for self-representation, especially for historically marginalized or silenced communities (Carter & Orange, 2012; Janes & Sandell, 2019; Ünsal, 2019; Liu, 2024).

Decolonial theory applied to museums is in no way detached from these political instances as it faces epistemic injustice and asymmetric power relations (see Vawda, 2019). Applied anthropology functioned as a methodological framework for this new approach in museum work in order for research and its outcomes to be mutually determined and controlled by researcher and source communities alike. Reimagining museums as active venues for social justice and political participation rather than passive archives of objects has been made possible in large part by advocacy anthropology. In situations of dispute or negotiation with Western institutions like museums, advocacy anthropology has proven to be a

successful strategy for empowering communities to have their voices heard. This method, which developed in environments with notable power disparities, views the anthropologist as a mediator who uses their knowledge of Western institutions to reconcile different epistemologies. By doing this, they guarantee that minority or Indigenous communities' viewpoints are truly taken into account and assist them in obtaining meaningful access to decision-making processes (see Hastrup & Elsas, 1990; Cook, 2003). The ability to hear these moral claims would clear the road to reposition museums' political aims as advocates for social justice and equity. As previously discussed, museums have historically functioned as institutions through which power is exercised, primarily by shaping and controlling the production, organization, and dissemination of knowledge. Their authority, traditionally rooted in their role as gatekeepers of cultural narratives, was being redirected to legitimizing those interpretations that were previously marginalised or excluded, thus elevating their political stances. Over the past few decades, this trend toward museum involvement has evolved gradually, reflecting larger cultural changes that favoured minorities to regain their voices (see Waziyatawin & Yellow Bird, 2005). It emphasizes the growing function of museums as facilitators of ethical reflection, cooperative community involvement, and inclusivity.

However, decolonial aspirations of delinking and pluriversality demand more than the inclusion of non-Western perspectives as the museum should be moving on from the "contact zone" model[11]; it calls for a fundamental reorientation of the epistemological foundations of the museum as an institution of knowledge production and reality interpretation. Within the opposition of epistemologies of the south and epistemologies of the north[12], Bonaventura de Sousa Santos (2018)

[11] The expression "contact zone" was used by Pratt (1991) to define spaces where cultures with asymmetrical power relations interact. After that Clifford (1997) applied it to museums in a inclusive perspective. However, it was later criticised as essentially "neocolonial" and fundamentally biased (Boast, 2011).

[12] In de Sousa Santos' perspective, these epistemologies are not geographically bound. Epistemologies of the south could not exist without the epistemologies of the north as they are grounded in the experiences of resistance of social groups that have systematically suffered injustice, oppression, and destruction as a result of capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy, wherever these struggles take place. Epistemologies of the south seek to move beyond the hierarchical divide that separates them from the hegemonic conceptions of knowledge of the North, that are rooted in Eurocentric modernity and built on the assumptions of science as objective and neutral.

offers two solutions that could exemplify the postcolonial and decolonial approaches to museums respectively. On the one hand, the “palimpsest museum” aims to de-monumentalize and demystify the hegemonic archive. It seeks to reveal the erasures and silences created by the standards of prevailing power structures through a self-reflexive process. In this case, the reinvented museum is conceived as a social arena for the renegotiation of knowledge, where intercultural translation becomes crucial, by recentring individuals and their knowledge systems. On the other hand, the “insurgent museum” likewise seeks to make visible and powerful what has been silenced, but it does so by breaking fundamentally with the very structure of the traditional archive. The insurgent archive is not intended as a physical space or an ordered collection that adheres to traditional standards in its endeavour to value the information and experiences of oppressed communities. Rather, it proliferates through unapproved creative, cultural, and social actions that manifest as a counter-aesthetic. The first proposal encourages existing museums to adopt a self-reflective approach, recalling post-colonial approaches, to critically engage with the inclusion and renegotiation of knowledge systems. The second, by contrast, goes as far as to reject the traditional Western concept of the museum altogether. Although both strategies mirror the previously described theoretical principles, they are often challenging to implement in practical and sustainable ways.

With the increasing need for discussing, questioning, overcoming and deconstructing colonial structures and residues in museums, many professionals, indigenous scholars, activists, artists and so on have been working toward practical solutions for reforming museum practices within this new perspective in order to make the museum a place of healing, “re-mediation” and negotiation of new semantics (Lonetree, 2012; Grechi, 2021; Ariese & Wróblewska, 2022) showing that the future of ethnographic museums is diverse and dependent on specific historical, cultural, and institutional contexts (Van Broekhoven, 2019). Nevertheless, socio-political, practical, economic and timewise limits sometimes cannot be overcome (see Onciul, 2015). Museums “are not set apart from global economic injustice and the reality of racial conflict and prejudice” and even when professionals have the best intentions in mind, their practices and work dynamics

privilege certain ways of knowing as they have been educated and socialized within these frameworks so that interactions with communities might still carry echoes of the historical dynamic between coloniser and colonised (Lynch & Alberti, 2010: 14). The challenges of decolonising a colonial institution are many and complex in terms of fundings, time and space as they imply the need to manage processes, emotions and reputations. So that Kassim questions whether museums are too embedded in coloniality to attempt decolonisation without the risk of it "becoming another buzzword, like 'diversity'" (Kassim, 2017). Not only decolonizing methods may become superficial, performative, or merely a public relations exercise if a thorough dismantling of museum nature isn't achieved, but they can come with great costs for communities (see Onciul 2015: 219-237). A further risk is that of slipping into tokenism or essentialism (ibid)[13], especially considering the globalised dynamics of the contemporary multicentred world where local identities are negotiated globally (Bhabha, 1994). Moreover, looking into decolonial practices, some paradoxes inevitably arise. First, the claim of hegemonic universality of the Western Museum would need to adapt to contemporary globalised world by "decentralisation". Through a sort of "explosion" the museum tries and break down its own borders by including non-Western stakeholders; but "does not this translation find its limit in the fact that the role of operator of universalization continues to be attributed to the Center?" (Amselle, 2016. 25). Second, once counter-aesthetic, knowledge-diverging pieces enter the institutional museum context they are inevitably institutionalised, and their "disobedient" power and message is weakened (ibid: 45).

The attempt at decolonising Western epistemology by critically examining one of the most emblematic institutions of knowledge production in the West -the museum-, also brings to attention some shortcomings of decolonial affirmations[14]. Mignolo's impetus at epistemic decolonisation requires conscious rejection of what is described as a monolithic West often tends to a reductionist stance and shows its limitations in practice. The binary opposition between West and non-West risks

[13] It must be notices that, according to Spivak & Harasym (1990) essentialism is not avoidable in terms of representation. When essentialism isn't due to logistic or practical constraint, it can even be strategic.
[14] See Colpani, Mascat, J. M. H. & Smiet (2022) and Zembylas (2025) for a theoretical overview of postcolonial critics to decolonial practices.

simplifying the articulated and diversified Wester intellectual traditions that shaped are reflected in institutions and museums' collections. If museums have historically played a central role in the construction of national identities, consequently each institution reflects the unique historical and political trajectories of its nation, even when depicting power imbalances. Similar to how European colonial roles varied from nation to nation, so did the ways in which ethnographic collections were formed and characterized. Because of this variability, site-specific approaches are necessary to handle the intricate legacies that occur in every collection. Moreover, museums' relationship with communities of interest is influenced by a complex interaction of historical, social, and geographical elements. These still affect how organizations interact with stakeholders today, therefore it's critical to establish more effective, contextually informed practices rather than one-size-fits-all strategies.

1.5 The Post-Museum of World Cultures and Its Ethics

Even recognising the political role of museums and collections, the meaning attributed to them are malleable and are susceptible to constant change and reinterpretation. Throughout time, depending on a combination of contingences such as the historical setting, societal context and the understanding of the world, these changes have evolved throughout at varied intensities (see Hooper-Greenhill, 1990). Since the end of the 20th century, the role of museums has been evolving rapidly due to many external stimuli while their institutional and political mandate has been broadened by the recent advances in museology and museum anthropology previously discussed (see e.g. Hooper-Greenhill, 1990). Evolving from a purely colonial space, today's ethnographic repositories repositioned as institutions dedicated to "world cultures", that now engage with a broad spectrum of themes, integrating Euro-American traditions and intellectual productions, scientific approaches, contemporary artistic practices and reflections over the formation of disciplinary fields. Although museums are still in charge of maintaining their collections, they are increasingly investigating the relational aspects between people and material culture as they move away from an object-centered perspective. Museums now view material collections not only as cultural objects anchored to their home communities but also as occasions to look into the

complex histories of international interaction, including trade, imperialism, migration.

Leaving behind the "modernist" museum of the 19th century focused on representing nation-state identity and mass-communicating authoritative narratives, the new "post-museum" has been developing in the last decades, retaining but reshaping some characteristics of its predecessor. While the modernist museum's audience did not have any voice and was presented a completed Western worldview through objects displayed in fixed relationships, the reflexive post-modern museum reimagines itself as active spaces for investigation, experimentation, and inclusive dialogue between different communities and audiences. (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000: 151-152). The "great collecting phase" peculiar of the modernist museum is over as the post-museum has been focusing more on the potential of their existing collection, by positioning itself as a dialogic setting that stimulates the creation of shared meaning by establishing a framework for the negotiation of cultural identities, memories, and belonging by embracing inclusive, open-ended forms of display (Marstine, 2011; Golding & Modest, 2013). This dialogic approach is developed also through the inclusion of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) safeguard within the post-museum mission. The ongoing identity renegotiation of the post-museums as theorised by Hooper-Greenhill (2000), from static to dynamic, from authoritative to multivocal, from exclusive to collaborative still has some complexities but still function as a theoretical and practical alternative to the nihilism of decolonial approaches. Without refusing the essence itself of Western ways of caring for cultural valuable heritage, the post-museum do not dismantle but renegotiate the social and political role of this institution in order to embrace, among others, non-Western perspectives.

Thanks to inclusive and participatory activities, museums are now not just prepared to respond to a wide range of audiences but are also becoming more people-focused even when making the most of collection "sociality" by encourage discussion around objects (Simon, 2010: 127-181). While still maintain scholarly and educational purposes, the post-museums resources to collaborative models in order to meet the needs of different -often underprivileged- communities (idem; Andermann & Arnold-de Simine, 2012). Social well-being, equity and fairness are

considered to be an integral part of the post-museum work and administrations increasingly entrusted them with fostering active citizenship, inclusion, and regeneration. At the same time, museums professionals also increasingly take part in the international debate about justice and human rights. Post-museums might thus exploit their authoritative nature -inherited from their predecessor- for implementing social consciousness, exercising political advocacy and even activism; they have indeed been attributed with moral agency and imperatives (Hein, 2000: 87-107; Sandell, 2011), meaning that, beyond professional and personal ethics, museums are potential change agents in promoting social inclusion and human rights.

As soon as the focus of museums professionals and museum anthropologists shifted from the care and management of collections to prioritizing relationships with people, human and cultural rights turned into a central matter in the field of museums studies and practice. Thus, moral concerns became primary in the museological discourse and museum ethics emerged as a distinct and significant field of discussion. The evolving expectations placed on museums as active agents within the social landscape responded to broader societal transformations and produced a shift toward the increasing professionalization of museum practice. All museum activities are inherently tied to ethical considerations, which are constantly evolving and rarely straightforward or universally agreed upon. Debates about the underlying purpose of museum work are ultimately efforts to define the guiding philosophical principles that shape how museums function and fulfil their responsibilities to society (Edson, 1997; Besterman, 2006; Marstine, 2011).

Codes of ethics, as self-regulating and educational sets of principles adopted voluntarily to set professional standards and norms, are the practical reflection of this debate. Since the 1925 America Association of Museums' Code of Ethics for Museum Workers, these aspirational documents have indeed reflected the evolving nature of museums of the last century, resulting in great number of national, international and site-specific codes that reflect how ethics is a perpetual and debated progress and contingent as it is sensitive to its context (see Marstine, 2011). Currently, the International Council of Museums Codes of Ethics, which was initially issued in 1986 and revised in 2004, is under review. The process started in

2022 and is still ongoing[15]. Since the opening to the public, the "democratic" museums worked in the public sphere by preserving collection in trust for society: as a consequence, museum ethical protocols do not simply address the responsibilities of staff members who should be putting the institutions above personal interests, but also have a larger audience outside the profession, the community at large. Sticking to their ethical claims, museum make themselves accountable in the eye of the public (Besterman, 2006; Chelius Stark, 2011). Herein, being the museum a political institution, politics and museum ethics have an inherent connection. Therefore, museum ethics can be considered as a pragmatic form of political practice since political, social, and cultural settings influence and ethical decisions made in museums and at the same time, the ethical choices museums take both might shape political contexts and even anticipate or inspire law making (Besterman, 2006: 439-440; Kreps, 2011: 74-79).

The post-museum growing interest in people more than in objects contributed to a stronger sense of ethical responsibility toward communities. Consequently, museums moral responsibility toward social justice has also been recognized in addressing issues like colonialism and indigenous rights. In light of post-colonial theories that have forced museums to critically examine power dynamics and reevaluate their claims to authority, has long been considered unethical to exclude minority and source communities from curatorial and research processes, as well as to extract knowledge from them without guaranteeing reciprocity and meaningful involvement. In this context, museums of world cultures, as well as national and international museum associations and professional organizations, have become more involved in ethical discussions regarding the ways in which Indigenous cultural heritage is researched, interpreted, and curated. Considering each country's specific historical relationships with Indigenous communities and minorities—as well as relevant national, regional, and local legislation— important topics including cultural property, copyright, repatriation, and the treatment of human remains and culturally sensitive material have all been covered in these

[15] See https://icom.museum/en/resources/standards-guidelines/code-of-ethics/ (accessed on June 27th, 2025)

discussions (Kreps, 2011, 2015; Diakhaté, 2013; Maranda, 2015)[16]. As will be further analysed in chapter 4, the Museum of World Cultures of Milan (MUDEC) has been proceeding in this direction: aware of coloniality and through self-reflective practices, the curatorial staff has been researching the historical formation of its collections, has been problematizing the political implications of its opening, has looked at critically analysing its own attempts at communities' inclusion; and has initiated ethical confrontations on various levels.

Figure 9: Hall 3 (now changed) of the current semi-permanent exhibition Global Milan (2021 ongoing). The two video installations depicted were realised with different participative methods. ©Museo delle Culture © Comune di Milano all rights reserved

In summary, in the last 50 years a series of concurring phenomena have combined to completely change museums' mission, shaking to the core the ethnographic museum. Post-colonial thinking and the following -and opposing- decolonial critique, the changes in anthropological perspectives with the development of cross-cultural and comparative studies, influenced and leveraged each other to question the widely accepted Western idea of the Other and the institution that, since its foundation, mostly contributed to shaping and spread knowledge about it. Participatory and peer-to-peer collaborative projects with source communities

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[16] Some codes and documents that are currently in use are that drafted by ICOM (2011, 2017, 2019, 2020) and the Museum association (2016) which are used as a reference internationally. On national level, some examples are the Guidelines for German Museums (German Museum Association, 2021) and the Sarr & Savoy guidelines (2019). Also, single museums can draw their own protocols, such as the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen (2019).

progressively shaped new museological debates about methodologies and ethics. Whitin the framework of a new post-museum where people stand in the spotlight while things have become a medium for new narratives, the -at least in theory-renovated world culture museum was attributed with moral agency. Ethical debates have become central in the museological discourse, as museums were asked for accountability not just to preserve their collection but also toward society and, more specifically, source communities. By doing so, institutions would inevitably negotiate the confines inside of which knowledge would be produced and disseminated within one of the major branches of Western philosophy. Even when a museum takes a critical stance toward its colonial past and actively promotes inclusion, it still seems to face inherent limitations due to its historical roots and the foundational influence of Western forms of knowledge. Simply by existing—even with a post-colonial awareness—a museum inevitably remains shaped by the very epistemological frameworks it stems from. As such, it cannot fully detach itself from the epistemological system it presupposes, nor become a neutral vehicle of knowledge.

A useful framework for ethically reconsidering the purpose and meaning of ethnographic collections is provided by the post-museum analysis as endorsing a radical decolonial strategy can be challenging within the confines of current institutional frameworks. However, a (tentative) holistic perspective can offer a valuable alternative in investigating collections. This method encourages a more thorough examination of collections in all of their historical and cultural complexity, taking into account both the larger global dynamics that led to their acquisition by museums and the local knowledge systems that shaped them. Despite the pretence to holism is condemned to imperfection and incompleteness (see e.g. Marcus, 1986), this kind of engagement with collections may open the way for fresh interpretations, deeper conversations with source communities, and a more comprehensive and inclusive view of shared heritage. Within this research, I attempt at looking at the selected lot of Andean textiles from the MUDEC collections through this wide view: examining their complex intercontinental and long-lasting biographies while also considering the ontological entanglements that have been influencing their agency through a field informed ethical proposal.

Figure 10: Examining the materiality of one of the considered Andean textiles, MUDEC

CHAPTER TWO. Cultural Heritage and Cultural Rights: Authentic tangible and Intangible forms of Memory and Identity

Commonly, heritage is seen as something valuable -culturally, politically, socially or commercially- something distinct from ordinary or everyday life that also typically emerges in contexts of risks, whether due to external threats or simply the passage of time. Over the last hundred years, heritage has transformed into a pervasive cultural phenomenon and is widely accepted as a universal value. Even though it was originally based on dominant and institutionalised narratives rooted in culturally specific Western values, the concept has been "morphing" due to contemporary international cultural and geopolitical dynamics (see Littler & Naidoo, 2004), and heritage is now almost everywhere. Moreover, the advancement in heritage studies brought a focused shift from primarily the preservation of material artefacts and architecture to the analytical discourse surrounding heritage itself and how it is interwoven with other aspects of the contemporary world (see Graham, Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2000). This "discursive turn" has helped reveal the power dynamics involved in heritage identification and management (Harrison, 2013b: 95-113), while the progressive expansion of the idea of heritage highlighted its relevance to the anthropological enquiry on culture and tradition (MacDonald, 2016).

Currently, the idea is that heritage does not possess a universally agreed-upon value; instead, what is valued as culturally significative depends on context-specific norms. Moulded by specific cultural interpretations, heritage is an ongoing act of engagement with the past, done in the present, aiming at the future. In this sense, the selection of "a past" through artefacts, landscapes and traditions is not limited to preserving them but is instead aimed at transforming them into resources for the present and investments for the future in cultural, political and/or economical terms (Graham & Howard, 2008a). Thus, heritage is an active occurrence of the present and a creative engagement with the past aimed at shaping future identities and memories (see Harvey, 2001; Lowenthal, 2004).

Thus, heritage is not a matter of fact per se: no object, place or practice have heritage value for their mere existence. Heritage is then not an inherited

characteristic but a constructed one, depending on the attitudes that people and communities have toward it (Harvey, 2001; 2008; Smith, 2006; Harrison, 2013b). Moreover, heritage is constructed and shaped by how people interact with it in space and time (see e.g. Byrne, 2008). The fundamental condition that is required for heritage, in order for it to be recognised as such, is to be perceived as authentic (within a specific community). However, authenticity itself is not inherent, but attached to heritage depending on people's expectations over it to be the "materialization" of their cultural identity and memory.

2.1 Heritage at the Intersection Between Memory and Identity

During the last decades of the past century, an intense new interest toward memory and forgetfulness -as the opposite of remembrance- spread in the social and human sciences (see Misztal, 2003). The changing perception and comprehension of time (and space) connected to globalization, and the progress of technologies brought about new sensibilities about the past. These were reflected in the growing prominence of memory discourses and increasing social interest in commemoration and remembering in Europe and the United States during the early 1980s (see Huyssen, 1995a, b). This broad cultural trend toward the past defined a "memory industry" (Klein, 2000) and seeped not only into visual arts and literature, but also into people's everyday life through the media. As tv channels specialized in history were created, the retro aesthetics became more appealing and home films and memoirs favoured an increasing emphasis on personal memory (Huyssen, 2000). Memory thus entered academic discourses and became a prominently invoked concept in books and scholarly articles in a diverse range of fields: from history to sociology, from anthropology to material culture studies. Finally, this fascination for memory had a significant influence in the museums and heritage management sectors too.

2.1.1 Social memory and identity

Despite the fact that memory has been essential in helping countries create official origin narratives, this worldwide cultural fixation on memory developed alongside a deep-seated fear of forgetting. This growing interest in forgetting initially emerged from public engagement with the Holocaust and the case of the *desaparecidos* in Latin America, making it clear that the societal demand to

remember and the anxiety surrounding forgetting was closely tied to trauma and repressed memories (see Huyssen, 2000; Klein, 2000). The new culture of memory was embraced by subaltern movements, which emphasized the intrinsic link between history, memory, and power. By questioning prevailing historical narratives and exposing them as tools of control over underprivileged populations, these movements demonstrated how the past can be deployed for political goals. Even though these types of "usable" pasts constructed through memory aspire to accuracy, it should be mentioned that they have also been considered in opposition to history (Wertsch, 2002: 30-33, 40-43), defined as critical and intellectual reconstructions of the past, detached from direct experiences (Nora 1989, 8-9).

Beyond the individual perspective, the idea of memory entered the collective realm. Since Halbwachs (1992) introduced the socially constructed notion of collective memory at the intersection of history and individual memory, proliferation of vocabulary referring to this new perception of the mnemonic activity developed to define collective, cultural, public, social, historic memory (see Misztal, 2003; Wertsch, 2002). This super-personal type of memory, that resonates across various fields, subjects and geographies, is highly influenced by the present. In addition to common values, ideology and belief systems it is influenced by the social, political, and economic environment in which it arises. Rooted in specific communities or groups, it reflects distinct cultural norms and remains both negotiable and diverse in its expressions. Thus, as these memories are not only actions of remembrance of the past they also lead to significant challenges regarding authenticity, identity, and power (see e.g. Olick & Robbins, 1998: 111-112; Climo & Cattell, 2002, 3-5; Wertsch, 2002: 66). Social memory often constitutes a contested space between dominant powers and marginalized groups as it can be both used to reveal marginalization as well as to validate power. While national governments utilize historical narratives to establish collective identities and legitimize their power, "counter-memory" as theorized by Foucault (1977) challenges these official discourses by reclaiming marginalized and silenced voices (see Olick & Robbins 1998, 126-128). Since it requires balancing conflicting political, cultural, and societal interests, reaching an agreement on social memory is a difficult process.

Contrary to academic approved history, personal or collective memory's emotive power is fundamental for identity formation. Moreover, discourses about memory are strictly linked to reflections on identity, as the last cannot be comprehended without considering its temporal dimension: the ways we place ourselves inside historical narratives find expression in our identities. In the 90s, an expansion of these concepts went beyond essentialist and individual definitions of identity. On the one hand, individual and group identities started to be interpreted as dynamic phenomena and ongoing practices rather that inherent qualities (Olick & Robbins, 1998: 122). On the other hand, observing that historical and social identity are strongly related clarified that belonging to a community requires placing individuals in reference to their collective past, even if it means rejecting it Simultaneously, communities use their bonds to the past to define themselves by also retelling their foundation narratives. In such cases, the concept of community itself revolves around the temporal dimension of identity (Hobsbaw 1972; Olick and Robbins, 1998: 122-126). Sharing, reiterating and reinterpreting collective memories—whether they were experienced firsthand or passed down orally— is a social process that creates emotional layers, interpersonal connections and maintains a sense of cohesion over time. Indeed, collective memory can provide a sense of continuity, belonging, and emotional security for both individuals and groups (Smith 2006, 63-65). The emotionality that naturally influences memory and identity formation and affirmation processes is then transferred in heritage as a constantly renegotiated materialisation of these values (see Prats, 1997; Fabre, 2013).

2.1.2 Memory and identity through heritage

The act of remembering emerges through dynamic interactions between individuals and their environments. What gives power to memory is the fact that it "takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects" (Nora, 1989: 9). Museums and heritage sites are prominent in memory formation processes and, conversely, they are shaped by the growing prominence of memory and identity discourses. Indeed, scholarly debates about heritage frequently locate in the intersection between memory and identity (see e.g. Lowenthal 1985; Huyssen 1995; Graham & Howard 2008a). Lowenthal's reflections on the past pointed out

the role of heritage in reconnecting people to their past and favour identity formation (McDowell 2008; Graham & Howard 2008b). Heritage fulfils people's need to connect with the past by providing a sense of (false) continuity through a constant process of re-examination, recognition and transformation, which it is intricately linked to who people are and what they stand for today. Even though they are always open to modern interpretations, historical landscapes, monuments, and artifacts serve as concrete reminders of the past and "remembering the past is crucial for our sense of identity" (Lowenthal, 1985: 197). In reality, heritage is a dynamic construct created and shaped by an ongoing interaction between the past and the present, emerging through our active engagement with it. This continuous exchange between expressions of memory and identity and the realm of heritage challenges the validity of authenticity claims, as heritage is continually reshaped by the ways people engage with it whether through consumption, commodification, or political and ideological use (Lowenthal, 1985; Urry, 1996). In turn, the malleable nature of heritage has made its intersection with history complex and debated. Stating that "heritage should not be confused with history" (Lowenthal, 2011) historians highlight how heritage is susceptible to "historical narratives" and can be instrumental for identity construction, even if it has the potential to democratize history and make it more comprehensible and accessible (see Moody, 2015). Recognising the connection between heritage and identity both in practice and in theory, the scholarly discourse has reflected on how identities have been expressed and legitimized through heritage, both intentionally and unintentionally. In turn, identity influenced both our conception of heritage, and the official procedures related to it. The role that tangible heritage plays in defining and representing national identity, especially in terms of monumental, rare, or valuable symbols of national identity highlight the political role of heritage for nation building purposes. Indeed, traditional heritage studies usually express national narratives (see Winter, 2015), as heritage has only sometimes been employed as a cross-cultural instrument to promote understanding between cultures (see Witcomb, 2015). However, heritage can also be used as a political and cultural tool for defining and validating the identities of sub-national groups and for questioning dominant cultural or societal norms and established identities (see e.g. Tunbridge, 2008). In

sum, heritage would provide a tangible form to the intangible and elusive concept of 'identity', by situating it into an historical narrative. However, considering that identities themselves are multilayered and mutable, even their relationship with heritage isn't static nor univocal (Smith 2006: 48-53; Climo & Cattell, 2002: 33-36).

Monuments, museums, and public commemorations are examples of seemingly permanent representations of the past that are actually subject to contestation and reinterpretation. Heritage has the potential to elevate memory to the status of history and use it for political ends, both to validate existing power systems and to reveal marginalization (Olick and Robbins, 1998: 126-128). In this context, "museums, like memory, mediate the past, present, and future" (Davison 2005, 145). In producing memory of the past through processes of the present, museums play a key role in defining official (national) narratives by displaying official versions of the past that eventually get institutionalized as public memory. Because of this, museums exhibitions might also create conflicts due to discrepancies between public expectations over controversial commemorative events and situated historical narratives (Wertsch, 2002: 42-43, Linenthal, 1996: 21-27). Even though museums are frequently regarded as objective stewards of authentic collective memory, curatorial practices are intrinsically arbitrary and subjective, thus "selective memory" may be a better definition of their outcome (Davison, 2005). Indeed, collections and exhibitions do not only serve as tangible reminders of the past but also as the institution's own values and practices, which are frequently shaped by power relations. Generally speaking, visitors to museums and historical places are projected into a material past but do not passively consume it. Through "reminiscence" visitors actively engage with historical objects and places to ignite both personal and collective memories. This cultural performance of remembrance ignites multi-vocal interpretation of heritage or museum collections that may challenge official narratives, present alternate viewpoints and thus democratize historical memory. Post-colonial approaches have exposed the contested and fluid character of heritage by questioning prevailing narratives and emphasizing subaltern perspectives that may not be conducive to nation-building

outcomes (Smith, 2006: 57). This has made room for alternative memories and frequently disregarded histories to emerge (see Urry, 1996).

In the contemporary paradigm, memories not only can be projected into tangible (collectable) objects, but also gain power in this objectification process (Figlio 2003: 152, 162). Accordingly, traditional forms of heritage have exclusively been connected to materiality for expressing authorized memory and identity from a specifically Western perspective. In this sense, the recognition of the significance of tangible heritage reinforces the bias that materialized memory holds greater power, thereby affirming the legitimacy of heritage in its tangible form. As material items associated with memory acquire self-evident legitimacy, those forms of memory that are not associated with tangible cultural expressions frequently lose lose validity and those groups that ground their identity in that collective memory have been, and are, frequently overlooked by institutionalised heritage discourses (Smith, 2006: 61). Not only intangible forms of mnemonic practice such as oral traditions have been subject to prejudice, but also the recognition of those 'heritage traces' without 'substance', frequently a reflection of a counter-narrative and expression of subaltern groups' memory passed from generation to generation, have been for long delegitimized because of their lack of materiality (see e.g. Byrne, 2003). Paradoxically, memory itself is intangible, just like the processes of remembering that are at the base of knowledge transmission and cultural production (both in its tangible and intangible forms). Moreover, sometimes it is the absence of materiality that authorizes a memory as heritage. Harrison's conceptualisation of the global phenomenon of "absent heritage" (2013: 169-192) that results in the conservation of voids or absent elements discusses the memorialisation of places and objects whose significance ties into their absence or destruction often the result of iconoclasm or violent events. The absence of tangibility in the empty niches of the Bamiyan Buddhas or the 9/11 memorial centre retain symbolic power and serve as visual representations specific events.

The idea of a "logical synthesis" between tangible and intangible heritage, as described by Van Vuuren (2008), can be applied to the connection between identity and memory. These elements do not exist independently, but are deeply interwoven and mutually influential. Practices of memory do not operate in

isolation, they are supported by material components, such places, monuments, or artifacts which, in turn, are legitimized as heritage through memory itself. Because intangible heritage cannot exist without memory and only acquires significance in connection to identity, tangible heritage thus serves as a tool for its preservation and interpretation. At the same time, tangible heritage cannot truly exist without memory and the intangible processes of knowledge transmission and formation that give it meaning and context. Considering this inextricability of tangible and intangible interferences in heritage-making and recalling the idea that heritage is an active process that contributes to, and is influenced by, collective and social memory (to favour or disrupt official narratives) it is clear that heritage in not something static to be simply preserved. Intuitively, whether understood as a tangible or intangible expression, it is rather a cultural tool for continuous negotiation of meaning and identity, mediated through memory practices. This holistic conception of heritage makes it "something we do" rather than "something we have" (Smith, 2006: 65-66).

2.2 The Ideal of an Authentic Tradition

Etymologically, tradition comes from the Latin *tradere* and refers to the transmission of knowledge over time, from generation to generation within a specific group. Essentially, a tradition is something that is created in the present (Handler & Linnekin, 1984) and, while made through its time-deepness and cultural specificity, it constantly renewed and reinterpreted rather than an unchangeable inheritance. If heritage can be seen as a -never neutral- discursive process which connect collective memory and social identity, the narratives that revolve around it create a tradition that upholds the group's legitimacy for the future generations (Rowlands, 2002: 108). While a tradition combines past, present and future as it needs to change in order to stay relevant, its perceived authenticity depends on social memory and to collective identity.

The concept of authenticity has been the subject of extensive scholarly debate and has been approached from a many disciplinary and theoretical perspectives (see e.g. Lindholm, 2008; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). Far from being a universally fixed or objective attribute, authenticity has been increasingly understood as

culturally constructed notion with projective nature, shaped by the historical, social, and philosophical specificities of Western modernity (see e.g. Appadurai, 1986: 45; Trilling, 1972; Greenwood, 1977; 1982; MacCannell, 1973; Cohen, 1988). Arguing that authenticity is not a static or inherent property, but rather something that is continuously negotiated within specific cultural settings, it reflects the values and ideologies of those who interpret and engage with it. More specifically, this perspective suggests that dominant interpretations of authenticity, are deeply rooted in Western ontology and, more specifically, are based on individuality even when it is extended to -individual- nations or groups (see e.g. Handler, 1986).

Once the debate between materialist and constructivist approaches was brought into the field of heritage studies and tourism it became clear that authenticity emerges from the dynamic and reciprocal interaction between objects, places, and people (see Jones, 2010). According to this perspective, people use their memories and sense of identity to define what constitutes authentic heritage within specific cultural settings. Simultaneously, acknowledging heritage's authentic value serves to consolidate and legitimize memory and identity on both a personal and a social scale (see Lipovetsky, 2022). Within the context of neoliberal modernity, and as a response to the cultural erosion, alienation, and fragmentation often associated with the contemporary Western world, heritage becomes a powerful tool for cultural and political re-evaluation and reappropriation of the past (see e.g. Davis, 1979; Samuel, 1994). Its use and commodification are driven by an idealized quest for authenticity in cultural identity, seen as a way to restore a genuine sense of self (Rowlands, 2002: 106). Most importantly, the colonial tension between Western modernity and tradition (Walsh & Mignolo, 2018) becomes paradoxical when the very quest for authenticity, rooted in colonial epistemologies (Bendix, 1997), turns to tradition in search of the "lost essence" that modernity itself has displaced.

2.2.1 Authenticity in the Heritage Discourse

Even though the term "authenticity" did not appear in reference to heritage until the second half of the 20th century, the idea of an intrinsic value connected to historic truthfulness of tangible expressions of culture, in particular architecture, had developed a century before. Historical buildings and monuments were recognised not just as expressions of national identity and official history, but also

as spaces for the construction of identity and collective memory charged with "character and historical values" (Silverman, 2015a)[17]. Authenticity was mentioned for the first time in terms of heritage preservation in the ICOMOS Venice International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments (1964: art. 9). This first definition highlighted how expert-approved authenticity was a crucial factor in assessing the value of cultural property. The Venice Charter's notion of authenticity became fundamental in scholarly debates for conservation and restoration projects, including the procedures for listing sites under cultural heritage inventories. Indeed, while the 1972 UNESCO Convention do not mention authenticity, it was considered a fundamental criterion for the selection of heritage to be included in the World Heritage List (UNESCO, 1977).

However, possibly the most relevant official document on this topic is the Nara Document on Authenticity (1994). Influenced by ongoing scholarly debates in the field of heritage studies, practices and documents (see e.g. Burra Chart, 1979; UNESCO, 1989; NAGPRA, 1990; ICOMOS-New Zealand, 1992), the 1994 document provided a complete turn in the perception of this concept referred to cultural expressions. Aimed at broadening the understanding of authenticity within heritage conservation, the Nara Document marked a shift from the Eurocentric norms previously established in the Venice Charter. Changing from expert-driven validation and universal standards in evaluating authenticity, it suggested more context-specific and culturally sensitive perspectives by placing a strong emphasis on local-specific customs and value attribution systems. Indeed, it acknowledged the diversity of cultural expressions and promoted community involvement in the authenticity assessment process, while taking into account the importance of memory and identity in order to simultaneously contrast

[17] Indeed, when Europe was stroke by political, economic and then cultural abrupt changes, a need to contrast incipient change and face new forms of modernity was expressed through a renovated attention toward architecture, as expressions of national identity and official history (Silverman, 2015a). While this antiquarian interest resulted in significant restorations, Ruskin (1849: 221-247) opposed to any intervention over ancient buildings as their historical essence (namely their authenticity) lies in the marks left by time. His beliefs that historic buildings are essential spaces for the construction of identity and collective memory and therefore deserves care and respect, influenced the approach toward historic monuments in the following years. Indeed, the challenge to preserve structures' "character and historical values" was clearly stated in the Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments (1931) and, even more importantly, it was accompanied by the expressed need to construct this perception of antiquity and cultural specificity of the site (see Silverman, 2015a).

nationalisms and globalizations (artt. 4, 8). In redefining the concept of authenticity, the Nara Document was also pivotal in overcoming the exclusivity of material concerns, by promoting a shift toward intangible cultural expressions (art.7).

During the following decades, as recommended in the Nara Document, heritage workers have been trying and deal with changing ideas and practices for preserving both tangible and intangible heritage. Following occasions such as the Interamerican Symposium on Authenticity in the Conservation and Management of the Cultural Heritage (San Antonio, 1996), the World Heritage Centre meeting in Great Zimbabwe (1999) and the ICCROM reunion held in the World Heritage city of Riga (2000; see Stovel, 2001) kept the discussion open on the topics highlighted in Nara. Discussing those reflections by applying them to specific regional situations, the meetings (and resulting documents) focused on the relationship between authenticity an identity, intangible cultural expression, community involvement and economic aspects such as tourism (Stovel, 2008). Nara's considerations and their related discussions were later adopted by the ICOMOS General Assembly (1999) and included in the UNESCO Operational Guidelines (2005b).

Authenticity plays a fundamental role in shaping our understanding of cultural heritage. Although the idea is complex and frequently contested, it has remained a crucial standard for determining the importance and value of material cultural manifestation. However, the crucial function of authenticity, especially within the UNESCO framework, came under increased scrutiny as intangible parts of cultural production started to receive recognition, not only entering the heritage discourse, but also being judged significant enough to be safeguarded. References to authenticity disappeared in the official documents. Neither the Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore (1989) nor the regulations for the Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral Heritage of Humanity included authenticity as an evaluation criterion (Aikawa-Faure, 2009: 14-21). According to the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), the definition of Intangible Heritage is based on the idea that, for its own survival, it is constantly "recreated by communities and groups in response to their

environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity" (art. 2). What makes intangible heritage relevant for a community's identity and memory is thus the ability of the community itself to change and adapt its cultural expressions depending on the context. Thus, not merely any materialist approach to authenticity is excluded, but also any conception of "truthfulness to oneself" over time fails to provide that aura of authenticity that would make a cultural expression "heritage". Even though its efficacy as an evaluation criterion for intangible heritage was excluded by UNESCO (2003), its ideal remained ingrained in our understanding of cultural heritage so that it became, in some cases paradoxical. For example, while the Yamato Document (UNESCO, 2004) stated that authenticity "is not relevant when identifying and safeguarding intangible cultural heritage", it still remained a fundamental criterion for the evaluation of the ICH to be inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage Lists (Bortolotto, 2011: 11-14). Indeed, the belief in the authenticity of Intangible Cultural Heritage remains necessary even if not completely valid, within the institutionalised discourse. Heritage agents (professionals and institutions) work toward the protection of they believe to be "authentic" cultural forms and assume them to be faithful to what they have always been over time, immutably anchored "into a past beyond memory" (Skounti, 2009). However, these traditions must unavoidably change, giving up some of their "authentic" traits, in order survive and then be acknowledged as heritage. In short, the illusion of an immutable "authentic" Intangible Cultural Heritage not only is necessary in terms of motivating engagement with preservation efforts, but also lies at the heart of the heritage-making process. When the concept of authenticity is ultimately a necessary constructed belief that supports heritage existence and preservation in the contemporary world, then "invented tradition" (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983) and "emergent authenticity" (Cohen, 1988) surface. Aligning to this discourse, "hyper-traditions" might emerge within those groups that perceive a "loss of culture" due to globalisation or being part of a diaspora, for example. These (re-) constructed cultural collective identities, based on the need to re-engage with heritage, challenge the idea of traditions' authenticity based on cultural homogeneity and geographical specificity (AlSayyad 2006). On the other hand, Clifford takes a step forward in reflecting on cultural transformation through his

theory of “articulation”, thus considering cultural formations as “articulated ensembles” of elements (e.g. religion, language, etc) that can be reconnected in different combinations; thus, rather than “inventing”, “communities can and must reconfigure themselves, drawing selectively on remembered pasts” in a continuous social, cultural and political process of “articulation” of cultural elements (2013: 60-63).

Being a Western concept aimed at Western finalities, authenticity has been a key factor in defining heritage, which is itself a Western necessity in terms of memory and identity. In this sense, when the institutionalised heritage discourse started to include different perspective on cultural expressions, authenticity was questioned. Despite this, deluded expectations or active constructions of authenticity in the heritage framework developed within the problematic economy of global tourism and heritage industry. Tourism as a contemporary cultural phenomenon, in all its forms, has had repercussions on power balances between the Global North and South and has been the object of extensive research. Through commodification, heritage tourism has been influencing the practices of representing and communicating cultural identities (see e.g Porter, 2008; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998), influencing their produced/perceived “authenticity” as a consequence (Greenwood, 1977; 1982; MacCannell, 1973; Cohen, 1988). Inevitably affected by these worldwide phenomena, the practices of crafting adapted to demand and became an economic venture as well, once again raising issues about authentic tangible expressions of local cultures (see Graburn, 1976).

As further developed in chapter 5 and 6, textiles are central in the paradoxes of local discrimination and national celebration of Andean identities, constructed through the voluntarily selected memory of a pre-modern idealised uncontaminated past. Indeed, during the last few decades, Andean textile practices have been strongly influenced by a safeguard and revitalising approach, moved by the perception of a disappearing “authentic tradition”. Then absorbed by the tourism economy from which they originally wanted to protect it from, Andean “traditional” textiles have been standardized for tourists while parallelly evolving for cultural use in forms that are now far from their perception of “traditional authenticity”. At the same time, the economic reliance on the commodification of

an “authentic” Andean identity expressed though textiles has led to an oversaturated market, which ultimately limits the financial profits available to weavers and erodes the sustainability of their work.

Figure 11: Local weavers performing their “authentic traditional” knowledge for judges during a fair, Pitumarca

2.3 Evolving Heritage: From Tangible to Intangible

Rather than a recent movement, heritage production should be seen as a continuous process and an essential part of the human experience. Individuals have always had some sort of relationship with their past as they decide to remember, forget, memorialize, or even invent about it. If heritage is shaped by people's changing identities, values, and concerns, as well as their lived experiences and emotional perceptions, then it is not fixed, nor is its meaning. Thus, heritage changes along with societies and reflects the evolution of national or other collective identities and their shifts of power. It represents the changing ways that societies construct, understand, and connect to the past: processes that are constantly influenced by more general social, political, economic and technological developments. Indeed, the idea of heritage not straightforward nor evolved with

linearity in a chronological way, but it is a dynamic and changing narrative (Prats, 1997; Harvey, 2001; 2008).

After the nationalisation process following the French Revolution and as a consequence of the disruption of social cohesion due to the Industrial Revolution, the modern idea of heritage has developed in 19th century Europe imbued in illuminism and influenced by the principles at the core of colonial expansion. As much as Romanticism influenced the recognition of nature as a form of heritage, the combination of nationalistic and racial discourses inspired the institutionalisation of museums and affected the growing interest in preserving ancient buildings. Both collections and monuments were considered the epitomes of the ideas of nation, history and identity, and their conservation became essential for educating the public. This interest in preserving material evidence of the past as an instrument of memory and identity developed with a great impulse during the second half of the 20th century. From this moment and further pushed by the development of heritage tourism in the following decades, national and international regulations were published (see e.g. Prats, 1997; Harvey, 2008). Concurrently, the academic debate about the origins, nature and aims of heritage sparked the critical rethinking of concepts underpinning the meaning of heritage itself such as authenticity, memory and identity (see above). Moreover, within a context of post-coloniality, the restricted Western idea and practice of heritage were questioned, aspiring to a more inclusive re-evaluation (see Smith, 2006: 16-28). This phenomenon swept over the original conception of heritage. This change and its paradoxes can be observed through the progressive inclusion of intangible forms of cultural expression within the material representation of heritage, before then exclusive.

Since the 1950s there was an expansion of the concept of heritage, both theoretically and geographically (see Vecco, 2010). Indeed, the Second World War spiked a general preoccupation toward the destruction of heritage which pushed for a renovated interest toward its protection and resulted in the 1954 Hague Convention (UNESCO Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict) which originated as a legal instrument aimed at protecting tangible "cultural property" in the context of inter-state warfare. While

the Hague Convention reflected largely Western priorities, it was also the first international document to include in its provisions the cultural heritage of "every people" (1954: art.1). The term "heritage" was first formally introduced into the international protection framework with the 1972 UNESCO Convention, which defined heritage as either cultural such as monuments, groups of buildings, and sites, or natural, including natural features, geological formations, and natural sites. Although the convention marked a significant milestone in heritage preservation, it faced criticism for its heavy emphasis on monumental and tangible sites. This universalistic approach toward a definition of heritage that prioritize material heritage tended to benefit industrialized nations, especially those in Western Europe while largely overlooking the rich intangible cultural expressions of non-Western countries and marginalized sub-national groups (see Cleere, 2001). During the following decades, Bolivia and other countries suggested assessing the issues regarding intangible cultural expressions and these debates brought to widening the concept of heritage with the progressive inclusion of intangible expressions of culture in the UNESCO official discourse[18]. The 1989 Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore by UNESCO marked the first significant step forward, even if its non-binding nature made it ineffective. In this document, the idea of "preserving/conserving" heritage was substituted by the more dynamic concept of "safeguarding" that would recognise the changeable nature of intangible heritage. On the other hand, the definition of "folklore" as "the totality of tradition-based creations of a cultural community, expressed by a group or individuals and recognized as reflecting the expectations of a community in so far as they reflect its cultural and social identity; its standards and values are transmitted orally, by imitation or by other means" was criticised as limited and charged with colonial meanings (van Zanten, 2004). The importance of orality was further evaluated during the 1997 international consultation in Marrakesh where experts introduced the idea of "Oral Heritage of Mankind" (UNESCO, 1997). Following this consultation, UNESCO took a significant step toward appreciating intangible heritage and launched the programme Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of

[18] See Blake (2001) for a synthesis of previous institutional measures that brought to the UNESCO 2003 Convention.

Humanity (1999-2005). The Programme, which was aimed at recognising and safeguarding cultural traditions at risk of disappearing, sparked some discussions as well. On the one hand, the idea of a "masterpiece" cast doubt on who has the authority to determine what is considered culturally significant (Blake, 2001: 46; Alivizatou 2007b). On the other hand, some experts expressed concern that registering intangible heritage would trigger “conservation" once again, with the risk of freezing these evolving cultural expressions and making them meaningless[19]. The growing engagement of non-Western countries within the activities of international organizations like ICOMOS and UNESCO brought a growing awareness of alternative understandings of heritage. In particular, the collaboration with African and Asian professionals played a key role in shifting the perspective on heritage within the organization, by bringing attention to and legitimizing the concept of intangibility (see e.g. ICOMOS, 2003). The 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was drafted as a result of these discussions, and a special fund was created to assist in the implementation of national and international listings. This change of perspective in international jurisdiction reflected, and was in turn greatly influenced by, the critical research of non-Western academics and heritage practitioners who have contested prevailing ideologies and worked on a more inclusive, broad definition of heritage (see e.g. Cleere, 2001, Teather & Chow, 2003; Munjeri, 2004). Even though the convention moved away from the controversial notion of “masterpieces”, or the idea of authenticity (see above), to embrace the broader concept of “Intangible Cultural Heritage” it still highlighted difficulties in the recognition of intangible heritage and issues regarding the measures it proposed (see Kurin, 2004; 2012[2003]). This was made clear in the small number of states in the global north, -including the United States and many in Europe- that have ratified the 2003 Convention once it came out. In a post-colonial setting, ratification would entail governmental acknowledgment of Indigenous or sub-national heritage systems, and which may cause conflict with the official identity discourse (Smith, 2006: 55, 108-109; see e.g. Harrinson, 2010). In the 2003 UNESCO Convention, the definition of heritage encompassed new

[19] See Nas (2001) and the included comments by various experts for a comprehensive overview of discussion on the topic. See also Alivizatou (2007).

cultural elements, and not only included “practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills” but also “instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith”. Despite this, and even though already in 1996 UNESCO wrote that “the tangible can only be interpreted through the intangible” (UNESCO, 1996: 194-195), heritage is still typically separated into intangible and tangible forms within the official international discourse. A step forward from this institutional separation took place with the Faro Convention (Council of Europe, 2005: art.2), which do not make any distinction between tangible and intangible, but rather focused on heritage in relation to the values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions that communities attach to it.

Along with this progressive desertion from the UNESCO separation, Munjeri’s (2004) and Smith’s (2006) perspectives reevaluate the predominance of intangibility over materiality. Tangible elements such as objects and collections, sites and buildings are only recognized as heritage when they are attributed meanings that reflect the values of a society. In this sense, the relevance of material forms of heritage is gained through intangible dimensions, such as cultural beliefs, memories, and social practices, that shape how heritage should be interpreted and valued (Munjeri, 2004: 13). Further developing this idea, Smith (2006: 53-57) argues that the formal division between “tangible” and “intangible” forms of heritage is outdated and heritage should be understood as fundamentally intangible. She recognizes that all heritage, whether it is expressed through material sites or immaterial practices, depends on the values and meanings attributed to it by society. Thus, what heritage management and preservation truly engage with are not merely physical sites or oral histories, but the interpretative processes that give them significance.

For the scope of this research, I will go further on the relation between tangible and intangible cultural expressions. The very existence of heritage depends on the ways in which communities -on a local or international level- engage with and ascribe meaning to it, from constructing authenticity, to using it to define social identity and cultivate collective memory. Even though heritage is shaped by culturally specific and inherently intangible processes, materiality has a fundamental role in every form of cultural expression even if only in the limits and

possibilities of the tangible human bodies that transmit knowledge. While in Northerns epistemologies, influenced by the Judeo-Christian distinction between body and soul, the predominance of the "epistemic" subject (the mind) tends to silence or regard the body as a blank passive vessel of human experience, the "embodied knowledge" is fundamental in Southern epistemologies which place a strong emphasis on knowledge as something that exists within the form of living beings, as we think feel and remember through the body (de Sousa Santos, 2018: 87-90). Thus, to interact with their environment, people use their knowledge and bodies to modify material natural elements in ways that are culturally specific. In many traditional practices, including craftsmanship, knowledge is created in the interaction between humans and their environment. This perspective on the dynamic relationship between "embodied knowledge" and people's ways of interacting with their natural environments allows for the preservation and renewal of specific cultural information over time. Tangible objects not only legitimize memory and identity but are also a primary mean of expressing value and cultural knowledge in general. Technical, practical, and symbolic notions are transmitted from one generation to the next through materiality, which is an essential medium in the transmission of cultural knowledge. In this sense, materiality and immateriality are deeply intertwined and cannot be separated when assessing the cultural significance or heritage value of a practice or object.

Andean praxis coincide with this framework as the weaving creative process is understood as part of a nurturing circle of interdependent elements that include people, materials, animals and the environment. In this intergenerational circle of knowledge transmission, humans interact with materiality through feelings and thoughts, mind and body. These concepts that deny the possibility to separate the tangible and intangible in Andean textiles will be analysed in depth in chapters 5 and 6.

Figure 12: Ruth weaving a small double-sided band, Calca

2.4 Intangible Heritage and Cultural Rights

As already explained, what we currently identify as heritage does not exist in a void, nor it is innate, but is has been shaped throughout time by a variety of influences. Within this process, diverse interests by diverse stakeholders can have a defining role. Essentially, heritage is closely tied to specific communities, yet often shaped by broader influences. When heritage has an officially recognised identitarian imprint, it can be utilized in political campaigns; On the other hand, if a minority feels represented by it, heritage can become an element for gaining respect and recognition. Within each specific context, the presence and recognition

of heritage can also bring economic consequences in terms of providing jobs, investment, and tourism. Perceiving heritage as a dynamic, ongoing process that allows cultural identity, meaning, and value to be negotiated in the present rather than as a permanent element or static representation of the past, makes space for marginalised communities and subaltern voices. Highlighting the significance of contesting prevailing, expert-driven narratives and governance structures, this approach shows that the true value of heritage is found in its active, contemporary use, not in strict preservation. Heritage relevance in contemporary society should lay in the ways that communities constantly engage with and reinterpret it to satisfy their political and cultural needs (see e.g. Smith, 2006). Heritage conservation should not aim at freezing a specific image of the past, but rather "managing the changes". This is possible only when tangibility and intangibility of heritage are considered equally relevant and communities are involved from recognising it to actively maintaining it alive (see Kamel-Ahmed, 2015).

Even though the right to preserve one's cultural heritage, particularly intangible heritage, is seen as essential to maintaining cultural identity and global diversity, the relationship between cultural heritage, human rights, and cultural diversity frequently presents both theoretical and practical difficulties (see Silverman & Ruggles, 2007). As Rowlands (2002: 107-109) highlights, two relatively novel understandings of the right to "possess" a culture have been introduced in recent international debates on cultural rights. The first focuses on the value of both individual and group awareness of cultural identity and the right to preserve it. Cultural traditions and expressions that are today the focus of political debate were once lived spontaneously, without ideological superstructures. As a result, people are defining, safeguarding, and deliberately giving value to their cultural identity, so that culture is no longer just lived but actively discussed, reinterpreted, and sometimes contested (see e.g. Prott, 2001). Secondly, if culture is perceived as something that one can "possess," and thus asserted legally as a type of property, the application of the corresponding legal framework creates a certain amount of uncertainty (see e.g. Strathern, 1999). This issue permeated into the Intellectual Property (IP) debate, also becoming increasingly relevant in discussions about heritage protection, cultural sustainability, and ethical engagement.

2.4.1 Cultural Diversity Through Heritage

During the second half of the last century, the perception on culture itself has changed alongside the idea of heritage. The definition of "culture" included in the 1982 World Conference on Cultural Policies in Mexico City included "not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and belief". In the following years, the UNESCO diversity protection programme developed according to these premises and in response to the idea that globalisation was a form of colonial dominance and homogenization a threat for preservation of cultural diversity (Logan, 2008: 444-445) [20]. Moreover, since the Nara Document recognised that authenticity was culturally specific, and thus heritage value depended on its original context, the universalistic approach that had originally defined the heritage discourse became meaningless and made some room for a more balanced participation in the debate. Indeed, in 1994, the World Heritage Committee adopted the Global Strategy for a more balanced and representative World Heritage List, which was leaning toward a more inclusive idea of heritage. Once intangible forms of heritage started to be seen as representation of cultural diversity, UNESCO launched the 2000(a) "Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity", aiming at making up for the complete absence of legal instruments of protection (ibid.). A year later, the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity highlighted the importance of diversity in traditional cultural expressions (especially that of indigenous people), declared cultural diversity "as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature" (art.1) and inserted its defence in the realm of human rights (art.4). Encouraging to respect local heritage values as a way of embracing diverse identities, it recognised the role that heritage plays in shaping individual and collective identity, and subsequently cultural diversity. Around the same time a reassessment in the attitude toward heritage took place with human rights entering the heritage discourse (UNESCO 2003, art.2) as the perspective on heritage protection shifted from material conservation to intangible safeguard. The professional top-down approach focused on monumentality and the idea of

[20] The ongoing phenomenon of globalisation is not a simple one to tackle. Confronting perspective have interpreted globalisation as a menace for non-Wester cultures or its opposite in various terms (see e.g. Tomlinson 1999, Berger & Huntington, 2002).

heritage as an asset to be preserved for its universal value -the so-called Authorized Heritage (Smith, 2006; see chapter 3)-, were progressively substituted with a more inclusive model based on community-centred practices that recognizes and integrates local perspectives and knowledge. Thus, heritage is not something you simply preserve, but instead a dynamic force for the sustainable development[21] and the empowerment of the communities who created and live with it (Carnagie Council, 2004). Just as communities are the creators and bearers of heritage in their everyday lives, they should also have the cultural right to actively participate in the "metacultural" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004) process of heritage production, from identification to management of their own heritage (see Logan 2008). Indigenous claims for controlling their own heritage reflects the struggle over who has the authority to define a group's identity. Establishing a sense of belonging is a deeply powerful emotional and political act that depends on the way in which individual and collective memory is understood, commemorated and transmitted (see Smith, 2006: 36). In today's globalized world, where heritage has taken on worldwide significance as a marker of cultural value, the struggle to control it has increasingly turned into a conflict over ownership and property rights. To describe the vulnerability of Indigenous knowledge to be dismissed, appropriated, or redefined, Anderson (2015: 772-773) quotes the expression *gnaritas nullius*, namely "no one's knowledge". Introduced by the Indigenous scholar Greg Younging (2010), the phrase condemned the colonial dynamics that silenced indigenous agency over their looted traditional knowledge as colonial settlers failed to recognize the sophistication of the ancient systems. Similarly, Indigenous knowledge was historically ignored by Intellectual Property (IP) law, enabling its exploitation. When IP organizations eventually looked at "folklore," a complicated picture emerged that included both legal and historical injustice issues.

2.4.2 Cultural and Property Rights

Within the debates about how globalisation has been affecting cultural diversity, the relationship between universal human rights and unique cultural traditions, or

[21] For a comprehensive review of all the meaning s attached to "sustainable development" see Ubertazzi (2022: 67-118).

between individual and collective dimensions is particularly tense[22]. For instance, some communities may decide to forego tradition in favour of modernization and to profit financially from cultural tourism, even if doing so alters or erodes their intangible heritage and thus their sense of local identity. As heritage gains more and more significance as a holder of universal value, the international community's mandates in preserving it may contrast to communities' specific needs to manage their cultural expressions (see Watkins, 2005). At the same time, during the last three decades, preserving culture has been progressively recognised as crucial for a society's sustainable development, even in economic terms (see World Bank 1999). According to Article 2 of the UNESCO Convention on Intangible Heritage (2003), sustainable development is essential to the recognition and protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). For cultural heritage bearers, particularly Indigenous people, this means that they can continue to earn a living while upholding their unique traditions. By formally acknowledging the combined cultural and economic nature of cultural expressions, UNESCO took a step forward with the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005a). Marking a significant turning point in international cultural policy, it has situated heritage at the heart of the creative economy, as it drives the formulation of regulations that facilitate the production, distribution, and accessibility of cultural goods and services at different levels. When the economic worth of cultural heritage is overlooked, people who bear cultural value are more often forced to turn to other revenues for meeting their basic necessities, shifting away from traditional activities. Lack of financial support makes it difficult for them to dedicate their time to preserving, reviving, and passing on their heritage, which significantly exacerbates the loss of TK and skills (see e.g. Turner & Turner, 2008; Akins, 2022: 65-94). Thus, while commodifying the cultural knowledge and traditions of ethnic minorities is often seen as necessary for their survival, it still carries significant risks, especially for those communities that lack resources or familiarity with neoliberal systems, preventing them from fully benefiting from

[22] According to Logan (2007; 2008), the conflict between cultural diversity -unique by definition- and human rights - universal and all-encompassing- leads to a fundamental clash between cultural relativism and universalism. This paradox is inherent in UNESCO, which serves a global mission by fostering cultural diversity.

their own cultural assets. Mass tourism's expansion thrived in this unbalanced context, that favour escalating social injustices and deprive local communities of autonomy over cultural expression. Because external actors increasingly control how cultural heritage is marketed, this loss of agency can result in exploitation and misrepresentation. This marginalizes Indigenous groups and jeopardizes the integrity of "authentic" traditions, while also excluding local living customs. Within this uneven dynamic, cultural property rights are becoming central.

In particular, once rights held by individual tradition-bearers or entire communities over the expressions and practices that constitute their own "authentic" ICH are considered in an economic sense, they fall through the gaps in between ICH safeguards and IP protection. These cultural expressions are deeply rooted in specific cultural contexts (collective memories, and social identities), but if perceived as shared assets from the universalistic perspective typical of the heritage discourse, they might easily be appropriated without proper recognition, consent, or benefit to those who have created and sustained them over time. With the constant growth of global tourism economies and heritage industries, interest in "traditional" cultural expressions has increased as well. The commodification of ethnic minorities and their culturally specific knowledge have been increasing the risk that these communities may lose control over how their cultural expressions are used, represented, or commercialized. The relevance of these issues has been perceived by the United Nations since the Universal Declaration of 1948 (UN 1948: art. 27) which states not only that "everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community", but also "the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author". These principles are further clarified in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (2007: art. 31) which says: "Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and TCEs, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts. They also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual

property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions". Traditional Knowledge (TK) generally includes both the knowledge itself and the associated cultural expressions, both tangible and intangible. Traditional Cultural Expressions (TCEs), also known as "expressions of folklore," refer to the various ways in which traditional culture is conveyed. TCEs can be found in a wide range of media, including dance, music, visual arts, symbols, performances, rituals, architecture, crafts, and more[23]. In this sense, human rights[24] are directly connected to cultural rights and property rights -in the sense of IP rights[25]-.

The fact that the interest in protecting TCEs within the IP rights jurisdiction did not develop until the later 20th century (a couple of centuries after the first IP right were instituted) is clearly connected to the political, economic and overall cultural changes brought by the end of the 18th century colonial endeavours. As previously colonised countries gained their independence, they also gained consciousness about the damage that colonialism had brought to their cultural heritage and how that affected their expressions of collective memory and social identity. Thus, many African countries took part in the UN 1973 discussion about the restitution of works of art to countries that were victims of appropriation. Moreover, with the advent of global communication, infrastructure and technology, many communities that had remained isolated and protected from Western interference for their whole history, found themselves easily accessible with their once-hidden forms of TK becoming widely appropriated and commercially exploited, often without any form of compensation or benefit to the communities and countries of origin (Shyllon, 2015: 60-61). These new concerns were faced for the first time by

[23] The definitions of TK and TCEs can be found on WIPO official website: https://www.wipo.int/en/web/traditional-knowledge/tk/index (accessed on July 5th, 2025)
[24] For a more in-depth discussion about the relation of IPR and CH and Human Rights see Shyllon (2015), Yu (2007) and Ziegler (2007).
[25] IP rights are proprietary rights that not only ensure that creators are acknowledged as authors of the works (moral rights) but also give individuals or groups the limited exclusive right to control and benefit from their intellectual creations (patrimonial rights), whether in the industrial, scientific, literary, or artistic fields. These rights include copyrights, patents, trade secrets, and trademarks, which can be held individually or collectively. In addition to these traditional categories, there are also the so-called sui generis regimes that safeguard, among others, geographical indications, protected designations of origin, traditional specialty products, and even certain databases. IP rights are territorial legal tool, as they need to be enforced on a country-by-country basis (see Ubertazzi, 2022: 119-154)

the Tunisian government with the help of local experts, UNESCO and the United Nations agency WIPO: the Tunis Model Law (1976) granted special protection, with no time limit, to works of national folklore, even if they are not recorded in a physical form. However, the need for international measures became more and more pressing (see Blake, 2001: 13-31).

To face these issues, WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization, since 1967) and UNESCO[26] published in 1982 the Model Provisions for National Laws on the Protection of Expressions of Folklore against Illicit Exploitation and Other Forms of Prejudicial Action and, later on organised a World Forum in 1997 (Phuket, Thailand) to discuss the protection of folklore for elaborating an international legal instrument to protect its related IP[27]. However, negotiations started off as quite complex due to the opposition from countries that were benefitting from the unregulated use of TK (Aikawa-Faure, 2009: 15). After completing nine fact-finding missions (1998-1999) aimed at investigating IP needs and expectations of TK bearer, including Indigenous peoples (WIPO, 2001a), WIPO decided to broaden its coverage to include IP rights pertaining to genetic resources. Since this larger agenda went beyond UNESCO's purview, WIPO decided to carry on the negotiations on its own. While WIPO completed a Survey on Existing Forms of Intellectual Property Protection for Traditional Knowledge and between 2001 and 2003 (WIPO, 2001b), UNESCO's plan for preserving ICH resulted in the 2003 Convention, which not only mentions the economic relevance of ICH e in terms sustainable development but also clarify that its provisions should not be intended as "affecting the rights and obligations relating to intellectual property rights" (art. 3). On the other hand, in 2000 WIPO established the Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (IGC) for international agreements and negotiations, and in 2007 it

[26] Before the creation of WIPO, UNESCO already recognised the role of IP in the heritage discourse, thus considered the need for "protection of the rights of authors and other copyright proprietors in literary, scientific and artistic works, including writings, musical, dramatic and cinematographic works, and paintings, engravings and sculpture" in the Universal Copyright Convention (1952: art.2).

[27] As for WIPO (1988: 3) the objects of IP are "the creations of the human mind, the human intellect. [...] In a somewhat simplified way, one can state that intellectual property relates to pieces of information which can be incorporated in tangible objects at the same time in an unlimited number of copies at different locations anywhere in the world. The property is not in those copies but in the information reflected in those copies."

started working on the Creative Heritage Program to develop best practices and guidelines for managing IP issues when recording, digitizing and disseminating ICH (WIPO, 2007). Among other related issues, WIPO has been focusing on developing strategies to apply IP regulations to protect TK namely the knowledge rooted in traditional contexts, practices and techniques that are developed and transmitted within communities across generations, often reflecting their cultural identity. According to WIPO, fostering cultural diversity and safeguarding cultural heritage depends heavily on protecting TCEs. The fact that both organizations have included, even if in different forms, heritage and IP in each other's considerations, clarify the inevitable interconnection between safeguarding intangible forms of heritage and protecting IP rights. At the same time, their inability to collaborate toward a communal goal, sharing a collaborative approach, also shows how UNESCO and WIPO methodologies and purposes are fundamentally incompatible. UNESCO aims at ensuring the continued practice and transmission of ICH and WIPO at granting exclusive rights to control and benefit from TCEs, which may conflict with many cultural practices' open and collaborative character. For example, if we consider the practical case of Andean textiles, as it will be further examined in this research, IP protection could hypothetically help prevent inappropriate uses of specific iconographies, whereas ICH safeguarding would involve measures to support the transmission of the symbolic meanings or the physical preservation of the textile itself.

At this stage, the discussion around using IP principles to safeguard indigenous TCEs began to spark significant debate within academic circles as well (see e.g. Wendland, 2004). During the last three decades, scholars started to explore both the limitations and potentials of adapting existing IP frameworks to fit the specific nature of TK and TCEs. Among the concerns raised were the risks of turning ethical and cultural questions into market-based disputes, the tension between the need to protect secrecy and the idea of the public domain, and the evolution of cultures that naturally influence each other. The complexity of managing these issues has only grown in the context of the contemporary digital world. At the

same time, the legitimacy of Indigenous people's claims was held against the fundamentally Eurocentric system of IP itself, highlighting a deeper conflict[28].

Pivoting on the precedent of IP law adapting to include software management and protection, the international debate has opened the possibility of extending IP to ICH, in the form of TK and TCEs (see e.g. Correa, 2001; WIPO, 2005), and the international community has been experimenting in this direction[29]. Considering that TK have normally an ancient origin and depend on oral transmission, conventional IP systems cannot provide protection. According to WIPO, that has recently published the first Treaty on Intellectual property, Genetic Resources and associated Traditional Knowledge (2024), TK-related IP issues, mostly centre on two areas: On the one hand, the goal of defensive protection is to stop third parties from acquiring unauthorized IP rights over TK. On the other, positive protection measures such as creating *sui generis* national regulations or adapting and using IP instruments like patents, trademarks, and geographical indications, ensure that originating communities can actively profit from their TCEs while also preventing unauthorized use of it (WIPO, 2023a). For instance, in the case of distinctive design, reputation, and style linked to culturally and economically relevant traditional handicraft that are susceptible to copying and unauthorized use, some IP tools, like collective and certification trademarks, geographical indications, copyright, can help protect artisans' interests (see WIPO, 2023b). However, the limitations of these measures make them ineffective or difficult to apply most of the times.

These uses and adaptations of IP instruments highlighted a complex stratification of issues related to the definitions itself of IP, ICH and TK, rooted in the differences between Eurocentric systems of knowledge and non-Western cultural expression (see e.g. Bowrey & Anderson, 2009; Asmah, 2010). First of all, cultural heritage has universal value and belongs to all of humanity. As previously mentioned, the universal relevance of cultural heritage was mentioned for the first

[28] See Brown (1998) and the included comments by various experts for a comprehensive overview on the main topic of discussion on the topic.
[29] See, e.g. Antons & Logan (2018) or the international research initiative called *Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage (IPinCH),* which focused on practical solutions for "the rights, values, and responsibilities of material culture, cultural knowledge and the practice of heritage research": https://www.sfu.ca/ipinch/ (accessed on July 18th, 2025)

time in the Hague Convention (1954: art. 1) and has been confirmed until now, for example in the UNESCO World Heritage lists[30]. Despite sparking criticism by non-Western perspectives (see above), heritage is still considered as timeless and globally shared while IP is territorial in nature, subject to national rules and is bounded to time limitations. Moreover, there are other characteristics that make certain types of IP rights inadequate for protecting ICH. Standard IP jurisdiction often requires criteria such as clear authorship, originality, fixity (in the sense of being reproduced in series), and limited duration before falling into the public domain[31]. TCEs often cannot meet copyright standards as usually they are developed communally over generations, rely on inherited customs, and are transmitted through imitation and memory. As a result, TCEs frequently fall outside copyright protection and into the public domain, proving that IP law is culturally specific and was created with particular, limited purposes in mind. (see Ubertazzi, 2022: 155-158).

In evaluating the effectiveness of IP as international legal instruments for TCEs, it is necessary to not only consider their applicability, but the limits imposed by the logic and reasoning that form IP rights foundation as well. When IP organizations eventually looked at "folklore", a complicated picture emerged that included both legal and historical injustice issues. As Anderson (2012: 6) notices, "imposing western liberal legal structures over knowledge systems that have never been thus managed [results in] the re-emergence of tensions from unresolved legacies of colonial pasts". The modern idea of the author, as a distinct individual with property rights over cultural works, was influenced by the fundamental ideas of authorship and originality that originated in copyright law from its beginning and have remained ingrained in Western society. This approach, however, is incompatible with many Indigenous cultures, where knowledge is contextual and

[30] See https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/ (accessed on August 1st, 2025)
[31] "In the public domain" and "publicly available" are not synonyms. TK that is publicly available but not in the public domain cannot be used without prior informed consent and benefit-sharing agreements with the owners. On the contrary, works that are unrestricted by law because their IP protection has lapsed or they have never complied with IP regulations are included in the public domain. In this case, anyone may use, copy, and distribute these works without charge or authorization (Ubertazzi, 2022: 156). These concepts related to the idea of "publicity" have been critically analysed from an Indigenous perspective (see Bowrey & Anderson 2009; Wendland, 2004).

collaborative and cannot be easily attributed to a single person (Anderson, 2015). As de Sousa Santos (2018: 53-55) argues, the idea of authorship that implies originality, autonomy, and creativity comes from Western "modern possessive individualism" while, in the epistemologies of the South "the most crucial knowledges have no authors". Paradoxically, as Bendix states, while authenticity in Western arts is associated with authorship, "lack of identifiable authorship, multiple existence over time and space, variation of the items, and the social and economic circumstances of the "bearers of tradition" served, instead, as ways of testing folklore's authenticity" (1977: 15).

The tensions that result from regulating TK within the framework of ICH or under IP legislation both point to a more profound, multi-layered misalignment. These complex dynamics stem from the ongoing effort to fit Indigenous TCEs into legal and epistemological systems that are fundamentally rooted in Western worldviews. Neither exclusion, nor inclusion, within these systems offers a fully satisfactory solution. Existing IP regimes still lack an effective international legal instrument capable of adequately protecting the variety of forms of Indigenous TCEs. However, treating all Indigenous TK solely as a matter of ICH safeguarding risks excluding Indigenous communities from market participation.

CHAPTER THREE. Museums as places of heritage: Centring the Intangible and Reconfiguring Power Relations

Progressively recognised as institutions capable of mediating cultural values and shaping social discourse, the idea of museums as neutral spaces for the transmission of knowledge was increasingly challenged. In this sense, museums do not merely reflect existing social narratives but actively participate in their production, legitimisation, and institutionalisation, often through selective processes that reveal underlying power structures and ideologies. As a new awareness of the historical role of museums began to emerge, they were increasingly recognized not only as spaces for cultural preservation, but as active agents in the construction of national identity, often through the essentialised and instrumental representation of the 'Other' within collections. By defining how knowledge is presented and determining what is worthy of preservation, museums shape how identity and memory are constructed, and ultimately what is recognised as cultural heritage. Indeed, the discourses on museums and cultural heritage cannot be understood if observed separately. While the institutional creation of heritage has been done "through metacultural operations that extend museological values and methods (collection, documentation, preservation, presentation, evaluation, and interpretation) to living persons, their knowledge, practices, artifacts, social worlds, and life spaces" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2006: 161), the admission of communities and stakeholders though the threshold of museums backstage profoundly transformed these institutions' mission.

The so-called French-Canadian *nouvelle muséologie* had a fundamental role in this changing perception of museums, linked to their access in the realm of cultural heritage (see Lattanzi, 2012: 7-8). First of all, Huges de Varine's (1985) new conception of eco-museum changes the classic perspective on these institutions to favour the idea that museums should be relevant for their territory and the people who lives there, not as passive spectators but as active participants. Once the traditional idea of museums was overcome, the interest toward social and environmental issues wes included in museological discourses, adhering to the progressive evolution toward a more holistic concept of culture that characterised

heritage studies in the same period and a more inclusive approach (Lattanzi, 2013; Davis, 2008).

By the end of the last century, the “heritage fever” (Fabre, 1996: 8) invested Western society and their constructed and colonial (Walsh & Mignolo, 2018) idea of modernity. For centuries and through the invention itself of ethnology, Europe had created its identity by opposing their supposedly continuous evolution against other cultures immobility; lately, growing concerns about the acceleration of modernity made the interest in controlling the past through the conservation of heritage -and the progressive expansion of what is considered heritage- a typically Western phenomenon (see e.g. Lowenthal, 1996). This change of perspective over the social management of the past (see chapter 2), invested museums as institution of memory preservation and identity construction. Museum’s collections have always been instrumental for preserving assemblages of “valuable things” useful for defining the “self” and the “other” (see chapter 1), for posterity. A key aspect of objects is indeed their relationship to the passing of time as, through their material nature, things bring the physical presence of the past into the present. Collections of artefacts evoke memory as they are “authentic” palpable link to the past (Pearce, 1995: 169-170) and museums that preserve them, as institutions with agency within a specific historical and geographical context, hold a relevant role in the representation of the past (Walsh, 1992). Essentially, museums not only create heritage through their fundamental function of displaying but also shape and convey meanings that go beyond a purely historical account. Museums can turn into touristic destinations able to offer visitors an “immersion” in a different world, perceived as authentic but always manipulated (see Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998).

As repositories of heritage, identity formation is one of the most pressing contemporary concerns of museums. As that they are not inert institution in term of social engagement nor neutral in producing knowledge, museums are “in the forefront of identity work” (McLean, 2008: 294; see also Karp, Kreamer & Lavine, 1992). In museums, identity is negotiated on three levels that are dynamic and influenced by changing social and political settings: the identities of those who arrange the collection to make the displays, those who view and interpret them, and those who are represented in the artefacts displayed. The first layer looks at

museum staff and curators, emphasizing the importance of diversity and acknowledging curatorial impact. The second layer focuses on how visitors interact with exhibitions, highlighting the museum's growing social duty to include different audiences. The third layer concerns the representation of source communities on display, which influences how individuals associated with such identities perceive themselves (McLean, 2008). Although individuals experience their identity in a personal and subjective way when engaging with museum activities, the way exhibitions and public events are curated and presented plays a significant role in shaping how that identity is perceived (see Karp, 1992). In this sense, Andean textiles collected, catalogued, exhibited at MUDEC inevitably convey an “idea of Latin America” (Mignolo, 2005) which is not neutral but mediated by conscious (or unconscious) choices made by people (see chapter 6).

Considered unique institutions in the heritage sector, the development of museums cannot be fully understood without considering the broader debates surrounding cultural heritage. With the rise of ICH as a global concern due to the fear that the economic processes connected to globalisation would threaten the survival of people’s traditions in terms of ways of living, knowledge and practices, museums were inevitably to take a position within the debate. As institutions that aim at preserving and interpreting cultural expressions, their role and practices closely reflect the evolving understanding of what constitutes cultural heritage itself and frequently align with international discussions on cultural diversity, indigenous rights, and sustainable development (see Alivizatou, 2008; Alivizatou, 2011).

Figure 13: PAM 01435 displayed in the exhibition Libertad!, MUDEC (10/2024 - /02/2025) ©Museo delle Culture © Comune di Milano all rights reserved

Figure 14: PAM 01427 displayed in the exhibition Qhapac ñan (02/2021- 06/2021), MUDEC @ Mudec. Photo by Francesca Ariatta

3.1 Intangible Cultural Heritage and Museums

Since their origins, museums have been primarily focused on collecting, preserving and displaying tangible collections. In particular, in the nineteenth-century European (colonial) paradigm, museum collections were assembled with the goal of providing encyclopaedic knowledge through the lens of the West. Within this framework, items were organized in relation to one another to create "apparently inevitable visual narratives" that appeared natural and self-evident, leading to accepting them as objective truths. Strongly built around hierarchies of power through knowledge production, these "modernist" institutions have had a significant impact on our current understanding of what a museum should be (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000: 151). However, in the last few decades, a new post-museum has been developing, where knowledge is "no longer unified and monolithic; it becomes fragmented and multivocal". This new model focuses on item interpretation and meaningful use rather than accumulation. Most importantly, there is a rising acknowledgment of museums role in the care for ICH as well, as a medium for preserving and expressing a culture's identity (idem: 152).

Clearly influenced by the international debates that would have resulted in the 2003 UNESCO Convention on Intangible Heritage, museums were developing a new perspective toward the intangible heritage embodied in physical objects and the cultural meaning related to their material collections (see Pinna 2003). Indeed, recognizing ICH as the main indicator of cultural meaning not only allows museums to consider their role outside their walls -within their territory and community- but also highlight how intangible forms of knowledge in museum collections allows to connect objects to their production and use. This new interest within ICOM (International Council of Museums) (see s.n., 2004) became central in occasion of the 20th ICOM General Conference in Seoul (2004), devoted to "Museums and Intangible Heritage", which inaugurated a new era for ICH in museums. The 2007 ICOM definition of museums (Vienna), indeed included intangible heritage, alongside material cultural objects: "A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes

of education, study and enjoyment". Intangible heritage is also mentioned the first principle of the most recent version of the ICOM Ethic Code (2004)[32] as part of the main responsibilities of museums. Despite this, a short-circuit persist when we consider the juxtaposition between preservation and safeguarding measures and approaches toward heritage and collections. Even if the relevance of ICH is repeatedly mentioned in the UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Protection and Promotion of Museums and Collections, their Diversity and their Role in Society (2015b), the primary function of museums is identified in "preservation" which do not coincide with "safeguarding" as mentioned in the 2003 UNESCO Convention. Heritage safeguarding aims at ensuring the continued "viability" of ICH, through its identification, documentation, research, protection, promotion, transmission, revitalization and preservation (UNESCO, 2003: art. 2.3). Heritage preservation is thus just an element of safeguarding, and involves activities such as acquisition, collection management, conservation and restoration, aiming at enduring the integrity of collections, also through inventory (UNESCO, 2015).

In this sense, the importance of ICH in the museum discourse is clear. Its role in reshaping the roles and objectives of these institutions is evident in the ongoing debates within the museum community regarding appropriate approaches and practices for its management[33].

3.1.1 Collecting and Documenting ICH within the Museum

Embracing intangible heritage besides tangible collections was thus considered as an opportunity for museums to renew their methodologies: museums could indeed widen their research field by engaging with living memories and, as a consequence, rethink preserving and exhibiting techniques, also in collaboration with stakeholders (see Alivizatou 2006; 2007a; 2008). The already established idea (Boas, 1907) that what make an artifact culturally significant is the symbolic meaning attributed to it through its production and use in its original context, and the renovated openness of museums toward intangible forms of heritage, favoured

[32] The ICOM Code of Ethics is currently under revision.
[33] Right after the Seoul Conference, the National Folk Museum of Korea started publishing the International Journal of Intangible Heritage, creating a space for these debates. From 2017 to 2020, the Creative Europe Programme titled Intangible Cultural Heritage and Museums Project (IMP) investigated the approaches and practices on ICH in various European Museums (see https://www.ichandmuseums.eu/en) (accessed on August 10th, 2025)

a more inclusive understanding of what museum collections can contain and how they should be presented. First, video and audio records (also in their physical form) of cultural expressions and practices shift from being considered documentation to transform these expressions into new types of museum items, preserving them for future generations (see Alivizatou, 2006). Second, in terms of educational purposes, putting an object separated from its origins “in-context” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1991: 390) help the viewer to locate the “ethnographic fragment” within a theoretical framework. From multimedia applications to storytelling methods, from audio stations to event organization, ICH (in many forms) is essential for this aim. However, recorded ICH actually undergoes a process of objectification and completely cancels what make that knowledge relevant, namely its embodiment and its relations (see Taylor, 2003).

In general, one of the primaries, and most contentious, strategies for preserving ICH proposed in the 2003 UNESCO Convention is the creation of national inventories and a Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (artt. 16, 17). This method has sparked a lot of discussion concerning the possible repercussions of this documentation in addition to the practical difficulties of creating such inventories. The fear is that intangible cultural expressions would become static and objectified if turned into material forms, like recordings or written texts. Indeed, critics believe that the original meaning of TCEs might get lost with their spontaneity and creative vitality when it is inventoried, recognized as a national treasure, preserved through formal education, and monitored by government organizations. Furthermore, there is a concern for possible standardization and institutionalization if ICH is forced to meet UNESCO standards to be recognised of value and safeguarded (Kreps, 2005: 5-6). This top-down idea that to protect ICH, institutions should document it, reflects a “rationalized and bureaucratized vision of heritage” that, according to some, might cause actual harm (Brown, 2012 [2003]: 95-96).

However, another important obligation stated in the UNESCO Convention for Intangible Heritage is for nations and institution to recognise the responsibility of ICH practitioners in the safeguarding of their cultural expressions. Indeed, the most significant shift marked by the introduction of ICH in museums was fostering

a more inclusive approach to community participation. This transformation has highlighted some complexities, but it also has extended beyond methodological adjustments; it signified a profound conceptual change that resonated with, and was reinforced by, the broader post-colonial discourses (and subsequent decolonial critics) that were already emerging. In this regard the Faro Convention (Council of Europe, 2005) puts communities at the literal centre of heritage not just by emphasizing the relevance of heritage in human rights and democracy, but also by properly affirming that what makes heritage such is people attributing the meanings and uses to it. In doing so, it also "recognise individual and collective responsibility towards cultural heritage" (art.1) and define a Heritage Community (HC) as "people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations" (art.2). In this sense, museums as "a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing"[34] can easily be considered as part of this HC (see Nikolic Deric, Neyrinck, Seghers, & Tsakiridis: 39-41)

3.2 The Role of Communities in ICH Safeguard

In social and political terms, a crucial shift in the heritage debate toward the recognition of communities' voices was theorized by Smith's (2006) opposition between the Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD) and the Subaltern Heritage Discourse. The AHD focuses on visually appealing material artifacts, sites and landscapes that current generations are supposed to conserve and safeguard for the sake of future generations' education and identity. AHD employs rhetorical tools such as "the past" and the assumption of "intrinsic value" to determine who has the right to speak about heritage, thereby granting professionals, like

[34] This is the ICOM definition approved in 2022 by the Extraordinary General Assembly of ICOM. See https://icom.museum/en/resources/standards-guidelines/museum-definition/ (accessed on August 12th, 2025)

historians and archaeologists, all the authority as stewards of what is important from the past (see e.g. Byrne, 1991; Smith, 2007). This discourse fosters a nationalistic approach to identity that is often built on privileged social narratives that exclude the experiences of women, ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, and working-class groups. Furthermore, AHD discourages critical participation by presenting heritage as a passive experience to be enjoyed rather than one that can be actively questioned or scrutinized. Through a self-referential framework that values expert knowledge and suppresses other viewpoints and participatory historical interpretations, it legitimizes itself. In opposition, the Subaltern Heritage Discourse developed since the last decades of the past century, due to the concerns raised by a wide range of culturally and socially defined groups, both in the West and beyond. Indigenous claims highlighted many issues of the AHD, including, that traditional and authorized definitions of heritage tend to promote national narratives that fail to reflect the lived cultural and social experiences of marginalized communities. This erasure diminishes the recognition of these communities' current cultural, social, and political roles as well as their historical legitimacy. By doing so it contributes to the persistent marginalization of "the Other" and helps conceal social injustices. Another concern relates to the prevalence of the conservation mindset, which often impedes more active and dynamic forms of engagement with heritage. Thus, many communities cannot really engage with their heritage when protected under national or international jurisdictions, ad they are treated as “visitors”. In general, Indigenous demands have been primarily directed at those in positions of intellectual authority such as historians, archaeologists, anthropologists, and museum curators, who have historically decided how the past is interpreted and utilized to support specific identities in Western societies. These criticisms are especially valid when viewed from a post-colonial standpoint, and museums play a crucial role in this reappropriation dynamic.

Some crucial moments in the process of progressive recognition of subaltern communities’ voices in the heritage debate are the Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance (Burra Charter, 1979: art.12), and the ICOMOS New Zealand Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural

Heritage Value (1992: art. 2). In both these national documents, indigenous agency is central: Communities' rights are recognised, and their involvement is considered necessary for identifying, guarding and protecting cultural and natural heritage. From an international standpoint, the role of community participation gains centrality for the first time during the 1999 UNESCO International Conference held in Washington, where "the active participation of local communities for safeguarding their own culture" was officially recognised[35]. The UNESCO 2003 Convention also highlights the role on communities in recognising, transmitting and recreating ICH (art.2) and in participating to its safeguard (art.11), marking a fundamental moment for the recognition of communities' agency in defining what is valuable and authentic heritage from their perspective (see Deacon & Smeets, 2013). Following up on this principles, UNESCO has been working on guiding and monitoring the application of the 2003 Convention through 26 indicators: the 21st regarding the "extent to which engagement for safeguarding ICH is enhanced among stakeholders", to be assessed through factors including communities, groups and individuals participation "on an inclusive basis and to the widest possible extent, in the safeguarding of ICH" (21.1). The aim is to promote decision-making processes that are responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative across all levels and in various safeguarding measures, including education, inventorying, cultural policy development, and awareness-raising initiatives[36]. Furthermore, the Operational Directives for the Implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2016) explicitly explains the important role of entities such as research institutes, centres of expertise, museums, archives, libraries, documentation centres not only in collecting, documenting, archiving and conserving data on ICH but also in increasing awareness, and encourage the use of participatory methods by actively including ICH bearers and practitioners in management procedures, educational activities, and exhibition work. Where appropriate, it is suggested to employ digital

[35] 'A Global Assessment of the 1989 Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore: Local Empowerment and International Cooperation' (see https://ich.unesco.org/en/events/international-conference-a-global-assessment-of-the-1989-recommendation-on-the-safeguarding-of-traditional-culture-and-folklore-local-empowerment-and-international-cooperation-00058) (accessed on August 25th, 2025)

[36] See https://ich.unesco.org/en/overall-results-framework-00984 (accessed on August 25th, 2025)

technology to illustrate the value of living heritage within local development frameworks and place more emphasis on the continuous transmission and evolution of TK rather than on the objects that are associated with it (art. 109).

3.2.1 Communities' Involvement in Museums ICH Management

Modalities and methods of communities' participation in different museums activities have been largely discussed, being viable even though complex as it implies the rediscussing of institution functions and professional's role and authority. Museum personnel must work proactively and efficiently with communities to value and safeguard ICH and TK, especially when these are connected to tangible collections. This cooperation should start during the acquisition phase, particularly when working with culturally sensitive items, and continue during the conservation, research, documentation, communication, and educational phases[37]. ICOM recognises collaboration with communities as one of museums' ethical principles, highlighting the essential role of informed and mutual consent in every phase (2004: principle 6).

Making a step forward, Bortolotto (2007) focuses on the temporal dimension and changeability of heritage and argues that the fundamental innovation in introducing intangibility into the heritage discourse is not the detachment from the tangible nor the concept of intangibility itself but rather the shifts away from stationary traditional Western museological ideas toward a more anthropological understanding of TCEs as dynamic, changing processes. This notion marks a shift away from viewing heritage as revered masterpiece from the past to be preserved and contemplated and toward seeing it as an active process with performative nature. Heritage is thus redefined as a living, symbolic space shaped and maintained by communities who embody a shared and living memory. This concept of heritage implies that "materialising" ICH through media or documentation could not be relevant for its safeguard and traditional museographical strategies needed to be renewed for mediating and communicating intangible heritage perceived as a process.

[37] See Nikolic Deric, Neyrinck, Seghers, & Tsakiridis (2020: 72-101) for an in-depth analysis on how museum practices should include considerations on ICH.

To take a step forward in this direction, museums need to focus less on the conservation of cultural objects and more on fostering the social practices through which these objects and expressions are created and enacted by source community members. The Smithsonian Folklife Festival, which has taken place in Washington, D.C., every year since 1967, is a noteworthy example of a showcase of ICH in action. Organized by the Smithsonian Institution (which played a significant role in the 1999 Washington Conference), is a great way to present subnational and cross-cultural manifestations within the larger transcending traditional boundaries of national representation and blurring simplistic distinctions between the traditional and the contemporary. The Folklife Festival has been providing a venue for changing cultural identities to be seen and appreciated, as it aims at encouraging traditional knowledge to be performed. Aiming at highlighting the human action behind the items kept in museum collections, this approach was embraced also by museums such as the National Museum of the American Indian, which engage with Indigenous people through exhibitions and socio-cultural programmes to foster innovation rather than presenting objectified Indigenous people as static or historical (see Mahina, 2004; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004; Bertolotto 2007; Alivizatou, 2007a). However, the involvement of communities is not always safe from the risks of objectification or "folklorisation" as initiatives like hosting shows, dances and demonstrations might still fall into the top-down approach to "exhibiting the other"; indeed, collaborations should be equal. In general, inviting nations or institutions and organizations to collaborate with source (Indigenous) communities to safeguard ICH recognise their agency but also comes with difficulties. Since many traditions are informal, it can be challenging to choose appropriate representatives without formalization which could compromise the cultural expression itself. Collaboration is further complicated by power disparities, and logistical challenges, particularly in big or isolated communities. The process is not simply technical as safeguarding measures may have political ramifications when it comes to instances involving Indigenous or culturally significant communities (see e.g. Kurin, 2004: 72).

Highlighting the relevance that material culture has in many non-Western communities, Kreps (2003b: 46-50; 2005) argues that collaborative forms of

preservation and safeguard can be implemented even in museum settings. First of all, as was already stated in chapter 2, material objects play a crucial role in preserving and transmitting culture. Enduring time, material culture both shapes and reflects society through human interaction, connects generations and help trigger memories and recover identities. Through a cross-cultural analysis of those activities that are typically associated with museum practice in Western terms, such as collecting, classification, display and conservation, Kreps demonstrates a commonality in people's "concern for the transmission of culture through time", conceptually similar to heritage conservation and safeguard. These non-Western practices of "indigenous curation" -that Kreps believe qualify as ICH (Kreps, 2005: 3)- are culturally specific and express how different cultures perceive and care for their cultural expressions in both its material and intangible forms. Their appreciation can contribute to overcoming the idea of superiority that has characterised top-down Western museological research and methods and can be integrated into mainstream museum, like e.g. in the Te Papa Tongerewa Museum in New Zealand (Kreps, 2003b: 50-73; Kreps 2005).

Even though the involvement of communities with tangible collections would apport many advantages for museums as identity preserving institutions, including a sort of validation (also in terms of authenticity) on a bottom-up perspective (see Deacon & Smeets 2013), Western institutions have been adapting slowly and with some difficulties, showing a "widespread incapacity of epistemic pluralisation in museum practices" (da Costa Oliveira & Scholtz 2025: 50-51; see also Phillips, 2011). Despite the awareness that non-Western people might experience differently their material culture due to epistemological differences, and despite the recognition of these views' relevance, conventional museum practices frequently prevail despite attempts to incorporate Indigenous conceptions. In many ethnographic institutions throughout the world, artifacts are still displayed through standardized media such as glass cases, captions and simplified language intended for a broad audience, which frequently cause the loss of important layers of Indigenous knowledge and interpretation. Utilizing Western museographical traditional techniques to represent Indigenous cultures usually cause a simplification of TCEs by removing the understanding of more profound cultural

and symbolical aspects. Given the richness anthropological studies on the topic of indigenous material culture and ontologies and the growing demands for inclusion, communication, and reparations from Indigenous groups, the mentioned difficulties of Western institutions to include "Indigenous curation" perspectives is indicative of a larger problem, possibly rooted in a stratification of institutional rigidity, with ingrained visual conventions, and a lack of innovative or creative interaction with other epistemologies. There is still an urgent need for a deeper "epistemic pluralisation" in museum practices (Kreps, 2003a; 2005).

A growing awareness that many cultures have different ontological views on their material culture, thus express care in different ways, and the idea that these cultural differences also affect epistemic perspective on how culture is transmitted, especially with regard to the hazy lines separating material and immaterial TCEs, is reflected in the claims of many minorities, subaltern or indigenous groups. The attempt of many Western organizations to adopt non-Western conceptions of curation highlights how this change has helped minority groups and subaltern communities regain control over their TCEs and the associated TK (see e.g. Isaac, 2009). Post-colonial critiques of Western collections and museums, as well as the incorporation of ICH into the discourse around global heritage, have developed along with more general political and intellectual shifts. Following the end of colonial rule, these trends surged in the second half of the 20th century and were greatly influenced by the growing involvement of voices and perspectives from regions other than North America and Europe. Overall, these voices have pushed for more inclusive and culturally aware methods of managing cultural property, challenging the conventional, Eurocentric framework of heritage studies and museology.

3.3 Whose Collections? Cultural Property in Museums

Divergencies and convergencies between cultural heritage and cultural property have been greatly discusses (see e.g. Anderson & Geismar, 2017a). While both concepts emerged in the discourses of international organs in the decades after the Second World War, the idea of cultural property is invoked especially in situations where nations' or communities' rights to their own cultural expressions have been

endangered and disputed. Following the devastation of the war, the international community began to fully understand the need of protecting cultural property and the possible loss of collective identity that could arise from its destruction or displacement (UN, 2954). Moreover, the historical effects of colonialism, especially the removal of cultural artifacts and the establishment of museum collections throughout imperial expansion, gained visibility. Illegal cultural property trafficking, which is frequently worsened by armed conflict or in situation of power disparity, has become a major issue worldwide. This growing awareness has been accompanied by increasing demands by Indigenous communities for the repatriation of cultural artifacts, as well as for the return of looted and trophy art collected or trafficked during colonial domination (see e.g. Fitz Gibbon, 2005; Palmer, 1989). Furthermore, debates about the superposition of IP rights and cultural rights have surfaced as globalization changed the ways in which cultural expressions are created, shared, and consumed. In general, the concept of cultural property -which basically conflict with the universal value attributed to heritage by UNESCO (UNESCO, 1972; 2003) and perfectly embodied by the "World Heritage Lists"- is raised especially when cultural expressions are threatened or expropriated in a way that endangers the identity and memory of the countries or communities who created, live and thus feel to "own" their authentic TCEs. Indeed, cultural property has been defined as "technology of sovereignty" (Hafstein & Skrydtrup, 2017: 40-41).

These discussions have been greatly influenced by museums, especially those that are entrusted with conserving, exhibiting, and interpreting cultural material from contexts other than their own. If museums are repositories of heritage, and heritage is attributed with cultural value as representation of collective memory and identity of a specific group, then the regimes of cultural property and universal value might collide within the context of a collection legally own by a public institution. Reinforcing and recalling museums' duties regarding their collections and toward its public and stakeholders ICOM published a Checklist on Ethics of Cultural Property Ownership (2011) as a practical tool for museums, deriving from its Code of Ethics, in which the responsibilities that museums have toward the communities from which the collection derive is clearly recognised (2004). In

particular, museums are invited to manage their collection considering the issues and debates regarding their legal ownership and communities' moral prerogatives over them: "Museum collections reflect the cultural and natural heritage of the communities from which they have been derived. As such, they have a character beyond that of ordinary property, which may include strong affinities with national, regional, local, ethnic, religious or political identity. It is important therefore that museum policy is responsive to this situation" and museums should foster collaboration with institutions and communities of origin, particularly those that have lost valuable heritage, by exchanging information and knowledge (ICOM 2004: principle 6). Indeed, even when the institutions may be legally the owners of these collections, their cultural value stems from geographically distant and frequently culturally different people that completely lost control over this heritage.

The first time the term "repatriation" as in "back to the father's land" was used to define the legal attribution of exclusive ownership to "lineal descendants or tribes (patria)" of a cultural property was in the National Museum of the American Indian Act (NMAI) in 1989, followed by the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA, 1990). As a federal law, NAGPRA recognizes Indigenous people complete "sovereignty" over human remains, funerary and sacred objects, that are held in museums and federal agencies (see Hafstein & Skydsrup, 2017: 40). After that, to address international claims regarding the return of cultural property that have been stolen or illegally exported, nations and single institutions have developed various measures of action both in response to specific claims and proactively (see e.g. Merryman, 2011, Tythacott & Arvanitis, 2014). First of all, museums should not encourage the illegal trade in cultural property and thus verify the legality of their acquisition -that should not come from an occupied country- by strictly adhering to relevant laws and conventions governing cultural property and avoid exhibiting pieces that have illicit or missing provenance information. When purchasing artifacts from Indigenous Peoples, museums must adhere to national and international standards, such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Museum acquisitions must respect the cultural rights of the people involved, particularly when it comes to

ceremonial goods, avoiding to acquiring human remains unless authorized by the relevant communities. Moreover, museums should avoid any form of exploitation by ensuring communities' wishes are respected and acquisitions are based on informed, mutual consent (see ICOM, 2004; ICOM, 2020). When an artifact is part of an historical collection, then its ownership and collecting histories should be investigated through the methodologies of provenance research. Museums ought to be willing to start a conversation on the equitable and expert return of cultural property, guided by humanitarian, scientific, and legal norms. If possible, museums should act promptly and responsibly to facilitate return of cultural objects or restitution -in cases where cultural artefacts were transferred in violation of national or international norms- (see ICOM, 2004; ICOM, 2019). While the relevant UN provisions such as the 1973 Resolution on Restitution of works of art to countries victims of appropriation and the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (art. 11.2) have been considered of purely moral and symbolic character, the international framework defined by the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970) and the UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects (1995), have been defined as legally ineffective. To fill this international vacuum, nations (and institutions) have elaborated their own frames. France initially published the Rapport Sarr Savoy (2018) and the Rapport Martinez (2023) before working on its legislation; Belgium passed a law in 2022 regarding federal museums, acknowledging the alienable nature of collections linked to the country's colonial past and establishing the jurisdictional framework for their restitution; Germany and the Netherlands have recently developed proactive restitution policies, even by individual institutions (see e.g. Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, 2019; German Museum Association, 2021); in Italy, topics like restitution and decolonization are still not widely discussed, both in terms of legal development and cultural debate, which is still largely limited to academic circles (see Guermandi, 2024). In this sense, MUDEC has been playing a relevant role in the developing scene on these topics in Italy, working toward and participating in the implementation of both a shared debate and site-specific guidelines (see chapter 4).

From a theoretical point of view, the disputes surrounding the repatriation of artifacts kept in major museums in Europe and North America is situates at the complex intersection of public and private demands, of subject and dominant interests. The rights of cultural groups to manage and uphold their own cultural expression as materialisation of their collective identity directly conflict with the idea of a universal right to access and preserve humanity's cultural heritage. The debate about repatriations was key within the “second wave” of decolonial critics in museum studies and has been involving specialists and museums both in colonial and previously colonialised countries. In the last few decades, various institutions have engaged in this heated debate that has not only legal but also philosophical and practical levels of analysis. The value of “universal museums”, even though widely criticised, was reclaimed in the Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums, signed in 2002 by 18 directors of famous Western museums. Despite condemning the “illicit traffic of archaeological, artistic, and ethnic” material culture, this document affirms that “although each case has to be judged individually, we should acknowledge that museums serve not just the citizens of one nation but the people of every nation”. Behind this statement there was the idea that antiquities, or material culture in general, should be viewed as the cultural heritage of all people, instead of being subjected to political reasoning and being claimed the sole property of contemporary communities, which frequently have only weak ties to the ancient civilizations they claim to descend from. Moreover, those artefacts that arrived in Western museums in the past have become part of specific collections, and by extension part of the heritage of the nations which “care for them” (see Cuno, 2006). This Eurocentric perspective was accused by ICOM representatives of aiming at maintaining the status quo deriving from imperialism. As Bienkowski (2015) explains, objections to this view on the universal mission of museums tackled from different perspectives. Greenfield highlights how universality claims clash with a “narrow national conceit” that is at the basis of museums constitution and “institutions cannot be 'universal' unless they are universally constituted or universally accountable. The nature of objects held and the breadth of their collections, however interesting, do not bestow universal holding rights.” (2007: 87). Secondly, the sincerity itself of the claim that universal Western museums aim at Enlightenment principles was

questioned as it appears to be more about retaining control over prestigious original artifacts. These institutions are not universal at all as they provide a limited perspective of the world's heritage through a small and carefully curated view. Furthermore, many people from the cultures from where these items come cannot appreciate these museums' collections (St. Claire, 2007: 94-95). Ultimately, while recognising the educational and cultural value of encyclopaedic collections, it's crucial to highlight the ethical issues surrounding the ownership of TCEs with problematic provenance. In this sense, Besterman (2011; 2014) advocate for the principle of "cultural equity" as an ethical framework and an alternative to the values embodied in the Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums. While museums may have legal ownership of artifacts, source communities hold moral claims over them. Thus, museums -especially those with encyclopaedic collections- have a complex responsibility to multiple stakeholders and must engage in transparent and ethically accountable dialogues with them. Going beyond their knowledge monopoly and recognizing power imbalances ingrained in their histories and collections, cultural equity would drive museums away "from inter-cultural aesthetics" toward "a more democratic debate around trans-cultural accountability". This approach would not only recognise that different cultural group might perceive and care for their material culture differently from the Western-trained museum staff, but also assess the authority and relevance of indigenous TK in influencing the interpretation and disposition of the collection. This perspective critiques the Western bureaucratic and legalistic museum practices, advocating instead for a more inclusive and democratic approach to the point of challenging the dominant notion of ownership that often marginalizes non-Western understandings of cultural heritage (Bienkowski, 2014).

This ethical strategy, stemmed from ownership debates and reflections on restitution, is implemented by recognising that diverse cultural groups can engage with and value their TCEs differently than each other and museum professionals with Western training, a notion introduced by the Nara Document (see chapter 2). This approach entails accepting Indigenous people have moral rights over their material culture, even if its legally own by Western institutions, and also valuing their epistemologies as legitimate for interpreting restitution claims. While valuing

TK holders' viewpoints in their claim of ownership is essential to the collections' future, applying these alternative epistemologies remains challenging both within museological and legal frameworks that have been shaped for centuries by Western norms.

3.4 Whose Knowledge? ICH and IP Rights in Practice

Cultural heritage, cultural rights, and cultural property are intricately linked and, even though cultural property issues that are at the base of restitutions claims are usually perceived as limited to material assets, they cannot be understood if separated from intangible cultural knowledge and symbolical meaning that objects are attributed to within a specific collective identity. In the last few decades, the debate over cultural ownership has evolved encompassing intangible forms like TCEs in addition to tangible cultural material. As a result, discussions concerning IP rights and cultural ownership are increasingly overlapping, posing difficult ethical and legal issues around control, and access. As illustrated in chapter 2, Indigenous people are recognised to held IP rights as cultural rights, thus as human rights. This is clarified in various international documents and reiterated by UNESCO in the Ethical Principles for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage, elaborated and published in 2015(a) by an Intergovernmental Committee to further elaborate on the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. It considers existing international instruments protecting human rights and the rights of indigenous peoples, and affirm that "the communities, groups and individuals who create Intangible Cultural Heritage should benefit from the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from such heritage, and particularly from its use, research, documentation, promotion or adaptation by members of the communities or others" (art. 7). Moreover, the UNESCO Operational Directives for the Implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2016) reinforce the affirmation of indigenous moral rights over ICH and extended it to material rights too (art. 171.b), to be implemented by States Parties adopting appropriate measures, including IP (art. 104, 173.b). Despite mentioning IP rights, UNESCO do not address key IP-related issues, such as ownership of intangible cultural expressions, rights to commercial use, or legal remedies against misuse or

disrespectful treatment of traditional cultural expressions, which are issues usually covered by WIPO. Instead, UNESCO focus on safeguarding TK recognised as ICH through the implementation of its viability via identification, documentation, transmission, preservation, protection, revitalization.

Given the wide range of needs and claims expressed by communities regarding their TCEs and considering that UNESCO provisions have certain limitations in safeguarding ICH, an alternative approach could be the adoption of IP protection mechanisms. However, even though national legal frameworks differ in the recognition of IP rights, existing laws were not created to meet the epistemologies of indigenous peoples and consequently they do not provide effective protection for TCEs. The recent interest in preserving TCEs brought to the re-examination of fundamental ideas in IP and to the development of new policies in response to growing national, and international intricated discussions (see e.g. Paterson & Karjala; Wendland, 2005). In particular, the most crucial areas of IP regulation for TCEs are copyright and related rights which cover a wide array of creative works (including books, music, paintings, sculptures, movies, software, databases) and which provide creators the legal authority to restrict how their creations are used once they are accessible to the public. To solve the vast range of requests and needs that communities claimed over their diverse TCEs, different IP instruments can be applied with always some kind of limitation. Trademarks (e.g. in Canada and New Zealand, see WIPO 2003: 47-52), geographical indications (e.g in Portugal and Mexico, see WIPO 2003: 52-54) and domain names have been used defensively - not without difficulties- to stop the illicit commerce of TCEs (see Torsen & Andreson, 2010: 57-61), while patents and the Art.39[38] of the TRIPS Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (1994) are difficult to apply for TCEs (Nwabueze, 2013). Even though the Berne Convention (WIPO, 1979)

[38] The cited article affirms that natural and legal persons can prevent others from disclosing, acquiring, or using confidential information without consent if the information is: (a) not generally known or easily accessible, (b) commercially valuable due to its secrecy, and (c) reasonably protected to maintain its secrecy. This article is based on the idea that all act of unfair competitions should be prohibited as expressed in the Paris Convention (WTO, 1994): any action that goes against honest business practices should be prohibited, including (a) acts causing confusion with a competitor's business or products, (b) false claims that discredit a competitor, (c) misleading information about goods that could deceive the public regarding their nature, production, quality, or quantity.

established minimum standards of protection between signatory States, copyright law is jurisdictional, meaning that when Australia needed to protect Aboriginal IP rights, a complex discussion (Janke, 1998) resulted in the introduction of new protocols first (WIPO, 2003: 75), and then in 2003 an amendment of the Copyright Act (1968) to include Indigenous communal moral rights.

Within copyright, economic and moral rights should be ensured. Economic rights have national variability and refer to the exclusive ability of the owner to regulate how their creations are used, usually by issuing licenses that grant or refuse authorization (on economic terms). Owners have the authority to control how their creations are translated, altered, performed, distributed, and reproduced while also prohibiting unapproved use by third parties. On the other hand, the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works (WIPO, 1979: art. 6bis) grants moral rights as, in short, the right to be recognized as the creator of the work (attribution), the right to object to any changes or uses that harm their honour or reputation (integrity), the right to disclose or withdraw the object of protection to and from the public. Moral rights, which are independent from economic rights and inalienable, have been argued to respond to most of indigenous claims over TCEs (see Vézina, 2019; 2020). However, TCEs frequently do not sit well within copyright regulations as they prioritize private over collective ownership. Indeed, while communities are more often concerned with safeguarding the cultural significance of their TCEs from misappropriation and exploitation by third parties, IP primarily seeks to protect authors against unauthorized commercial use (see Nwabueze, 2013). As we previously pointed out, ICH is usually collective, passed down through the generations, and modified over time, while copyright laws require identified authorship in order to provide protection and protection has limitations in time (see Torsen & Anderson, 2010: 22-56).

3.4.1 IP Rights in Museums

Since the 1970s, cultural institutions such as libraries, museums, archives have played a major role in international discussions over Indigenous TK and intellectual property, as they keep large collections that were frequently assembled during colonial times often without the consent or benefit of the populations

involved (see e.g. Brown, 1998: 193-195; Janke, 2005; Rincón, 2009). Even though source communities should be (in theory) the copyright holders of these TCEs, they were usually documented by non-Indigenous people who now preserve them, manage the records about them and control the information they communicate through display and publications (Anderson, 2015). These cultural institutions find themselves in a complex position as they are both IP users in terms of the collections they research, preserve and communicate and holders for the knowledge they elaborate, produce, display and publish, even about the collections themselves. Because of this, museums are always confronted with IP issues while carrying out their mission as defined by ICOM[39], applying IP jurisdiction to balance the interest of the creator and the benefit of the public[40].

Moving away from the separation between tangibility and intangibility of heritage (see chapter 2), museums are acknowledged not merely as custodians of tangible cultural artifacts or material representations of both tangible and intangible heritage (e.g. photographs, audio-visual recordings, documentation). Instead, they are guardians of the intangible cultural meanings tied to their tangible collections, and they are expected to respect source communities' rights over the TK and ICH related to their material collections. If museums are responsible for the care and interpretation of TK in much the same way as they manage their material holdings, IP rights also become a central concern in terms of Indigenous cultural ownership and “sovereignty” requiring careful ethical and legal consideration (see Anderson & Geismar, 2017b: 10-11). As communities are no longer passive subjects of display, they aim at becoming active partners in interpreting, managing, and recontextualizing their cultural heritage within museum spaces. This greater participation of source communities brough stakeholders to a wider understanding of the social and political role of Western museums as they have been growing

[39] See https://icom.museum/en/heritage-protection/copyright/ (accessed on August 28th, 2025)
[40] Considering the growing relevance of IP regulations within the museum management field, especially because of the advent of technology, WIPO published a guide for *Managing Intellectual Property for Museums* (Pantalony, 2013) which also gives space to business opportunities connected to copyright protection. This publication, however, to not directly face the issues related to TCE, which are addressed in terms of legal and ethical IP applications in the WIPO guide titled *Intellectual Property and the Safeguarding of Traditional Cultures: Legal Issues and Practical Options for Museums, Libraries and Archives* (Torsen & Anderson, 2010) which I’ll be using as a relevant reference in this section of my dissertation.

concerns over the possibility that institutional policies might disregard their moral or economic interests. Cultural expressions, like songs or symbols, may be at risk of being appropriated when they are recorded or displayed and there have been cases in which aspects of source communities' cultural heritage, subjected to institutional safeguard measures, have been used for commercial purposes without their prior permission nor recognition (see Wendland, 2004; 2005). Especially with the growth of digital technology, these problems underscore the necessity of critically analysing current institutional policies and legislation pertaining to collection ownership, control, and access. However, it can be arduous for source communities to regain sovereignty over their TCEs both because of legal limitation of IP frameworks and because customary rules and cultural or spiritual motivation are mostly disregarded by the Western perspective, which perpetuates colonial dynamics.

In the last decades, Indigenous peoples have been actively working to gain access to and control over collections, especially in settler colonial contexts but also in Western museums that are far from their source communities. IP frameworks often perpetuate existing power imbalances by granting rights to those who document or record TCEs over the rights of the source communities. As so, according to current legislation, the people or organizations that created the recordings, images, or archival materials usually hold ownership rights instead of the Indigenous communities that are the actual creators of the TCE. Hence, most of the time source communities do not have control over, nor access or knowledge about the information collected, recorded, displayed within Western institutions[41]. A perfect example of this paradox are open access databases and inventories that, on the one hand could enhance the protection of TCEs by providing access to collections and thus assisting in the identification of legitimate beneficiaries, pertinent customary legal systems, and possibly providing useful documentation for legal or ethical evaluations in case of unauthorized disclosure or inappropriate uses, on the other might favour illicit appropriation of the information presented to the public. This became particularly relevant in the case of culturally significant

[41] A good example for an international initiative that helps Indigenous communities gain control over how data is collected, managed, displayed and accessed is Local Contexts. See https://localcontexts.org/ (accessed on August 28th, 2025)

or sensitive material that, for being secret or sacred according to customary rules, should be kept restricted to third-party and regulated by source communities' own authority frameworks (Anderson & Koch, 2004; Torsen & Anderson, 2010: 27-28). This paradoxical situation emerges in every material produced by the museum about its collections -from exhibitions to catalogues, from social media and website to souvenirs- and can potentially cause various issues in terms of IP claims by source communities.

Figure 15: The image of an archaeological textiles from the MUDEC's collection was used to communicate the IX International Conference on Andean Textile held at the museum in 2022

The management of TCEs, in both tangible and intangible forms, presents several IP issues for museums that, as trusted institutions, should work to substantially respect indigenous' moral rights. In this regard, the expansion of IP regulations on moral rights can be a useful compass for managing TCEs in museums even if IP rights on those collections (both tangible and intangible) are not applicable nor they are lawfully assigned to source communities (see Vézina 2019; 2020). As TK

holders seek proper recognition as the rightful creators, guardians and interpreters of their culture, the moral right of integrity is especially important in protecting TCEs from disrespectful treatment, helping Indigenous communities uphold their customary practices and ensure respectful cultural representation. Any form of misuse, including digital alterations of any kind, or commercial exploitation, can distort or erase TCEs deep cultural and symbolic significance, that has been traditionally transmitted within its specific cultural framework. Ultimately, Indigenous peoples emphasize the need to safeguard the sensible nature of some secret TCEs that are at risk of being exposed in museums. In this case, the right of withdrawal enables communities to take TCEs out of the public domain if needed, while the moral right of disclosure can stop unapproved public usage. At last, moral rights are potentially able to offer an appropriate long-term timeframe for protecting TCEs that are passed down through generations to preserve cultural continuity rather than for commercial purposes (ibid.). In this context, ICH safeguarding concerns are called again into play as museums cannot alight to UNESCO lines and provide the most efficient conditions for "ensuring the viability of the ICH", through "the widest possible participation of communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals that create, maintain and transmit such heritage" (UNESCO 2003, art. 2; art. 15) if not by recognising source communities' cultural rights over their TCEs. To do so, museums have been increasing their efforts toward community collaboration and non-Western curating practices, aiming to favour Indigenous and minorities in regaining authority over their cultural expression and representation.

This shift in museum curating resulted from multiple phenomena that invested both the museum and heritage discourse during the second half of the 20th century (see chapter 1 and 2). On the one hand, strong ideological detachment from the colonial motives of ethnographic collections and their political finalities, on the other, the increasing contribution of non-Western perspective in defining cultural value. The recognition that different cultural groups might relate to their material culture in different ways, especially in the superposition of tangible and intangible cultural expressions, has had a fundamental role in fostering new collaborative methodologies between museums and communities that would values these

different perceptions. The current self-reflective approach generated by post-colonial theories led post-museums to see their collections as catalysts to broader histories and participation. Rather than completely "delinking" from Western epistemologies or obliterating (colonial) historical residues, the post-museums work as places of discussion, experimentation and inclusion, and aims at the elaboration of shared meanings where source communities may negotiate their cultural identities and memories. The debate about ICH and non-Western perception of value in heritage production also favoured the shift in emphasis from preserving objects to fostering relationships with communities. As a consequence, museums' ethical responsibility toward stakeholders and source communities is highlighted and human and cultural rights are positioned at the centre of museum practice. Leaving their position as main advocates for the AHD, museums become part of a Heritage Community as theorised in the Faro Convention and lose their authoritative voice over source communities' heritage.

Despite the inherited limitations due to epistemological differences, the debates about ICH safeguard and source communities' ownership rights over their cultural expressions, including IP, had a fundamental role in the evolution of museum missions toward the application of "cultural equity". The framing provided by UNESCO and WIPO can support ethical measures that should reflect the relevance of cultural rights in museums practice. Indeed, even if current national or international laws do not provide applicable regulations, the issues they highlight should be kept in high consideration when managing TCEs, especially when they are culturally relevant for minorities and indigenous communities. Cultural institutions of any kind, especially if holding non-Wester collections assembled within a context of power imbalance, should promote the use of these instruments for the elaboration and publication of ethical protocols that guide operations inside and outside their hall, ensuring that Indigenous voices, values, and traditions are treated with dignity and respect. In order to be truly effective, ethical protocols within Western institutions like museums must not only address the concerns and claims of communities engaging with different ontological perspectives, but also adapt to the specific historical and cultural contexts of their collections.

PART TWO: A case study

CHAPTER FOUR. The Museum of World Cultures of Milan: Origins and Politics between Self-reflection and Participation

While the Museum of Cultures of Milan was founded quite recently, the origins of its collections can be traces down to the history of Milan's connection to the world since modern age. Going through the history of the assembling and preservation of the non-European Collections of the Municipality of Milan allows to grasp comprehensively not just the travel, relations and interest of its lustrous citizens' who then decided to donate or sell their findings but it also favour a better understanding and perception of this specimens by the various curators, intellectuals and academics who were in charge of managing, studying and displaying the pieces. Undoubtedly, the collection as we know it today has been shaped by a convergence of political agendas, economic contexts, and cultural perspectives, all of which have been influenced by local, national, European, and more recently, global dynamics. The MUDEC itself as a public institution cannot escape from its role of showcase of political intents in the globalised and capitalistic contemporaneity. At the same time, the way these collections have been

used within the museum to interpret end represent the “Other” has significantly contributed to shaping public perceptions of cultural diversity.

Despite museums have had a significant impact on how cultures perceive modernity, time, and cultural identity, they have also proven to be flexible enough to serve a range of purposes: from being an institution founded in Western traditions commonly linked to colonial histories, to becoming spaces for communities to negotiate their place within broader cultural narratives. When MUDEC opened in 2015 as a completely new institution trying to make sense of old and inhomogeneous collection, it introduced a new approach by periodically reassembling its historic collections to reinterpret their fragmented stories. The initial semi-permanent exhibition focused on retracing the complex history behind the civic collection. The following display expanded this perspective, addressing global relations through a local lens and engaging with current debates on museum practices influenced by post-colonial theory. Since its opening, the MUDEC adopted a post-modern approach aiming at creating a space for communities and stakeholders’ voices to be heard (see chapter 1) . Despite occasional tensions, conflicting expectations that have sometimes inhibited progress or favoured methodological adjustments, this process has developed over time. Moreover, the curatorial team has continued to engage in a self-reflective and critical practice beyond community involvement, fostering an ongoing multidisciplinary discussion over ethical management of non-European collection.

The museum is still a work in progress, a “complex body” with its own “metabolism” “organs” and “channel of circulation” (see Deliss, 2020) a dynamic organization dedicated to reconsidering its function and responsibilities. Contributing to this ongoing change is the goal of my project, while also considering the complexities of an institution that has developed to be a multilayered and dynamic entity shaped by the interaction between people and collections, politics and communities (Herle, 2023 [2016]; Gosden & Larson, 2007)

4.1 The Origins of non-European Civic Collections in Milan

The MUDEC's collection of non-European artifacts as we know it now is a "idiosyncratic composite" (Deliss, 2020: 63), the outcome of an ongoing process of converging collections that were put together by a large number of contributors. Investigating the intertwined histories of items, people, and institutions within the complex transitions in culture and society that impacted Milan during the last couple of centuries is crucial to understanding the evolution of these collections.

The eclectic history of collecting of Milan started back in the 17th century. The ecclesiastic Manfredo Settala (1600-1680) assembled one of Milan's first scientific collections. Using a contemporary classification system of *naturalia*, *artificialia*, and *curiosa*, his collection included scientific tools, ethnographic materials, artwork, and both natural and artificial specimens. Over fifty years, Settala produced an exceptional scientific cabinet, anticipating the modern concept of the museum as a centre for study. The collection was ultimately given to the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan in 1755 as per his will. The arrival of Settala's objects to the civic ethnographic collection would have completed much later (see Aimi, De Michele & Morandotti, 1985; Squizzato, 2013; Rocca, 2015; Rocca, 2021; Perani, 2020).

The MUDEC core collection converged between the 19th and 20th centuries from three main institutions: the Archaeological Museum (Museo Patrio di Archeologia), the Natural History Museum and the Art Museum (Museo Artistico Municipale). The earliest non-European objects connected to the early formation of Milan's civic heritage were part of the Milanese painter Giuseppe Bossi's collection. His collection included several items of non-European origin (that haven't been identified yet) and was probably linked to a mining exploration society known as the Consiglio delle Miniere, was acquired by the Pinacoteca di Brera in 1817 and was later transferred in 1864 to the Museo Patrio di Archeologia (Antonini & Orsini, 2015). In the years following its establishment by royal decree in 1862, the Museo Patrio di Archeologia also received additional donations of works of non-European origin (Rosa, 2012: 137)

Nonetheless, the Museum of Natural History was the institution that was instrumental in the development of the "Extra-European Collections". Indeed, ethnography and prehistory were beginning to emerge within the larger field of the natural sciences and Milan was a primary centre of debate on evolutionary theory in Italy throughout the first half of the 1800s. Besides the periodical Il Politecnico oversaw by positivist Carlo Cattaneo, the Natural History Museum (established in 1838) was a pilar for the development these theories. The founding fathers of Italian anthropological and prehistoric-ethnographic museography Paolo Mantegazza, Giuseppe Vincenzo Giglioli, Pellegrino Stroebel, and Luigi Pigorini, were trained within this intellectual milieu (Lattanzi, 2021: 85). Because non-European material culture was thought to be appropriate for illustrating the customs of "primitive peoples" and making straightforward comparisons with European prehistory, the museum started establishing a significant ethnographic section as early as 1858, well before its official opening in 1863 (Antonini & Orsini 2015).

Located on the ground floor and consisting of nearly 600 objects, the Ethnographic Collection is mentioned in the inaugural speech given by the first director Giorgio Jan (1863: 10-12) and described in the adjunct director's (1854-1866) Guide to the Natural History Galleries of the Civic Museum of Milan (Cornalia, 1870). In both, a primitivist perception of other cultures is explicit, as well as the comparativist scientific project underlying the exhibition. At the beginning of the "Ethnography Hall" displayed alongside human remains from ancient Greek and Egyptian burials, were "three mummies and two Peruvian skulls of the Aymara race [...] in which one can observe the habit that Western Indians had, before the civilizing influence of the Europeans, of wrapping and deforming the skulls of newborns" (Cornalia, 1870: 44). A little further along, in the section called "Paleoethnographic", next to prehistoric artifacts from various Italian and European regions, there was also a shelf dedicated to America (ibid.: 45). There, "you would have been able to observe a small collection from the bronze age, in which there is also an object in serpentine, which served as an instrument to the ancient inhabitants of Mexico, shaped in the same way as the axes of the present islanders of Oceania. The comparison of such almost identical objects from the

most disparate regions and epochs gives rise to many conjectures. Are these perhaps arguments in favour of the unity of origin? Or proof of the identical natural development of the human intellect?" (Jan, 1863: 11-12). After passing the phrenological collection, one would arrive at the 'Ethnographic Collection,' the original core of today's collections, which was donated in 1863 by the Seminary of Foreign Missions at San Calogero in Milan (now the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions, PIME) (Cornalia, 1870: 45).[42] The collections at the Civic Museum of Natural History evidently embody the 19th-century naturalist viewpoint, wherein ethnography and palaeontology were regarded as complementary fields, both contributing to the study of human natural history, predominantly shaped by physical anthropology. In these initial stages, director Emilio Cornalia was the driving influence in defining the theoretical frame for the newborn Museum of Natural History. Indeed, mainly during the second half of the century, several Milanese researchers and explorers considered the institution as a scientific reference and donated their records, anthropological materials, and exotic objects (see Antonini & Franco, 2015). Among them Pellegrino Strobel, Manfredo Camperio, the founder of the Museo Preistorico Etnografico di Roma, Luigi Pigorini and Paolo Mantegazza, who started the Museo nazionale di antropologia ed etnologia in Florence.

After the donation of the San Calogero's collection, the already existing interest for the New World[43] resulted in a series of donations by relevant scientists such as the naturalist Antonio Raimondi who travelled Peru for more than 20 years and sent ancient Andean pottery and textiles back to Milan (1863), or Cristoforo Robecchi, member of the geographical Society, who as well donated valuable objects from Peru (1887). Other relevant names were Osculati, Narducci and Strobel, who contributed to the most ancient part of the Americas' collection that still served the comparativist theory, especially in the case of lithic pieces (see Livi, 2008; Domenici & Orsini, 2010; Orsini 2015a; Antonini & Franco, 2015). The death of Cornalia turned the tide as the ethnography and paleoethology collections were

[42] Founded in 1850 in Saronno and known since 1926 as PIME, the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions began its ethnographic collection when missionary Carlo Salerio returned from Woodlark Island with a significant number of artifacts, forming the initial core of the San Calocero Ethnographic Museum (see Tragella 1947; Gheddo 2002).

[43] See Aimi (1991) for a detailed account of history of the Civic collection from the Americas

removed from the exhibition to make space for a newly arrived ornithological collection. Despite there was an interest in establishing a museum of prehistory and ethnography in Milan, modelled after Luigi Pigorini's institution in Rome, the ethnographic and paleoethological collections were neglected for around two decades, demonstrating the declining interest for these disciplines. In the 1893 reorganization plan, to conform to what was thought to be a common trend among many cultural institutions[44], the museum's leadership decided to remove the ethnographic and paleoethological collections in favour of keeping only anthropological materials that were thought to be in line with the zoological framing of the human species. Some records from 1899 to 1900 clearly reflect the intention to create a dedicated Ethnographic Museum within the Castello, by merging existing collections with those of the Natural History Museum (Antonini & Orsini, 2015) However, only the prehistoric collection was formally transferred to the Archaeological Museum (1904), while the ethnographic collection remained in storage until 1929, when it was relocated to the Municipal Art Museum in the Castello Sforzesco (Livi, 2008) where East Asian collections from China and Japan were held, regarded as exotic art pieces, in contrast to the artifacts housed at the Museum of Natural History.

The Municipal Art Museum was founded in 1878 as a result of the 1874 Historical Exhibition of Industrial Art, organised by the private Italian Industrial Association to promote art in service of industry (see Tasso 2012; Tunesi 2017). Milan was aligning with the European phenomenon of international exhibitions as events for constructing national prestige. After the 1874 exhibition, various kind of objects belonging to Milanese noble families entered the Municipality Art Museum, some possibly came from the Americas. The Museum catalogue specified that "Peruvian, Italiote, Etruscan, and Hellenic vases," as well as "Weapons from the Peoples of the New World" were indeed exhibited in the same cabinets (Catalogo 1878 in Antonini & Franco, 2015). However, the collection from Asia was growing and would progressively take the spotlight in the following years. Indeed, among a

[44] "Moreover, ethnography was also removed from other museums, including the new and renowned one in London. What remains is pure anthropology, as it considers the human being as an animal species within the zoological series. When, in primitive man as an animal, conscious, deliberate, and free labor began to manifest in the forms of his products, a new era began for him, from which the remains..." (Vignoli, 1983 in Livi, 2008: 282)

diverse range of objects, including those that were incorporated from the Archaeological Museum, the 1906 catalogue of the Art section also mentioned Asian porcelain, textiles and bronze pieces (Frova, 1906: 27-28).

Figure 16: Chinese and Japanese objects were part of this Bronze display at the Castello Sforzesco opening (Frova, 1096, tav. 37)

Giovanni Battista Lucini Passalacqua's collection from Japan, displayed for the first time in the 1874 during the Historic Exhibition of Industrial Art (Esposizione Storica di Arte Industriale), got into the civic collection only in 1889. It was assembled along the routes that brought many Lombard merchants in silk to Asia (see Zanier 2008). Indeed, the first non-European Milan Civic collections from Asia were strongly connected to the market and production for silk that was fundamental for Northern Italy economy at that time. An epidemic had struck European sericulture in the 1850s and Japan, that recently reopened to international trade, became the primary source of *seme bachi* (silkworm seed) that flourished till the 1880s. The trade in East Asian crafts and antiquities, collected during the trip or directly in the markets set up to welcome European traders in Yokohama, flourished as a consequence of the silk enterprise. Passalacqua's collections were acquired to be included in the Artistic Collection at the Castello Sforzesco. Around a decade later, the cavalier Carlo Giussani, who lived in Japan for more than 30 years, working in the business of silk as well, donated his

collection to the Castello Sforzesco: his more than 300 pieces entered the civic collections for educating new generations at industrial art. In 1910, another addiction to the Asian collection was purchased by the Milan municipality: this time, coming from the collection of Ferdinando Meazza, artist, art collector, businessman and silk expert as well (see Amadini, 2015).

While silk merchants were travelling East, other Milanese industrialist have started expanding their endeavours in Africa and this initial economic interest in Africa resources quickly became a mean for colonialism. Shortly after Italy put foot into Africa with the acquisition of the Assab bay through private transaction -a covert for starting Italy's colonial expansion-, the Società di Esplorazione Commerciale in Africa was established in Milan in 1880 (see Milanini Kemény 1973). In 1894, four years after the official annexation of the first Italian colony, the Società was in charge of the "Mostra Eritrea" in the section focus on geography and ethnography during the Esposizioni Riunite event in Milan (Comitato per le Esposizioni Riunite, 1894: 22). Apparently, exhibitors were encouraged to donate their displayed items to the Civic Museum by Giuseppe -Pippo- Vigoni, mayor of Milan in that period and prominent traveller who played a key role in shaping support for Italian colonial ambitions. His 1879 journey to Abyssinia deepened his commitment to expansion, and during his 27 years as president of the Society, his travel writings helped construct a romanticized image of Africa (see Vigoni 1881, 1935). His collection would have been donated to the Castello Sforzesco Civic Art Museum in 1935 and given quite relevance in the display. Once again, great "universal" exhibitions had a great role in defining ethnographic collections: while the 1874 Exhibition legitimized the aesthetic appreciation of Asian art crafts, the 1894 one impulse the collection of material culture from subjugated countries within the political framework of colonialism (see Falcucci & Antonini 2019)

The Vigoni donation was just one example of many new acquisitions that enriched the Civic collection during the first few decades of the last century, including the 1929 transfer of the National History Museum collection previously mentioned (see Antonini & Orsini, 2015; Antonini & Franco, 2015)[45]. The collections display

[45] Within the 2015 MUDEC catalogue *Oggetti d'Incontro*, the original castello Sforzesco registers references are all mentioned in detail.

changed through time, but it unequivocally showed the perception of non-European material culture at the time. Objects from China and Japan were separated from the "Ethnographic collection": the first ones were exhibited in the Sala della Balla to enhance how "no other people in the world have achieved aesthetic expressions of such original and exquisite beauty" (Candrini, 1931: 37) while the ethnographic objects were "arranged in display cases by continent, with each continent divided into sections corresponding to its regions and equipped with clear labels, the newly organized collection offers a clear—albeit concise—overview of the customs and traditions, and consequently the level of civilization, of the most characteristic peoples of the world" from Lapland and North America, to North and Central Africa, Oceania, Asia and South America (Candrini, 1930). While the first display spoke to the public of remarkable artistic traditions, the second was all about primitivism and folklore. In 1936, a gallery housing the collection of former Milan mayor Giuseppe Vigoni was inaugurated to illustrate how Italian entry in Addis Abeba and European colonialism in general brought civilization to the obscure lands of Africa (Antonini & Orsini, 2015: 24; Antonini & Franco, 2015: 198-201).

The different classification and diverging appreciation of Chino-Japanese pieces and those from the ethnographic or colonial display was even clearer when the collections needed to be evacuated during World War 2. Only the Oriental collections and Pre-Columbian ceramics were part of the evacuation plan in the summer of 1943; these were shipped out of Milan together with other artworks, while the rest were held secure onsite. Nevertheless, the in loco measures to protect the remaining collections were ineffective because the building was converted into a barracks filled with flammable materials. Everything that remained in the Sala della Balla, including the whole Vigoni and the Ethnographic collections, were destroyed when an incendiary bomb struck the Castello Sforzesco on August 14. These items were clearly considered secondary, as seen by the fact that not only ethnographic materials were not given priority for evacuation, but also their destruction wasn't noted in the official documentation (Antonini & Orsini, 2015: 24-25). At the same time, the Settala's collection which was already

dismembered during the Napoleonic looting and then stored in the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana, also underwent serious losses in the 1943 bombardment (Aimi, De Michele & Morandotti 2020; Rocca, 2021).

As just the East Asia and pre-Columbian collection (with very few exception) survived WW2, they were included in the Studio BBPR project for the new Castello Sforzesco Museum that tried to replicate the pre-war arrangement. However, they were never exhibited again in those galleries and the ethnographic were not exhibited nor studied for a couple of decades. Despite this, private citizens interest non-European civic collections continued to grow during the second half of the past century. Right after the end of the war till the 50s, a new way of collecting non- European material culture emerged in Italy, with great delay in comparison to other contexts in Europe, where it had entered the world of aesthetic appreciation since the end of the 19th century. Thanks to collectors and traders of the calibre of Paul Guillaume, a new perspective lighted the so-called "*art négre*" and its entrance into specific circles made it increasingly familiar for artists in Paris. This passage of the ethnographic object from document to artistic inspiration marked the practice of those artists that were later defined as "primitivists", surely being Picasso the most relevant[46]. In Italy, collectors such as Ezio Bassani, Alessandro Passaré, Franco Monti e Federico Balzarotti curated their attraction toward non-Western during the aftermath of fascism, racial laws and the demise of Italian colonial endeavours. As a result of his work as a sculptor, Franco Monti (1931-2008) was exposed to African art. Although he never saw himself as a collector, he began buying pieces in Côte d'Ivoire, built a gallery in Milan, and had a big impact on Italian taste in non-European art. At the time, Ezio Bassani (1935-2018) was a well-known expert in African art. During his business travels, this entrepreneur who had a strong interest in primitivist art got involved in important ethnographic art markets throughout Europe. Through his exhibitions, he particularly contributed to the appreciation of African sculpture in Italy, especially its formal aspects. In the same period, due to his love of modern art, the so-called "doctor of the artists" Alessandro Passaré (1927-2006) became active in the African art market. Last but not least, after visiting Latin America, architect

[46] See Bargna (2009) for a wider and more complete picture on Primitive Art.

Federico Balzarotti (1922-2000) realised that the figurative language of pre-Columbian textiles would have been of great inspiration for abstract art (see Orsini & Franco, 2015).

However, these collections, in their entirety or in part, entered the civic ethnographic collections later on, from the beginning of this century, in form of acquisition, donation or long-term loan (see Orsini, 2015). In the meanwhile, a renovated interests toward the neglected public collection still housed at the Castello Sforzesco had resumed. From the 80s, new investigations, displays and donations resulted in publications and temporary displays in the Museo di Arte Applicata: the Pre-Columbian collection, implemented by an important donation, was investigated thoroughly and the most relevant pieces exhibited and published (Laurencich Minelli, 1984), a new collection catalogue (Aimi & Laurencich Minelli, 1991) was written in occasion of the celebrations of the fifth hundred anniversary of Columbus arrival to the Americas; The temporary exhibition Weapons of Ancient Japan was followed by another thematic display titled *Kinkô: East Asian Bronzes from the Ethnographic Collection of the Sforza Castle* (Castello Sforzesco, 1995). During the same years, the Natural History Museum, where a portion of the Settala's zoological collection was moved to in the post-war era, organized a great exhibition that reunited what was left and what was forgotten of the collection (see Aimi, De Michele & Morandotti 1984; Rocca, 2021).

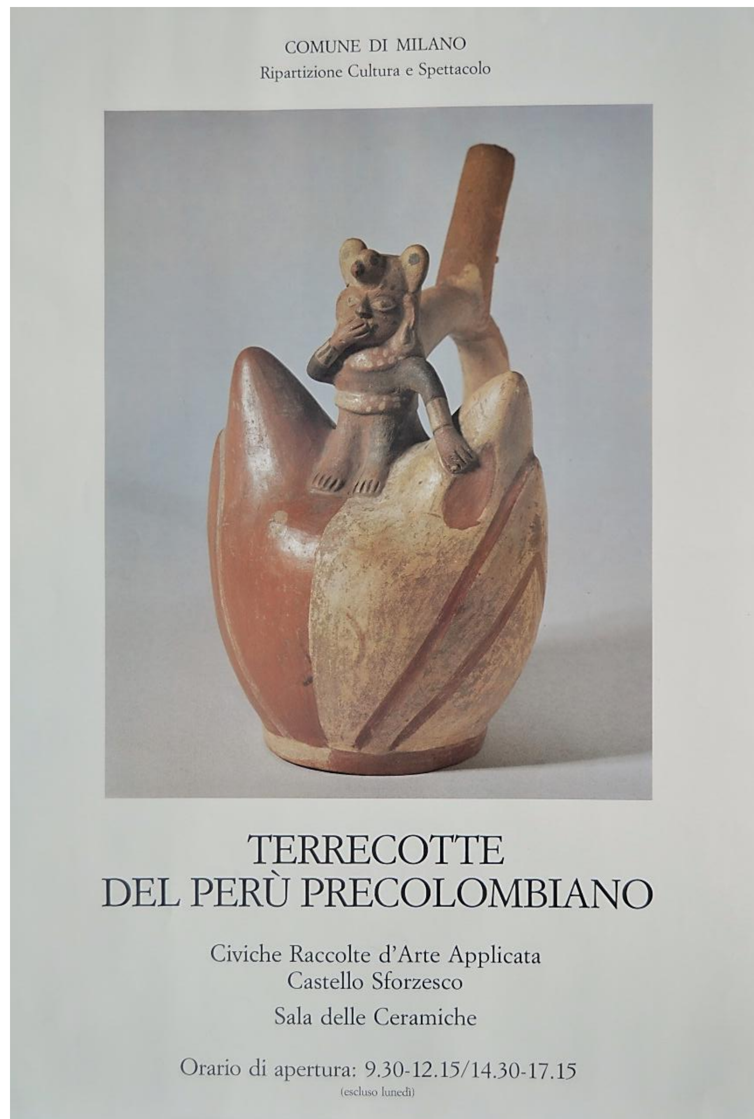

Figure 17: Catalog Terrecorre del Perù Precolombiano (Aimi & Laurencich Milenni, 1991)

A progressive specialization of disciplines led the "Raccolte Extraeuropee" to acquire relevance as a part of the Collections of Applied Art. Prompted by the publication of an international call to build a new space for these objects (see below), there was an attempt at filling the gaps in the civic collections through massive acquisitions and donations. However, the absence of a specialist occasioned a lack in the ethical due diligence as they weren't always verified in terms of legitimate provenance. After the approval of the new museum project, a specialised curator was hired to manage the collections: Carolina Orsini. From that moment, on the one hand the collection grew consistently over a few years - adding to those pieces mentioned previously, many more arrived (see Salsi, 2000;

Salsi, 2004)- and a programme of long-term exhibition allowed a better visibility of the collections that were recently acquired or for long hidden. Among them *Indoamerica. Archeologia ed etnografia del Sud America al Castello Sforzesco* (17 febbraio 2006 - 29 gennaio 2007) which presented some recent donations (Segre and Lo Curto), then *Orientalia. Percorsi cinesi e giapponesi nelle Raccolte Extraeuropee del Castello Sforzesco* (23 dicembre 2006 - 25 novembre 2007), *Dalla Turchia. Una scelta di opere ottomane dalla collezione del Castello Sforzesco* (26 novembre 2008 - 15 febbraio 2009) and *Mal d'Africa. Alessandro Passaré. La costruzione di una collezione* (26 ottobre 2011 - 6 gennaio 2013). In this context also ICH was considered, especially in terms of the acquisition of photographic archives.

This was a turning point for the preservation of the civic ethnographic collections of the Milan Municipality, which pushed toward what is now the Museum of World Cultures.

4.2 A New Perspective on the non-European Collections: From the Centre for Extra European Cultures to the MUDEC

The concept for a museum honouring Milan's ethnographic legacy first surfaced in the late 1990s, during Mayor Gabriele Albertini's administration. Supported by the two relevant political personalities in Milan for cultural policies and museum management (the Central Director for Culture and Museums and the Cultural Councillor of the city), the project was part of a larger reimagining of the city's cultural legacy. The aim consisted in establishing a multipurpose facility, a Citadel for Cultures, that would have hosted a variety of intercultural events and activities; most importantly, it would have accommodated not just the non-European collections, which were to be crucially incremented, but also the art library and archives of CASVA (Centre for Advanced Studies in Visual Arts), the Archaeological Museum and the Photographic Archive (see Giorgi, 1999; Mottola Molfino, 2004[47]).

[47] To get a better idea of the magnitude of the initial project, look at the dedicated section of Masoero (ed) 2004.

In 1999 an international call was published by the Municipality of Milan for consigning the project of the new space that would have housed the civic ethnographic collection: the Centre for Extra European Cultures. This project was supposed to rise from a proper strategy of industrial archaeology in the old Milanese factory known as *Spazio Ansaldo*, already purchased by the Municipality of Milan in 1989 with the intention of converting it into a (multi)cultural centre. British architect David Chipperfield, who won the competition, designed a large-scale museum in the former steel plant of the abandoned industrial complex. The project consisted of three floors devoted to services to the public, clearly imposing the building as a place for the people since the beginning: its 17,000 square meters were supposedly to be dedicated to semi-permanent collections and temporary exhibitions, an auditorium, a specialized library, multipurpose rooms that can be used for audio-visual projections, a restaurant with an open yard and an underground parking lot. In particular, the new centre mission as a cultural hub was stated clearly by the open irregular plaza on the first floor, surrounded by large glass walls and curve showcases that were to introduce to the exhibition area, housing the civic collection (Chipperfield, 2004; Salsi, 2004).

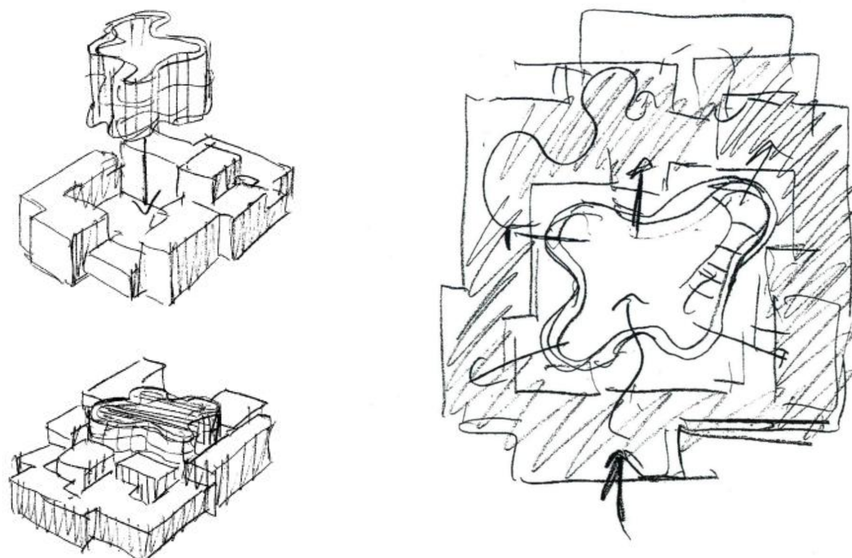

Figure 18: Chipperfield's projects according to his proposal for the Spazio Ansaldo international contest @Mudec Archive

Inspired by Milan's long and eclectic history of collecting, the original concept for the City of Milan's non-European collection was to be shown as an evocation of the city's multicultural identity. Indeed, since the 1980s Italy had been attracting a growing number of foreign nationals, many of which had been converging in Milan to the point that they significantly altered the urban structure of the city (see Orsini & Villa, 2021). The museum was not, however, meant to be ultimately anthropological, because artifacts would have been arranged for their formal and aesthetic characteristics to be fully appreciated while still taking into account their historical and ethnographic relevance. The building hosting the collection was supposed to become a permanent centre for documentation and education on extra-European cultures (Giorgi, 1999; Salsi, 2001).

The museum experimental perspective originated from its completely new setting - not a renovated one-. However, it reflected a paternalistic view originating from the lack of engagement that Italian museums experts still had regarding the foreign wider and debated field locating in the intersection between museum studies and post-colonial theories (see chapter 1). Indeed, the rather simplistic aim of the new institution was to create harmony between anthropology, history, and aesthetics also aspiring to become a venue for both aesthetic appreciation and cultural mediation promoting interaction and inclusion in a city that was becoming more and more multicultural. The work on the Castello Sforzesco non-European collection had started even before the museum's official opening through early exhibitions (see above), digitization and partnerships with foreign scientific institutions, in order to establish the premises for a scientific, cultural and educational reference. Moreover, the museum's declared goal of serving as a hub for intercultural communication and integration was already developed during the design stage, when local communities participated in joint activities and projects, building a trusting relationship that would serve as the project's cornerstone (see Orsini, 2004; Salsi & Orsini, 2004; Salsi, 2004; Orsini & Salsi, 2006).

However, the project stalled for almost a decade. In 2009, during Letizia Moratti's tenure as Mayor of Milan (2006-2011), the Director of the Civic Collections of Applied Arts, Claudio Salsi, entrusted a scientific committee to define the museum's scientific and curatorial orientation. The well-known French

anthropologist Marc Augé, who served as Director of Studies at the École des Hautes Études in Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in Paris and is renowned for his groundbreaking work on the idea of "non-places," chaired this group. Experts from a variety of academic and cultural fields related to the museum's holdings, including Ivan Bargna, Giancarlo Calza, Giovanni Curatola, Maria Camilla De Palma, Davide Domenici were also on the committee. Carolina Orsini, Francesca Tasso e Claudio Salsi represented the Municipality of Milan in the committee's efforts (Determina Dirigenziale 213/2009 in Pugliese, 2015). At this point, the Centre of Cultures was designed to function as a vibrant cultural centre that would host a variety of events aimed at promoting discussion about world issues and historical and modern cultural shifts. At this point. the scientific committee was working in light of those debates that in the previous few decades sprouted from post-colonial perspectives, revolutionized cross cultural studies and had consequently shacked the colonial roots of the "classical" ethnographic museum in Europe and especially in North America, where museum anthropology was already a well-established discipline. In Italy, museum anthropology, which is defined as both anthropological practice within ethnographic museums and critical analysis of the museum itself, had started to take shape as a discipline in 1991. In 2001, SIMBDEA, an association devoted to museography and the preservation of demo-ethno-anthropological[48] heritage, was established, and the same year, a special division was established inside the Italian National Society of socio-cultural anthropologists. This change, the professionalisation of demo-ethno-anthropology within the ministry of Culture and the inclusion of the ethno-anthropological heritage in the national law *Codice dei beni culturali e del paesaggio* in 2004 started a conversation between more modern international methods and Italian standards (Lattanzi, 2012: 6). With the support of different media and contemporary art, the mission of the of the semi-permanent exhibition of the Centre for Cultures in Milan would have been to use artifacts as a starting point for cross-cultural debates. In this perspective, material culture would have played a crucial role for the auspicated encounter among cultures as communities would have had a role in narrating the collections. The original project for the opening

[48] For an exhaustive report on the evolution and interrelation of the term "ethnology" and "ethnography" se Lattanzi (2021: 89-94)

was indeed focused on the theme of encounter. With the exception of a dedicated area reserved for temporary exhibitions, the whole collection was supposed to be organized by geographical regions, each one conveying their historical and cultural specificities but also highlighting shared elements and convergences. The goal was to offer a glimpse on the diverse range of dynamics of cultural interaction between different parts of the world by also showing what links our culture with those of other continents.

However, since 2008 the city was facing a great recession and new pragmatic concerns have risen, highlighting the challenges of balancing this ambitious cultural project with limitation in accessibility and shortage in funding. Indeed, economic and financial constraints caused a revaluation of the original project for such a sizable museum as its long-term manageability started to be questioned, especially because the building was located outside of the city centre and outside of most touristic itineraries. Under the new Mayor Giuliano Pisapia (2011-2013), many of the decisions and cultural policies of the previous council were re-examined: when the museum was still under construction, the change in perspective was already clear and the Museum of World Cultures (MUDEC) management model was revaluated. In order to maintain the museum's operational and financial viability, a co-management method between public and private was adopted consisting in the division of functional areas between the public and private sectors. In 2013, it was established that the municipality would have maintained its authority for the care and promotion of the civic collections, while a private partner was given control over the operation of supplementary services including the bookstore, café, and planning of temporary exhibitions. According to Marina Pugliese (2015), MUDEC's director during the opening phase, this option would also have solved the problem of a civic collection that, despite the recent acquisition campaign, wasn't still sufficient to fill the exhibiting space on the first floor as some geographical sections were still unbalanced in terms of numbers and quality of the pieces. While this solution brought indisputable economic advantages, it also completely disrupted the core of the original project as multidisciplinary as it was, which would have included a number of activities such as theatrical performances, conferences, and workshops with a great focus on

educational activities, an ethnic restaurant and a shop dedicated to original crafts, promoted through fair trade (see Salsi, 2001; Salsi, 2004).

The private company who won the call was 24 ORE Cultura, the Cultural branch of Gruppo 24 ORE, which specializes in providing economic, financial, legal, and professional information and print the renown financial daily newspaper Il Sole 24 Ore. 24 ORE Cultura, on the other hand, operates in the art and cultural heritage industry by publishing, overseeing museum activities, and organising art exhibitions. This model of cultural management, blending public with private, has set a precedent in Italy and the consequent dynamic has been influencing the institution policies, image and activities over time (memorandum from a meeting of the Scientific Committee 2010, in Lo Verso & Sottilotta, 2021).

In parallel, as the Municipality decided to renounce to the project of a new contemporary museum in the ex-Portello industrial area of the city, the new Councillor for Cultural Policies, Stefano Boeri, an architect and politician interested in art history, decided to redirect the original ex-Ansaldo project and declared in his first press conference that the entire new building would have become a “hub for contemporary art”. The Centre for Extra-European Cultures Scientific Committee was informed through an unanticipated communication from the city council’s Cultural division. In Boeri’s idea, Western contemporary art would have occupied the new location while the extra-European collections would be relocated in another space -to be defined- in the ex-Ansaldo complex. His belief that ethnographic exhibitions would not have drawn a large enough audience is evident. Therefore, the location of the ethnographic collections shouldn't have interfered with the hosting of significant exhibitions of contemporary art.

As many newspapers reported, this abrupt change caused a great deal of criticism from both donors and diasporic communities. On the one hand, those who donated their collections voiced a strong frustration as they were hoping to see their objects on permanent display. On the other hand, numerous diasporic associations also expressed their disagreement, feeling marginalised and deprived of a space for self-representation as they had already been part of the arrangements for the activities that would have enhanced the upcoming permanent exhibition. Their disagreement was made clear in a public open letter

to Mayor Giuliano Pisapia, signed by 35 organizations devoted to promoting intercultural discussion and extra-European cultures. By voicing their concerns about the uncertain future of the Centre for Extra-European Cultures, they not just referred to the efforts and support they already put into the project but also highlighted the mayor's own election program, in which he promised, as primary goal of his campaign, the construction of the museum. These tensions resulted therefore in a political conflict that brough Boeri to leave his charge as Cultural Councillor of Milan[49].

At this point, the Centre for Extra-European Cultures was once again in need for a revision: whilst the problem connected to the financial and space management could not be solved without a collaboration with the private sector, this new set up would have needed to a new scaling of both the scientific and curatorial project and a reshaping of communities' participation dynamics. In 2011, hundreds of organizations representing Milan's international groups came together to form the Forum della Città Mondo (World City Forum). Based on a bottom-up approach and without a bureaucratic organization, associations were given complete autonomy in creating the upcoming museum cultural programming. This reflected in their enthusiastic participation in the planning of the first participatory cultural program for the year 2015/2016. The over 70 events, including book presentations, film screenings, workshops, and conferences, were community-relevant but not connected to the ethnographic collections.

In 2013, the Municipality Council for Culture pushed for the creation of a second-level organization, the *Associazione Città Mondo*. In theory, this official recognition would have given a twofold advantage: first, the groups' members gained the legal standing necessary for working more straightforwardly with the Municipality; second, the recognised association would have worked in a more bureaucratic framework, making the collaboration with the public sector easier. However, the associations' flourishing creativity was based on members' voluntary, community-driven, which worked difficultly with the administrative reasoning of

[49] Press review on this episode is quite rich. See e.g. Cirillo (2011), Redazione Artribune (2011), etc. Information on this phase were also presented by Sara Chiesa, Carolina Orsini, Iolanda Ratti, Anna Antonini during the ICME (International Committee for Museums of Ethnography) 2016 Annual Conference, PANEL VII The Current Landscape of Ethnographic Museums in Italy.

municipal offices this new institutionalised form limited its independence, financially and politically. An issue of inclusivity also raised as of the almost 200 associations that were originally part of the Forum, only 85 joined the Association. Despite this, the new legal structure made the decision-making process more difficult as it required the creation of a representative committee for each global region involved. Even though it was based on the principles of participation and democracy, the need for unanimous consent made every discussion slower, which caused projects to stall or be delayed and prevented initiatives from being implemented on time (Lo Verso & Sottilotta, 2021: 9-10). These complications have influenced the relevance of community participation and the relations between the *Associazione*, the Municipality and the museum in gestation. These dynamics were to be completely transformed in the following years.

As previously analysed in this chapter, the civic collection of non-European objects had come together in a long and manifold process that had involved a variety of people and institutions, intricated dynamics, connections and situations that favoured the formation of a likewise multifaceted collection that reflect diverse political, cultural and economic factors which altogether involved Milan and its people along its history. Nonetheless, there had never been a just one relevant institution that functioned as a recipient for all ethnographic collections before recently. Different kind of objects, coming from different regions, perceived differently mostly according to the beholder eye than because of their own characteristics, were collected, assembled and offered to those institutions that, in a specific timeframe, political and cultural context were believed to be the best recipient. When cultural and political forces coincided for the creation of a multicultural centre for the city of Milan, which would have housed the non-European collections reunited, the museum once again became a political instrument as a place where institutionalised cultural dynamics were put into practice. The continuous variation of the same forces made the project an object of pretextual and political dynamics.

4.3 The Museum of Cultures of Milan: From the Opening until Now

In March 2015, the Chipperfield building opened to the public as the MUDEC - Museum of Cultures of Milan[50]. In the same year, Expo brought 21 million visitors to Milan, turning the city into the most international destination in Italy. International exhibitions had always had a great influence not just in urban infrastructure but also in the way a city depict itself to the world watching. In the past, international exhibitions were the perfect occasion for a nation to display its control over resources and, not coincidentally, they were frequently connected with the creation or implementation of ethnographic collections from colonial territories. In a way, international exhibition allowed nations and cities to show their grasp over economic and cultural diversity within its borders. If we consider that establishing a museum is never a neutral act but a symbolic process validating political structures, the fact that Expo and the MUDEC opening aligned was clearly not a coincidence, but a way to validate national identity both locally and internationally (Steiner, 1995).

4.3.1 Exhibiting Milan through the Other

The civic collection was partially displayed in a semi-permanent exhibition while a part of it was housed in the open storage (Di Marco, 2015). The semi-permanent exhibition, that was supposed to last five years, was titled *Objects of Encounter* (*Oggetti d'Incontro*) and was curated by the museum curatorial team that worked independently after the scientific committee termination. The temporality of the project was based on the idea that, if the museum ought to communicate with its own cultural context and the society it's embedded in, then it should also adapt over time. For the same reason, the exhibition design prompted a self-reflective itinerary though the encounters that the Milanese society had made throughout history, allowing a reflection on how these connections had shaped the local contemporality and offering the visitor the tools to look critically and the practice of collecting (see Orsini 2019). As it showed how the collection itself was

[50] After the UNESCO World Culture Report on Cultural Diversity, Conflict and Pluralism (2000) many international institutions had decided to leave behind the term "ethnographic" as associated to political implications (see UNESCO, 2000b). On the other hand, the new denominations "Museum of Cultures" "Museum of World Cultures" "World Museum" recalled the idea of a new kind of museum, a hub for encounter (Lattanzi, 2021: 102-104)

assembled, the exhibition did not -and could not- aim at presenting cultures according to traditional geographic or ethnic classifications. Deviating from that universalistic approach that had influenced many ethnographic displays, *Oggetti d'Incontro* described the specificities of the civic collections. While historical narratives were clearly prominent, the museographical presentation of the selected objects also clearly satisfied an aesthetic view on the collection, as it was promised during the first proposals dating back 15 years. The high ceilings-halls, the dimmed lighting with spotlights on the objects and, above all, the dark-wooden cabinets influenced this perception. The narration started from Manfredo Settala's collection that was included thanks to a long-term loan, continued toward a section dedicated to the origins of the collections from explorers to missionaries, then the development of commercial and then political relationship with Africa (leading to colonialism) and Asia (due to the commerce of silk) that brough to next section, dedicated to great exhibitions. The display continued with a video installation explaining the darkest era of the collection during WW2, leading to the last section of the exhibition, dedicated to post-war collecting practices and their connection to modernism. The next two-room space was supposed to be dedicated to temporary exhibitions dedicated to contemporary art or in-depth studies of the collection (Orsini, 2015). During the following years, the temporary exhibition mostly focused on detailed historical studies, scientific projects, specific or cross topics related to the civic collections[51]. This intense activity of curating was vehicle of the idea that creating an exhibition could be an interpretive process itself, capable of generating new insights and understandings, offering more than just an opportunity to present knowledge gained through fieldwork, written sources, or expert collaboration (see Herle, 2013).

[51] See e.g. Orsini & Villacorta Ostolaza (2016), Antonini & Villa (2017), Barzetti (2018), Antonini, Orsini & Farinelli (2019). See also the dedicated webpage in the MUDEC website: https://www.mudec.it/mostre-in-corso-2/#mostre_passate (accessed on June 30th, 2025)

Figure 19: The first semi-permanent Objects of Encounter (2015-2021). @Mudec. Photo by Fallani

After five years, the curatorial team started working on a new concept for the new semi-permanent exhibition. Influenced by the post-colonial theoretical framework that pushed toward the implementation of participatory practices and supported by the evolving collaboration with communities concurrently with the inclusion of new perspectives of curating non-European collections, the new exhibition tried and align with the most recent debates on museum work. The curatorial team, supported by anthropologists, historians and citizens with different migratory backgrounds, was already reflecting on how the new exhibition should have reflected the latest societal changes, when the Covid-19 pandemic hit Milan highlighting inequalities and conflicts all over the world. Furthermore, being northern Italy the first to be hardly stroke by the pandemic that would have changes contemporaneity, the curatorial team could not avoid focusing on the phenomenon of globalisation and how Milan had been influenced by global exchanges since the Modern Age. Thus, the exhibition *Global Milan. The World seen from here* (*Milano Globale. Il Mondo visto da qui*) examines significant international ties that the city has been a part of from the sixteenth century to the present, with different roles. Since it again originates from the study of MUDEC's civic collections, which are intimately linked to the history of Milan and its territory, providing a general account of the globe falls outside of the scope of this exhibition.

Aiming at tackling sensitive topics like colonial atrocities, capitalism, the environmental and social downfalls of some historical events, and the difficulties of modern transnational migration and diasporic experiences, the curatorial team worked with activists, cultural mediators, individuals with relevant transnational personal stories, as well as with experts, artists, bloggers. Following four initial workshops, a number of follow-up meetings were held with more than 40 stakeholders with biographies that were especially pertinent to the subjects covered, where they contributed not only to the themes selected but also to how these could be presented in museographic terms. Numerous challenges pertaining to representation, narratives, content, accessibility, and censorship were highlighted by these conversations. In the absence of straightforward or universally applicable solutions, efforts to address these issues were often hindered by communication challenges and practical constraints, requiring an approach that integrated historical, social, and anthropological perspectives (see Orsini, 2021, 2022; Sebhat, 2021).

In the first three halls, the display develops through multiple levels. Each hall is dedicated to a continent that in some way and at some point, influenced or was influenced by interacting for different purposes with Milan (or Lombardy in general). However, a single narrative unfolds across the halls with the aim to interpret all the stories presented as part of a shared historical trajectory that connects diverse experiences and realities. At the same time, the exhibition clearly assesses the complexity and historical depth of each communities' reality, emphasizing how they reacted to the effects of colonial aggression without minimizing or disregarding the long-term effects of such violence (Montaldo 2021; Orsini, 2021)[52]. The last two halls, not bounded to the museum's existing collections, were shaped through a complex participatory process led by anthropologists Ivan Bargna and Giovanna Santanera (Bargna, 2021a; Santanera, 2021). This phase revealed differences in goals, interpretations, and communication, culminating in a shift in group dynamics toward the end of the project. In the end, the fourth hall featured contemporary Italian artworks reflecting on the colonial past, while the fifth focused on Afro-descendant

[52] See the exhibition catalogue *Milano Globale: il mondo visto da qui* (MUDEC 2021).

communities in Milan, with contributions from mainly second-generation artists, musicians, writers, and influencers (Bargna, 2021a).

Figure 20: First hall of the second semi-permanent exhibition Global Milan (2021 ongoing). @Mudec. Photu by Aleph

The whole participatory methodology that defined themes and influenced museological and museographical choices in the semi-permanent exhibition *Milano Globale* at the MUDEC was part of the debate that had just recently penetrated Italian museological discussion. After 2020, with great delay in comparison to the United States and UK, social conflicts such as the BLM protests and removal of colonial monuments in the US and in Europe favoured a sort of awakening for the academic discussion -and practical implications- on coloniality in museum and heritage studies in Italy (see e.g. Grechi, 2021; Guermandi, 2021; Cimoli, 2022). Despite the fact that *Milano Globale* was ground-breaking in the context of post-colonial practice in Italian ethnographic museums, some criticalities still emerged e.i. in terms of methodologies. Stressing the complexity of collaboration between the strongly bureaucratic institution that is the museum and the pluralistic voices of communities, relationships were set to be imperfect, and conflict was inevitable. Even though they were both fundamentally political in themes and methodologies, the dynamics of these relationships developed differently for those groups that worked to display the civic collections and for those who, on the contrary, were free of this bound. In the first case, communities

that took part in the workshops were given *carte blanche* in expressing their doubts and concerns, and curatorial or theoretical themes they suggested were considered of high relevance. However, the participatory peer-to-peer model was spoiled by the fact that they were presented with a project that already elaborated by a multidisciplinary academic and professional curatorial team as it would need a sort of validation from communities. Stakeholders were thus considered as informed consultants more than co-curators, and they didn't take part in the final stages of the curatorial stages (see Orsini, 2022). However, there was an attempt to include local voices in the exhibition and the stakeholders' needs were consistently taken into account and several adjustments were made: besides the development of dedicated programs after the exhibition opening, and the incorporation of some reflections into the catalogue, specific museographic choices were adopted affecting in particular the third hall, dedicated to colonialism (ibid.). Specifically, two postcards depicting young African women with exposed breasts were flipped and therefore removed from the sexualizing lens that drove their creation. Nevertheless, it was considered essential to include them in the exhibit, as it served to expose and critically denounce this phenomenon. There, long-term loaned objects from the Museo del Risorgimento clarify Italy's impact on the colonies through the political practice of collecting (see Taccola, 2021). Moreover, interactive video installation explains the detailed history of Italian colonial endeavours as stakeholder explicitly request for the exhibition not to silence the atrocities that have been forgotten behind the common Italian say "Italians, good people" referred to their presence in the colonies. The voices of members of Milan's diasporic groups themselves became part of the exhibition. Opening the fourth section, an interactive video related to the Milano Città Mondo project, realised through the artistic intervention of CamerAnebbia and the expertise of anthropologist Silvia Iannelli was the outcome of a long-term participatory process. The installation, aimed at favouring empathetic identification through interviews, offered a space for self-narration and self-definition, and an opportunity to face complex topics such as identity geographies and transcultural conditions (CamerAnebbia & Villa, 2021). Although there have occasionally been criticisms from various stakeholders on the work done in the permanent exhibition, everyone expressed appreciation for this installation, which gave them

a sense of presence and allowed them to see their experiences being directly voiced. However, this raises questions about how the public perceive the extent into which the museum's displays may really be mediated. As someone who worked directly on this installation while the permanent exhibit was being prepared, I am well aware that even the interviews themselves went through an inevitable curatorial adaptation process. The final two halls followed a different curatorial approach, shaped by anthropological methods in which curating became a form of ethnographic fieldwork itself. Here, the exhibition space was not merely a venue for presenting research conducted elsewhere, but rather a space where anthropological knowledge was actively produced through collaborative engagement (see Bargna, 2020; Bargna, 2021b; Bargna, 2023). Even though contradictions and critical issues that arise were considered of value from an anthropological perspective, this inevitably had consequences in terms of image and representation, leading to negotiations, compromise, complains from some segments of the population and from the press. A final performative accusation of tokenism from the same participants toward the museum became, in turn, part of the whole exhibiting process. It must be noticed that the display was supposed to change every year in order to host the artistic practice of individuals with migratory background from other regions.

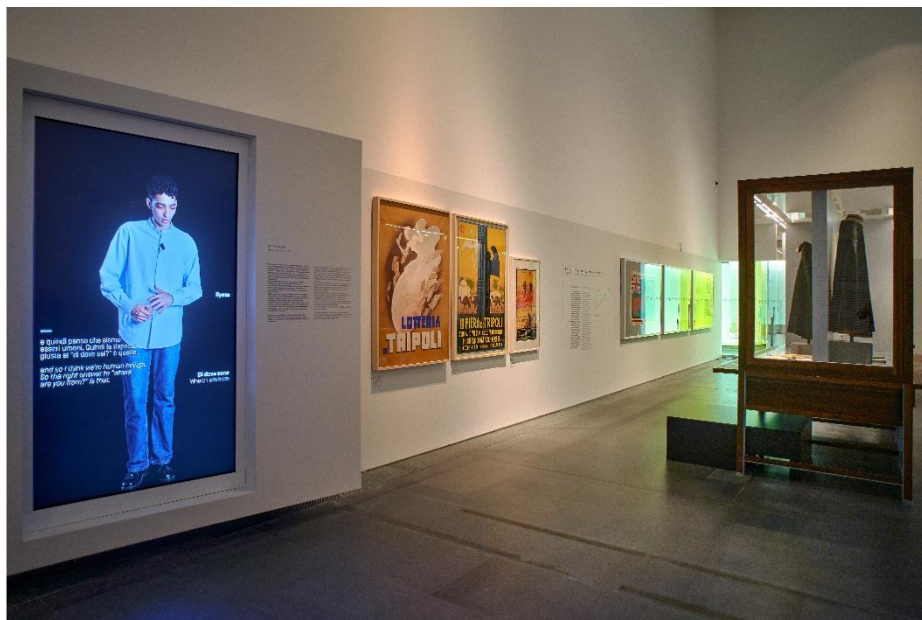

Figure 21: Third hall of the semi-permanent exhibition Global Milan (2021 ongoing). CamerAnebbia and MCM's installation on the left. @Mudec. Photo by Aleph

In the following years, a change in the MUDEC direction brought a revision of its cultural programme. As demonstrated by the Museo di Arte orientale (MAO) in Turin and the Museo delle Civiltà (Muciv) in Rome, the appointment of Marina Pugliese as the new director, who had previously presided over the museum's opening in 2015, may be interpreted as a national trend to assign experts in contemporary art to lead significant organizations that house collections from outside of Europe.

Within this new leadership, the original inclination of the museum mission toward contemporaneity was interpreted as an occasion to focus on contemporary art forms which came with a different perception of the civic collections and with the departure from the previous forms of anthropological practice in the museum space or participatory approach to museum curating (see Pugliese, 2025). The rupture from the previous methodologies was clear in the interventions on *Milano Globale*: Aiming at being open to critics, the third hall underwent some adaptations while the original purpose of the last two halls of *Milano Globale* was deviated to promote a series of exhibitions focused on cross-disciplinary topics. In 2023 and 2024, this approach allowed a bounded display of the collection and excluded stakeholders in the curating process while contemporary artistic practice was predominant. Within a process of adjustment toward an increasing presence of the civic collections in the displays, selected objects were most of the time composed and disassembled creating "contemporary heteroclite assemblage" that deconstruct their initial, source-centric classifications" (Deliss, 2020: 63) to create specific narratives and occasions to tackle specific topics, evoked by contemporary installations. As result, on the one hand new pieces of contemporary art entered the MUDEC collection, on the other interventions on the semi-permanent exhibition *Milano Globale* were made to foster new interpretations (see Rizzo & Inozemtseva, 2025).

Since the marginalization of non-Western artists was exposed and a slow transition toward more recognition within the contemporary art world was prompted, even ethnographic museums had been involved in international discussions about inclusion and the portrayal of non-Western art. Entering the ethnographic museum, contemporary art aimed at challenging institutional

narratives, negotiating authorities and fostering decolonial practices. The classical juxtaposition of contemporary art and ethnographic collection can be a useful and powerful instrument to give a contemporary representation of the art production in the globalised world avoiding a crystalized representation of “the Other” though historical collection. However, it also comes with the risk of “art-washing” and delegating artists to develop sensitive topics the museum should disentangle. Firstly, when intervening on collections, artists risk falling into an appropriative dynamic, overshadowing those people and contexts that produces those pieces. Secondly, it the infiltration of contemporary art in the ethnographic museum has been dragging museums in the dynamics of the art world, with the risk of a shift of museum professional work from preserving and enhancing collections through an always evolving practice of curatorship (see Peters, 2008) to a more art-market oriented form of event-organisation (see Bargna, 2020; Bargna, 2021b; Bargna, 2023).

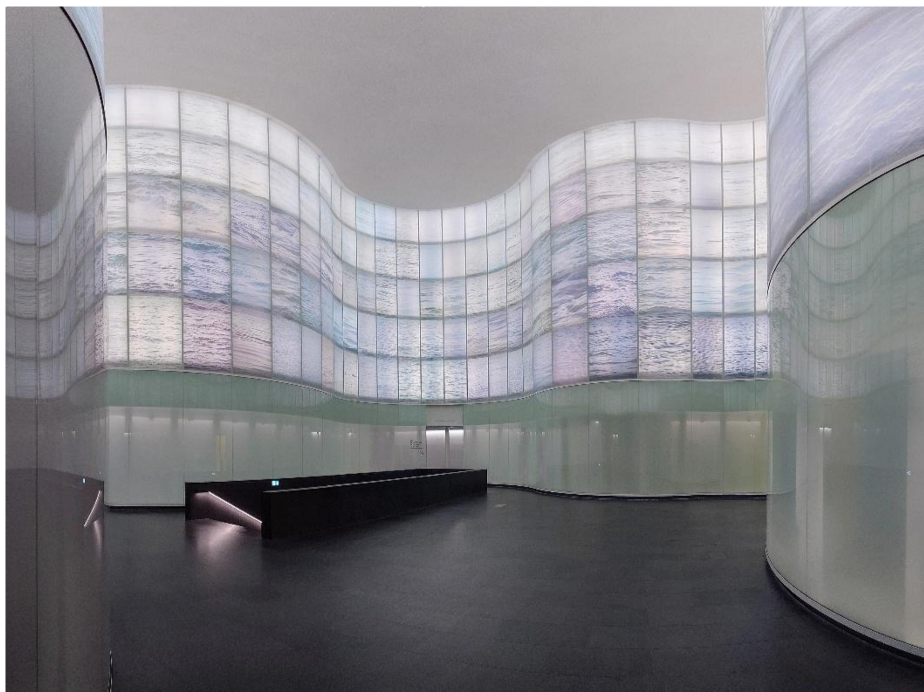

Figure 22: Adrian Paci's installation "Il vostro cielo fu mare, il vostro mare fu cielo" in the Mudec's agora (11/2024 - 09/2025). @Mudec. Photo by Sara Rizzo

Although this synthesis does not seek to provide an exhaustive account of the history of MUDEC as an institution and of its collections, I aimed at shading a light on the complexities involved and to underscore the efforts that have shaped its

current role within a broader context of local and international political and cultural dynamics. The ongoing challenges of managing non-European collections within a European institutional framework are clearly reflected in the persistent tensions surrounding these objects.

4.4 Participatory processes: Milano Città Mondo

Curating has progressively become a dynamic, changing practice influenced by ongoing social interactions and negotiated authorship rather than a set or standardized process. The increase of audience or stakeholder-centred approaches that promote the active involvement of individuals and communities is an indicator of a larger trend in curating practices based on a shift away from objects and products toward people and processes (see chapter 3). In this framework, public programs are moving past being simple forms of outreach or educational supplements to exhibitions; they are indeed becoming more and more relevant in museums, as they seek to become places for collaborative knowledge creation (see Bargna, 2021b; Bargna, 2023).

Even before the official opening, communities and stakeholders had been highly involved in the development of cultural framework for the MUDEC. The original idea of the Scientific Committee was to involve them in "narrating" the collections, when that project went down (see above), the relationship with communities were reshaped but they were still involved in designing initiatives and activities for the participatory cultural programme that would have followed and went along with the opening of the first exhibition *Oggetti d'Incontro*. The reshaping of the administrative and organisational configuration that communities were invited to make in order to facilitate working with the bureaucratic public offices within the museums, destabilized the internal dynamics and made it more difficult for them to participate in the negotiations. These organisational challenges resulted in a progressive centralisation of the decision-making processes into the municipality arms, which entrusted the launch of the first MUDEC POP programme, planned for 2015, to the *ABCittà* Cooperative which was supposed to mitigate internal struggles and support communities in working according to municipality's timetables and processes. Even though communities played a central role,

incompatibility between the in informal approach and the local administration's procedural requirements still emerged and many members of the *Associazione Città Mondo* were unsatisfied and felt they were deprived of their original role. The dynamics were to change further as the *Milano Città Mondo Palinsesto* came up beside the two-year MUDEC POP programme, discontinued from 2016. The MUDEC Pop project, together with the initiatives it encompassed, succeeded in creating a genuine bridge between the museum and the communities through the collections themselves as "contact zones" (see chapter 1) to foster new cognitive processes (Lattanzi, 2012: 11-14). This experience prompted a reflection on how much communities of reference, namely those who have a diasporic past connected to the areas where the collections come from, were interested in or attached to these objects. On the one hand, it was not a given that people had knowledge nor experience of specific material culture from their originating countries. On the other hand, it soon became clear that every community had specific ways of engaging with its cultural expressions and that these variations influenced how the collections and their preservation were seen. What emerged was the realization that diverse and sometimes opposing perceptions of heritage were at stake, revealing that the Western-oriented framework of heritage protection that underpinned the museum's work was based on the assumption that these communities would have naturally shared an interest in the institution and its activities, which wasn't necessarily the case.

Despite maintaining "*Città Mondo*" in its name, this new format altered the relationship with the communities as it was managed by the newly instituted Office for Cultural Networks and Cooperation of the City of Milan (*Ufficio Reti e Cooperazione Internazionale*). The *Palinsesto*, conceived as an annual programme of cultural events such as talks, screenings, performances, and exhibitions, became the MUDEC central participatory agenda for the following years. The renovated participatory methodology put forth by the Ufficio Reti sets the *Palinsesto Milano Città Mondo* apart from previous projects by involving specialist and diasporic associations through ad hoc partnerships and without the mediation of the Forum or Association *Città Mondo*. Previous types of direct engagement were replaced by a progressive concentration of coordination tasks on

the Ufficio Reti, leaning toward scientific committee-guided projects including calls for artistic or curatorial projects and ethnographic research that aim at both understanding and including migrant populations. Considering that the first four editions of the Palinsesto focused on individual migrant communities (Eritrean/Ethiopian, Chinese, Egyptian, and Peruvian) (Mudec, 2017; Mudec, 2018), associations representing specific groups continued to be in charge of organizing and specific events, with assistance from selected specialists and Universities to avoid static and essentialized representation of cultures (see Lo Verso & Sottilotta, 2021: 10-11). These initiatives have helped to create a proper intangible archive of first-hand knowledge -and its tangible expressions- by encouraging the active participation of specific stakeholder groups in the museum's operations and promoting the self-narration of the actual protagonists from communities of interest (see Orsini, 2019).

In 2020, while the MUDEC curatorial team was working on *Milano Globale*, a profound change invested the Ufficio Reti theoretical and methodological approaches. Once again, this turn was originated from a political hint: The Cultural Council suggested in 2020 to align the Palinsesto to the selected theme for the whole Municipality cultural programme for the year: "Women's talents" (Mudec, 2020). This situation gave the Ufficio Reti the perfect opportunity to rethink its approach and redirect it toward a transcultural perspective that would favour new models for participation. A new focus on the personal experiences of individuals with diasporic heritage who are not necessarily affiliated to associations avoided any bias or generalisation that might occur when a specific association (or representative) speaks for the whole community. At this point, direct participation was assured through the creation of a "*cabina di regia*" meaning a steering group with decision-making liberties, constituted of experts and members of Milan's cultural scene who were already involved in public discussions on inequality. This new participation model gave the Ufficio Reti the possibility to look back at its own work with a critical perspective based on post-colonial ideas and gave the Palinsesto activities a more theoretical framework on themes such as migration and social exclusion (Lo Verso & Sottilotta, 2021: 11-12). This process of continuous and adaptive learning, based on overcoming inevitable conflicts, did

not stop there: in 2021, the focus was indeed a reflection on the accessibility of non-European individuals in cultural production, while in 2022 new generation were involved in a discussion about rights and fluid identities (Mudec, 2021; Mudec, 2022)[53]. These initiatives answered to the museum need to tackle specific complex topics but did not have a large participation nor attendance from the larger communities.

A certain confusion on how the MUDEC is perceived from the outside, by communities that have collaborated during the years but also by the public is caused by the fact that the museum is still split in two in terms of spaces and services management. The collaboration between the private contractor and the public museum has always been quite complicated, due to a lack of a shared mission for the MUDEC as an institution. Since 2015, the Sole 24ORE Cultural group has subcontracted the restaurant and ticket office, while has been managing directly the design store, auditorium, social and communication outlets and educational programs. In addition, it has been using the allocated halls on the first floor to organise temporary exhibitions, -produced or acquired- that only sporadically align with the themes and specificities of the civic collection. Due to the nature itself of the 24 ORE business, it has been adopting an entrepreneurial model to manage the museum. Facilitated by all the internal services they manage, they were able to construct an image of the MUDEC that would perfectly fit the tourist expectation. After the Municipality bought the ex-Ansaldo factory and reorganised its spaces, the construction of the MUDEC “treasure chest” building by an Archi-star was part of a programme of gentrification and “museification” of the city (see Amselle, 2016: 89-93). Currently, via Tortona, where the museum is located, is well-known as a place of fashion, design and art. The Sole 24 ORE management clearly adjusted to this image: the restaurant (and bistrot) was granted to a famous chef; the shop is dedicated to contemporary design, and many spaces are frequently rented for glossy private events. Even so, this sense of sophistication is accompanied by "blockbuster" temporary exhibitions which get higher profits from ticket sales and merchandise and normally focus popular

[53] In 2021 and 2022 two podcasts were also co-produced: “Generazioni Liminali” and “La cura delle parole” are available on Spotify.

themes in which loans from the civic ethnographic one rarely have space. In this context of cultural commodification, the risk is for the museum to be perceived as an empty shell or a brand, without a clear image or mission (see Marstine, 2006; Bargna, 2021b).

Since 2023, the Palinsesto format was discontinued[54]. Aiming at “decapitating” the “three headed monster” (quote from a Ufficio Reti employee in Lo Verso & Sottilotta, 2021), in which the museum, the Ufficio Reti and the Sole 24 ORE’s plurality of offers contributed to the absence of a primary identity for the museum, the new direction reorganised the internal workflow and distribution of the museum and a Museum Board was created (see Pugliese, 2025). The museum's primary goal during the last three years, according to director Marina Pugliese, has been to focus its efforts on rebuilding its public image and repositioning itself as an innovative institution in the national and international arena. This has involved, on the one hand, fostering a greater emphasis on contemporary art and, on the other, renegotiating, whenever feasible, the conditions of its partnership with Il Sole 24 Ore in order to both reallocate funds and redefine cooperation within the limits of current agreements. As a result, the Ufficio Reti's conventional responsibilities have been significantly reshaped, with a substantial reduction especially in its function as a bridge between the communities and the museum. Indeed, the intention has become to promote a more collaborative work with the curatorial team by transforming the Milano Città Mondo project into specific public programs that reflect and expand upon the themes of the museum’s current exhibitions. In 2023, the exhibition project *Rainbow* displaying different stories related to the rainbow as a natural, cultural, spiritual and human phenomenon was accompanied by a BAMSM[55] session focusing on the idea of spectral

[54] Some Palinsesto successful activities were still maintained such as MUDEC in Rap. This interaction between the institutional setting of the MUDEC museum and the underground world of rap in based on the activation of the ethnographic collection by restoring a few traditional musical instruments to be played to produce sound. As participants record, sample, and create beats that they perform on, these sounds serve as the foundation for original rap recordings (see Aravecchia, 2025).

[55] The main goal of Romi Crawford's BAM School Modality (BAMSM), originated in the US, is to investigate the ideals of the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s and 1970s and their continued relevance through dialogical and intergenerational approaches promoting the creative, theoretical, and pedagogical contributions originating in non-dominant cultures (see https://bam-school.com/Milan)

consciousness—an awareness that embraces the rainbow as a symbol of the human community in all its diversity. These initiatives included conferences, workshops and involved a public specifically interested in the complexities of intersectionality (see Aravecchia, 2025).

Figure 23: One of the BAMS sessions, MUDEC. @Mudec. Photo by Susanna Yu Bai

In 2024, the Ufficio Reti had the opportunity to investigate its practices and discuss strategies of community engagement with a diverse range of participants within the three-days event Forum Cultura -promoted by the Municipality of Milan and hosted by the MUDEC- aimed encouraging the discussion on cooperation between the general public, business leaders, cultural specialists and cultural institutions in general[56]. During this meeting, participants discussed the need expressed by diasporic communities and younger generations with migrant backgrounds to be actively included in decision-making processes and the role that experts might have in terms of mediation with communities. Reshaping participatory practices for a meaningful inclusion of heterogeneous communities would need institutions to take a step back and create a sincere space for collaboration and staff to undergo relevant training (see Atti Forum Cultura, in print). However, for the participation not to be “symbolic” “formal” and “auto referential” more steps need taking outside to these kinds of one-time restricted events. In general, it appears to me that involving specific communities in specific

[56] See https://www.mudec.it/forumcultura2024/ (accessed on July 2nd, 2025)

activities, mainly schools, artists, activists, researchers and universities is a methodology that clearly boosts effectiveness, expressing once again the need for a bureaucratical institution such as a public museum to interact with other likewise structured realities. Once again, communities at large are however left in a marginal space in terms of peer-to-peer and innovative collaboration within the museum space. This paradox inevitably leads the museum staff to question the very notion of a community of interest and, as emerged during an interview with Alessandra Cecchinato, a long-term employee of the Ufficio Reti, to reflect on the rupture between the lived reality of the territory and diasporic communities, and those who ultimately become the museum's interlocutors.

In the meanwhile, the inclusion of the Public Art Office (Ufficio Arte Pubblica) within the physical spaces of the MUDEC, brought new possibilities in terms of "bringing the museum outside of its walls" and foster new participation dynamics. The Travelogue exhibit and its public program aim at facing and expanding through life stories, poetry, music, film, and theatre topics such as migration, diasporic identities, the journeys of objects and people. This came with a participatory public art project called "MUDEC Calls San Siro" In which people from Milan's cosmopolitan San Siro area were involved. Participants made connections between personal travel-related items and those in MUDEC's collections through guided museum tours and local workshops. In December 2024, two artists translated the content that came from this whole process into a mural and the collection of oral histories about the objects marked the end of the project (see Cosmai, 2025). Initiatives of this nature sometimes run into resistance or debate, especially when they involve larger populations and reach into the territory. Some actions that the museum staff suggests in good faith, particularly those that aim to interact with the urban landscape, are not always warmly received, as noted by Bianca Aravecchia the Ufficio Reti's head. This suggests a discrepancy between the museum's interpretation of what could be significant and the more nuanced, often contradictory reality faced by local residents.

Adhering to the same vision of projecting the museum's influence outside, the Ferruccio Parri National Institute carried out historical study on behalf of MUDEC,

which resulted in the Map of Colonial Odonymy[57]. By identifying approximately 150 streets and public spaces in Milan that are associated with Italian colonial history, the map was designed as an educational tool for critical reflection on Italy's colonial legacy and its presence in the cityscape and engaged with both diasporic and non-diasporic communities in a dialogue about colonial memory (see Cosmai, 2025). In parallel a consultation group on colonialism (Tavolo sul colonialismo) composed of historians, sociologists, activists, and experts who have previously taken part in MCM and MUDEC activities was established in order foster an interdisciplinary confrontation on the topic of Italian colonialism in Africa. The on-line meetings were initially aimed at working together toward the presentation of the Map of Colonial Odonymy in occasion of the Memorial Day of the Yekatit 12 massacre in Etiopia by Italian colonialists. The event, hosted in the headquarters of the Municipality -Palazzo Marino- was an opportunity for the Ethiopian community of Milano to take up space in such an institutional occasion and make their voices heard. However, other issues and antagonisms were also approached during the meetings, highlighting some longstanding tensions between the Ufficio Reti, representing the MUDEC and communities (see Aravecchia, 2025). First of all, participants expressed their need to continuity in participation, despite any political fluctuations that might influence institutional interests. They also demanded more clarity in terms of institutional, bureaucratic - and economical- definition of their role in relation to the MUDEC, as a public institution. Though a process of equal contribution from participants and museum staff, diverse possibilities have been evaluated, stressing in the one hand the need for institutional recognition and, on the other, the complexities and limits of the bureaucracy that derive from it.[58] A sentiment recurrently voiced by a significant proportion of the interlocutors with whom I engaged within the Ufficio Reti concerns the substantial difficulty of conceiving projects and cultivating spaces of dialogue that might be genuinely egalitarian. Such difficulty is rooted, for the most part, in the complex, multi-layered challenges that are structurally embedded in

[57] See https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/e087792474d24dd5be0fa7015298e811 (accessed on July 2nd, 2025)

[58] This information was collected from the informal memoranda of the six meetings held from June 2023 to January 2024.

the interaction between a public institution and the citizenry. These complexities manifest most acutely in the negotiation of collaboration agreements, in the management of timelines and responsibilities, but above all in the economic dimension. As stressed by Sara Chiesa, curator of the African collections directly involved in the daily activities of the Ufficio Reti, along with Bianca Aravecchia, one of the main constraints of their collaborative work with stakeholders in recent years has been the reliance on voluntary collaborations, which by definition could never be sustained on terms of fairness, whether in the allocation of effort or the investment of time. This disparity, which inevitably result in a contraposition between stakeholders and museum staff and prevent the possibility of building a collaborating group of peers, has emerged as one of the main concerns that the office has attempted to address in recent years by looking into options that could enable the financial compensation of its interlocutors while also being legally viable for the museum as a public organization. In fact, as multiple interviews revealed, the museum is currently forced to look for outside partnerships to integrate different viewpoints and, more generally, to foster diversity—since none of its permanent employees have diasporic experiences or backgrounds rooted in different cultural and geographical contexts. The limitations of employment procedures of the Municipality of Milan itself, as well as the historical configuration of migratory patterns in Italy, must all be considered in the interpretation of this limitation.

At the same time, the asymmetries of power intrinsic to any encounter between private citizens and institutional representatives cannot be disregarded. According to observations from the Ufficio Reti, certain potential or former stakeholders consciously refrain from engaging with the museum, precisely because they do not perceive themselves represented in an organization that remains defined by an ethnographic framework. Despite the power imbalance favouring the museum—which, as a public institution, inevitably carries political connotations in its public image—the prevailing view among staff is one of abandonment by the political sphere. Experience within MUDEC has shown that political backing is indispensable for sustaining initiatives aimed at community engagement and ethical responsibility, particularly when the institution seeks to amplify diverse

voices through collaborative practices. Yet this support is widely perceived as absent, leaving many projects without the conditions necessary to endure or even start.

Not only self-reflective curatorial practice and collection research, but also participatory projects based on the relations with diasporic communities depend on the fact that the MUDEC mission is necessarily connected to the territory, even though its collections came from afar. Despite this, the museum was still able to connect with source communities on one occasion. The 2020 exhibition *My bed is a garden - Mi cama es un jardín.* The textiles of the women of Argentina's dry forest resulted from the display of a selection of bed covers donated to MUDEC in 2016 and coming from Santiago del Estero, Argentina, where MUDEC researchers and director Federico Ferrario did fieldwork in July 2019[59] producing a film/documentary dedicated to the memory of the last great female weaver of the area. According to Carolina Orsini, senior curator of MUDEC's collections, the museum's efforts toward internationalization should be directed above all at developing projects with the communities from which the collections originate. Despite the fact that similar investigations have generated considerable results in foreign museums, such initiative would constitute an innovative approach within the Italian context, where comparable methods are more rarely undertaken. Rather than just expanding institutional horizons, reestablishing connections with source communities would be an opportunity for reconsidering the underlying structures that are employed today to interpret and make collections relevant. To address the ongoing need to strengthen connections between collections and their source communities, this doctoral project developed its case study by tracing the collection directly into fieldwork.

Collaborating with people who have a connection to the collections—whether through diasporic histories or as members of source communities—is essential for any museum that holds ethnographic material. This is especially true for institutions that care for and exhibit objects originating from regions that have

[59] It is also worth mentioning the collaboration with Indigenous communities and local institutions carried out by the "Antonio Raimondi" archaeological mission (now) in Tumshukayko, led by MUDEC senior curator Carolina Orsini (see Orsini, 2025, https://proyectoraimondi.com/) (accessed on July 6th, 2025)

been, or continue to be, marginalized within global power dynamics. Nevertheless, it can be difficult to establish actual peer-to-peer interactions. Differences in expectations, points of view, and communication are likely to surface, particularly when institutional procedures or budget limitations influence how museums interact with their multiple stakeholders. The MUDEC experience clearly demonstrates how efforts designed to share the interpretation, development, research, or exhibition processes with communities often reveal the museum's own limitations. As a Western and bureaucratic institution, the museum often struggles to fully embrace the complexity and diversity of the worlds represented in its collections.

As Anna Antonini, curator of the Asian collections and head of MUDEC's archive and library, points out, the museum's relationship with the Milanese community cannot be ignored for the object often holds a particular relevance for the local public. This is especially crucial in a setting where the general Italian public is still unfamiliar with some perspectives, such as decolonial theories, due in part to Italy's failure to confront its colonial past. According to Antonini, the museum must thus always consider the audience it is speaking to and choose an appropriate starting point for these discussions. As Durrans argue "an ethnographic exhibition could not communicate a curatorial argument at all unless it did not also tell visitors something they already know, in the sense of using familiar categories to introduce unfamiliar ones" (1993: 131). The object itself can serve precisely this role: 'in front of an object you are inevitably compelled to ask questions' says Anna Antonini. The collection object therefore serves as a trigger, providing an opportunity to address and inquire about the fundamental argument behind its arrival in Milan.

4.5 Self-reflecting Practice and Ethical Debates

The shifts in MUDEC's curatorial practices and participatory strategies since 2023 have led to a reorientation of internal efforts, placing greater emphasis on ethical considerations.

In 2023, the MUDEC started leading the operations to create the first Italian group of ethnographic museums with non-European collections (Mipam) in order to

form a network to discuss and address a range of shared issues (Direzione Cultura, Area Museo delle Culture, Progetti Interculturali e Arte nello Spazio Pubblico, 2025). After the first meeting, held in Milan, to define participation and discuss expectations, representatives of the twenty museums involved have met periodically and divided in thematic groups ("Ethics of Collecting," "Museums and Communities," "Conservation Practices," "Network Formalization and National Advocacy") to define the group configuration and its theoretical and practical framework. The network seeks to promote ethical and sustainable heritage management strategies through the creation of common standards for museums' ethical acquisition of material culture, its restoration and conservation, and increase the visibility of Italian museums with non-European origins within national and international museum forums through collaborative involvement in grant opportunities and funding calls for particular projects or initiatives. One of the aims is also to favour the promotion of collaborative museum practice involving communities of origin and interest in the interpretation and presentation of collections. The "Museums and Communities" working group highlighted shared criticalities in terms of enhancing the collection of non-European origin favouring and nourishing relationship with communities. Pursuing the creation of stable and lasting relationships with a diverse range of stakeholders that would turn institutions into trustful references within specific settings would need practical and ethical discussions on engagements procedures, budgets and formalisation[60].

At the same time, the longstanding provenance research conducted for years by the curatorial team lead by Carolina Orsini, nurtured a certain sensibility over the dynamics that intertwined museum and art/antiquities markets[61]. The main objectives of provenance research, namely the investigation of the ownership history of a specific object, are to confirm the legitimacy of museum acquisitions,

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[60] These issues discussed during the second Mipam meeting, held in Parma in April 2024, are described in groups' informal memoranda.

[61] The Guillermo Schmidt Pizarro project, in which MUDEC collaborates with multiple international institutions, is one of the most important provenance-focused projects. Schmidt Pizarro, a well-known Peruvian collector who worked in Europe and the United States beginning in the early twentieth century, dispersed coherent collections after selling many Andean antiquities to prominent institutions of the era. Currently, MUDEC has 91 items that were purchased from Schmidt Pizarro in the 1930s.

provide items their historical and cultural context, enhance accessibility and transparency of information, and foster international cooperation. Thus, for museum collections to be managed in an ethical and responsible manner, provenance research is crucial (see chapter 3). As a result, the curatorial team lead by Carolina Orsini and Anna Antonini with the representatives of other five Italian museums with non-European collections, coordinated by Sofia Bollo of ICOM Italia, started a new ICOM working group dedicated to provenance research. After numerous in person and on-line meetings, the newborn group could define guidelines and frameworks, deciding to focus on the biographies of non-European artifacts that are currently housed in Italian museum collections and working to guarantee greater transparency in the management and dissemination of these collections. Defining the need to promote further discussions about provenance research and decolonization among museum professionals at a national and international level, the group recently published its manifesto in which the ethical implications of provenance research are clear[62].

In both cases, one of the first action of these newly created networks was to define their aims and limits. The need to define a theoretical, methodological and operational framework was attained through the draw up of shared documents written with the participation of all members. Writing the ICOM Manifesto, recently presented during a thematic series of workshops online, was a long and participated collaboration among founder members and associate participants to the group (which I am). The writing process was a tight negotiation among those who voluntarily took part in the meeting, discussing terminologies, definitions and key concepts for operating in alignment. Even though the topics addressed were similar or at least connected, the still ongoing process for the drawing of the Mipam founding chart, to which the representatives of the museum members took part, has mainly focused on the bureaucratic definition of the group, its internal organisation, the frequency of meetings and its fundings management.

The initiatives promoted and participated by the Museum of Cultures of Milan to establish a network of institutions engaged in collaborative dialogue around ethical

[62] See https://www.icom-italia.org/gruppo-di-lavoro-provenienza/ (accessed on July 8th, 2025)

issues stem from the lack of ethical guidelines that adequately respond to the specific context of Italian museums and heritage legislation. Considering that non-European collections present unique challenges that have never been fully addressed institutionally, the considerable participation of institutions in the Mipam and ICOM provenance working groups, highlights the urgency and complexity of these issues (see Orsini, 2025). These organizations are frequently relied upon to handle delicate issues pertaining to the possession, interpretation, and exhibition of a diverse heritage, both tangible and intangible.

Putting these debates into practice, the museum curatorial staff started an ethical reflection over a fortunate but complex donation offer received in 2023. The collection, made of more than 400 works, mainly from Western Sub-Saharan Africa, a small group of items from Central and North America, and other objects from Southeast Asia, particularly from Papua New Guinea, Borneo and Bali, was doomed to be destroyed if not accepted by the museum. This impasse compelled the examination of the ethical responsibilities of the Museum of Cultures in curating its acquisitions and the unanswered questions that stemmed from this situation became an integral aspect of the study. Led by Paul Basu -president of the Museum Board and curator at the Pitt Rivers- and coordinated by experts -anthropologists, sociologists and cultural mediators, including the curator Sara Chiesa-, a thematic workshop addressed the bundle of issues related to this case, including provenance, legality, market dynamics, authenticity, restitution, and the role of diasporic and indigenous groups in redefining the collection's meaning (see Chiesa, 2025). The ongoing research on this collection, and on the deontological dilemmas its donation raised, will be shown in a dedicated exhibition and, ultimately, would conform the practical foundation of an ethical protocol dedicated to acquisitions[63].

Engaging in ethical debates and promoting ethical guidelines currently appear as a viable opportunity for museum professionals to tackle complex issues related to their sensible collections. Institutional cooperation offers a crucial forum for

[63] This topic was presented by Carolina Orsini and Sara Chiesa during the Conference titled "Sensitive, problematic, contested?" (Zurich, 20-22 Nov 24).

examining both specific legal constraints and more general theoretical issues.
It is evident from the MUDEC team's recent initiatives to promote a continuous discussion on these topics how crucial ethical issues have become when it comes to managing non-European collections kept in European institutions. While ethical discourse is often rooted in Western frameworks—which may not align with the ways in which similar issues are understood in other epistemological systems—keeping these conversations confined within European walls risks producing narrow perspectives and partial solutions. Challenges and subsequent discussions around ethical museum practices are exactly what defined the scope of this doctoral study. Through participatory fieldwork, it aims to address a specific issue while simultaneously considering the more general and persistent need for institutional norms that can facilitate more inclusive and responsible practices in museum settings.

CHAPTER FIVE. Woven Identities: The Life of Andean Textiles from Ancient Threads to Market Demands

Although their uses and aims have changed throughout time, Andean textiles have historically played a significant role in identity, memory and communication. In the contemporary Cusco region, their presence is ubiquitous and interconnected, in various forms and extending across multiple registers (see Heckman, 2003; Terry, 2020). They have utilitarian uses like carriers, clothing, or household items; they are displayed as symbols of community belonging in festivals, celebrations, and political events; they are used in ritual contexts like offerings or coca-leaf readings; they are exhibited in museums; they circulate as souvenirs as much as they are used as decorations in shops, cafes and restaurants. Indeed, different forms of Andean weaving can (and have) easily adapted to all the categories -for the internal use or the external gaze- that Graburn identified for what he calls "Forth World Art", namely those art forms created by cultural minorities within dominant national states (1976; 2006). In general, they are nowadays both an essential source of income for weavers and vendors and a fundamental visual statement for regional identity.

As textiles move between contexts, being repurposed, entering or leaving circuits of exchange, circulating as commodities in markets or preserved as artefacts in museums, they are not merely reclassified and re-signified within shifting frameworks of value. Items that once served as everyday tools or carriers of symbolic meaning are reimagined and repositioned, accruing fresh layers of significance within new regimes of value and more crucially, they undergo deep ontological transformations.

5.1 Adean Textiles as Ethnographic Fragments

As Kirshenblatt-Gimblett affirms, "the artfulness of the ethnographic object is an art of excision, of detachment, an art of the excerpt. Where does the object begin, and where does it end? This I see as an essentially surgical issue. [...] Perhaps we should speak not of the ethnographic object but of the ethnographic fragment. Like the ruin, the ethnographic fragment is in- formed by a poetics of detachment"

(1991: 388). Thus, the moment an object is severed from its original context, it is automatically transformed into a cultural fragment. The meaning originally attributed to that object is progressively lost, along with the TK that once surrounded its production and use, while the dislocated fragment becomes subject to manipulation and reinterpretation. The pieces preserved in museum collections are accompanied, at best, only by written notes or audiovisual information, intended to reconstruct -however partially- the elements of the original context considered relevant by the person who collected the object; in any case, they remain fragments. The selection of the object, as well as the information that might accompany it, are therefore arbitrary actions, depending largely on the will, values, and perceptions of the actor who carried out the act of fragmentation, perceptions that may differ considerably from those of the communities who created and once used the object. The textile collection from the Cusco region, currently preserved at MUDEC - Museo delle Culture in Milan, are no exception (see Appendix 1 and 2).

This lot consists of historical garments and accessories donated to the institution between 2007 and 2008. These pieces were originally acquired during two research trips to Peru led by the museum's curator, Carolina Orsini, on behalf of the Sala delle Asse Cultural Association of Milan, which, since its foundation in 1997, has been committed to the study and restoration of diverse forms of art. Many of the objects in the collection date back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, preceding the rise of mass tourism and the subsequent emphasis on safeguarding traditional techniques and their incorporation into heritage economies. The textiles taken into consideration in this study are representative of the Southern Andes' textile production, specifically in the Cusco region. In many cases, their finish indicates that they were not meant for daily use. They are handwoven using a variety of techniques and made of camelid fibre, wool, and synthetic yarn that have been dyed with both natural and chemical pigments. This collection includes a representative sample of clothing items that are typically worn by men and women.

Among the women's garments, several *mantas* (in Quechua *lliklla*) stand out. These can be worn over the shoulders and secured at the front with a pin, or they

can be used to carry children or goods. They are formed of two woven strips that are linked along the long edge to form a single square piece. Included as well is a *montera*, a beautifully decorated headpiece that is usually worn by women but is also used by some dance groups and by males in positions of power. The collection also includes an *unkuña*, a multipurpose cloth that can be used as a personal item frequently associated with unmarried women, a pouch for coca leaves and a wrapping for ritual objects. Within the collection are also included a couple of *golones*, finely embroidered strips used to adorn the lower edge of *polleras* (traditional skirts of various lengths). The men's garments in the MUDEC collection include two *chullos*, knitted hats worn by men or boys that were made by both men and women using colonial-era techniques; a number of *ponchos*, which vary in size depending on where they are from, made by joining two woven strips with a central opening for the head; a shirt called an *unku*; and a *chuspa*, a small bag with a long strap that was traditionally used by men to carry a personal supply of coca leaves, but is now also used by women to store money and personal items. A necklace with rattles for llamas and two slings (*warak'as*) are other objects taken into consideration in this study.

These artifacts' typological information included in MUDEC's database system comes from data supplied by the vendor at the time of acquisition, limited comparison investigation, and direct observation. Frequently, this information is vague or incomplete, especially when it comes to interpretation, purpose, and exact provenance. With the information I collected during this research, I was able to supplement such data by integrating the viewpoints and real-world experiences of the communities that produced these textiles (see chapter 6). More significantly, approaching these pieces anthropologically and placing Andean textiles not just as material artifacts but as dynamic manifestations of social meaning and cultural practice, made it possible to frame them as a case study within the larger conversation on the protection of ICH and indigenous cultural rights in the context of museum studies.

5.2 Andean Textiles as Subjects

Andean textiles, reveal a surprising range of investigative possibilities. Moving beyond a purely technical or iconographic approach in order to uncover the intrinsic language of the textile, scholars from a variety of fields, including archaeology, history, linguistics, and the arts, acknowledge that woven forms provide deep insights into not just systems of production and exchange but also identity, territorial belonging, social practices and symbolic meanings within the communities that create and use them. Recent studies revealed that textile epistemologies can be understood as a "text" that conveys specific cultural messages, far beyond the idea that women encoded in textile iconography the accounts of their community's entire history (Silverblatt, 1978) or the attempts to reconnect contemporary iconography to Inca symbols (Silverman, 1999). A combination of technique, colours and iconography conveys details about the society in which they are produced. Considering that textile production persists as a living practice within Indigenous communities of rural Peru, Bolivia, northern Chile, and northern Argentina, this continuity calls for interaction with the weavers' firsthand knowledge, whose expertise reveals the Andean semiotic core of textile production. On the one hand, clothing characteristics convey a set of personal and social information about the person who wears it such as occupation, societal position and community affiliation (see e.g. Zorn, 2004). On the other, according to ethnographical, historical and material studies, different (and combined) aspects of Andean textiles materiality and appearance seem to carry a wide range of knowledge. Essentially, textiles serve as visual and material languages that encode cosmological comprehension in their unique forms and designs (Silverman, 1994; Cereceda, 2017). Cereceda's research suggests that size, colour, and stripe arrangement information's in woven bags (*costales*) convey a range of practical information, including about the content they carry (1978; 2010; 2017). Observing the endurance of Andean weaving techniques even through colonial dominance, Desrosiers affirms that textile technical features also conceal layered symbolic meanings, particularly in the binary logic of weaving practices mirroring the dualistic principles structuring Andean societies, while simultaneously resonating with broader cultural systems (1992; 1997). However,

textiles are not merely the support to encoded messages. As the Franquemonts affirm, weaving functions as a powerful means to "put culture into practice" and as a "cognitive instrument" through which meaning is ascribed, reshaped, and sustained across generations (Franquemont & al.,1992: 48-49). Expanding upon Bourdieu's concept of habitus, namely the collection of enduring and transferable dispositions shaped by social learning and experience that guide perception and behaviour, passed down through the generations via imitation and education (Bourdieu, 1972; 2021[2015]), it is possible to view Andean weaving as a practice that continuously conveys and enacts culture.

Scholars such as Denise Arnold and Elvira Espejo, drawing on their close collaborations with Andean weavers, underscore the ontological dimension of Andean textiles, their liveliness. Within this worldview, a textile is not conceived as an inert object but as a living being, animated and enmeshed in social and cosmological relations. The idea that textiles were living being had already been introduced by Cereceda (1986; 2010) and Desrosiers (1992; 1997) but the complex perspective of Espejo, director of the Museo Nacional de Etnografía y Folklore de Bolivia, artist and indigenous weaver herself was fundamental to trace the relationship between the weaver and the creation, through its phases and changes as they are produced. Textiles may be understood as living entities that go through successive phases of elaboration, use, and eventual dissolution within a "operating chain"[64] (or life cycle) based on the interplay of human activities with the regional environment. Being a complex three-dimensional being, the textile that enact the economic, productive, social, and cultural realities of its context, it must be considered a vital participant within networks of socialization, a veritable "subject in the world". This makes the boundary between things and living beings porous within Andean ontologies. Women weavers not only generate a living creature through a both reflective and technical process that is "comparable to bearing a child" (Arnold & Espejo Ayca, 2013: 305) but also weave broader circuits of social exchange. Their activity is frequently juxtaposed with the masculine sphere of warfare, suggesting a system of gendered complementarity in which the taking of

[64] The first one to apply the concept of *chaîne opératoire* to describe the dynamic sequence of actions needed to produce material culture was André Leroi-Gourhan in his studies about prehistoric lithic production.

life and the giving of life are conceived as parallel, interdependent dimensions of Andean social organization (see Arnold, de Dios Yapita & Espejo Ayca, 2007; Arnold, 2010; Arnold & Espejo Ayca, 2010; 2013; Espejo Ayca, 2022).

Within the frame of the ontological turn[65], Andean "cosmopraxis" challenges Western "cosmovision", being focused on co-participation rather that observation of the world. According to this point of view, Amerindian ontologies emphasize that creation emerges from a transformation of what is already existing rather than from nothing (Arnold, 2019). Thus, learning in the Andes means mastering material transformation processes, such as turning fibre into thread, thread into fabric, as much as clay into vessels. In these societies, the act of creation is inextricably linked to social exchange and the infusion of "personhood" and vitality into material forms (ibid.). Through Bell and Geismar's idea of materialization this framework can be expanded, and woven textiles may be reframed as provisional crystallizations within continuous processes of creation, use, circulation, and disintegration rather than as static material culture. By emphasizing their mutual involvement in constructing social interactions, this relational approach emphasizes how individuals as well as things gain significance through the networks in which they engage (Bell & Geismar, 2009). Andean textiles appear in such a theoretical framework not just as symbolic or useful goods but also as actors in dynamic processes of memory, identity, knowledge, and cultural habitus when tangibility and intangibility are impossible to distinguish.

5.3 Historical Paths for Andean Textiles

The Andean textile tradition endurance stands as proof of the multifaceted significance of textiles within the central Andean region (see Jimenéz Borja, 1999; Gisbert, Arze & Cajías, 2006). In order to fully appreciate textiles' relevance in the Andean world throughout time, it's critical to examine the historical and social processes that have influenced their development brought them to their current perception. Since ancient times, textiles have played a significant role in the social, political, cultural, and economic life of the communities that have inhabited these

[65] See Holdbraad & Pedersen (2017).

areas. Their identity, knowledge and production systems are reflected in these intricated techniques, colours combinations and iconographies.

5.3.1 Ancient Central Andes

Peru offered the most important evidence that textile production in the central Andes developed earlier than ceramic technology. In the Callejón de Huaylas in northern Peru, the Guitarrero Cave revealed the earliest evidence of textile technology in the Central Andes, one of the oldest in South America (Jolie & al., 2011) while the most ancient cotton cloth fragments of the Andean area are found in Huaca Prieta (La Libertad, Peru), a north-coast archaeological site dating back to the preceramic period (Bird, 1948). The development of textiles, which was significantly revolutionised by the introduction of the loom during the Formative period (around 1400 BCE), demonstrate the existence of highly organised societies in the region which perceived textiles as a fundamental way of symbolic communication, which is in turn reflected in the expansion of many complex techniques (see Manrique P., 1999). Furthermore, the remarkable preservation of many archaeological remains has been made possible by the arid climate of the Central Andes' coastal areas. An ever-changing understanding of textile production and use in the pre-Hispanic context has been greatly aided by the study of these materials. Mostly preserved in national and foreign museums, they have provided insights into methods and materials, a better understanding of the interaction between humans and their surroundings (including the exploitation of natural resources) and a better grasp of the ways in which textiles were socialized as material objects and used as vehicles for both quantitative and qualitative forms of information[66]. The earliest written records about textiles in the Andes were produced after the Spanish Conquest by chroniclers like Pedro Cieza de León, Bernabé Cobo, and Inca Garcilaso de la Vega who focused especially on the Inca Empire and early colonial periods (see e.g. Murra, 1962; 1999 [1978]). These accounts provide important albeit mediated, insights into the cultural, social, and political significance of textiles in these periods. Recorded by Inca Garcilazo de la Vega, the foundational myth of the Inca Empire about the mythical couple Manco Capac and Mama Ocllo associate to the feminine character the instruction of

[66] See e.g. Gayton (1978); Bird & al. (1985); D'Harcourt (2002); Dransart (2011)

women with the knowledge on agriculture and textiles (Rowstorowski, 2006: 18). Guaman Poma de Ayala, in his *Nueva Crónica y Buen Gobierno,* divides Inca's history in four stages and while describing their characteristics, for each of them he mentions the evolution of textile use, techniques and materials (1980 [1615?]). Bernabé Cobo accounts provide ethnohistoric descriptions of loom techniques and use (1956 [1653]). All three records highlight the relevance of textiles within the social, political, economic and ceremonial life of the Inca. According to Murra, textiles were the artifact of prestige for excellence, thus fundamental for establishing and maintaining power relations as "no political, military, social, or religious event was complete without textiles being volunteered or bestowed, burned, exchanged, or sacrificed" (1962: 722).

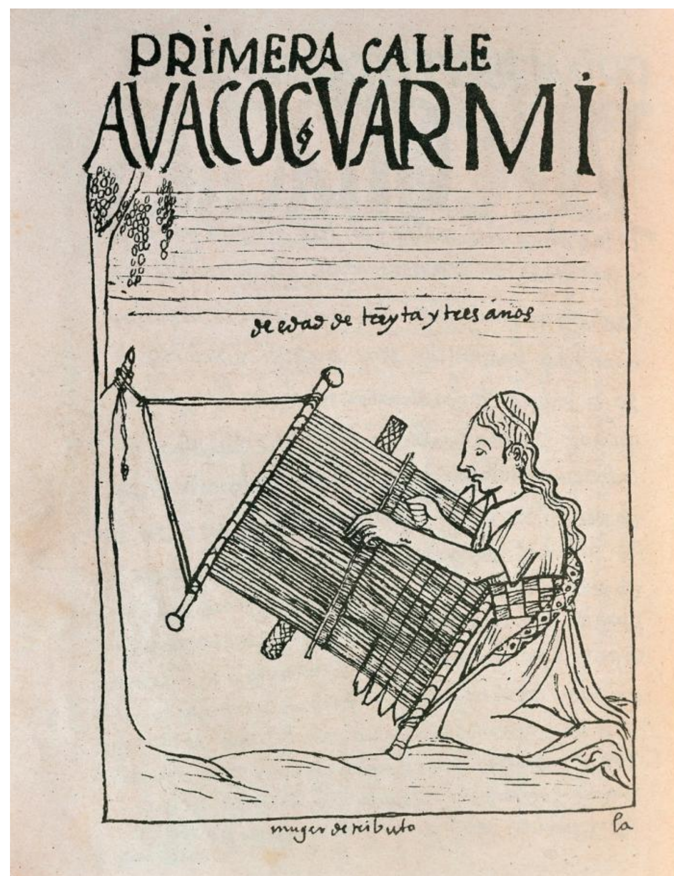

Figure 24: A weaver using a backstrap loom. From Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala (1615). Primer nueva crónica y buen gobierno.

5.3.2 Late Ica Empire and the Viceroyalty

When Spaniard invaded and colonised the Central Andes (1532), and especially after the institution of the Viceroyalty (1544) the local social and political organisation, economic and cultural orders underwent forceful and inevitable profound changes such as Catholicism, currency, Spanish language, familiar and community structures modifications, along with the introduction of typically European concepts such as art and private property. The clash of these two different value systems unfolded in intricated dynamics of syncretism, acculturation and assimilations that clearly influenced not only material culture but also the associated symbolical meanings. The changes in textiles cultural expressions were particularly significant because they developed on many levels, sprouting economic, environmental, social and cultural consequences. On the one hand, since clothing in general is a social indicator, the Spanish fashion became the model to follow for the local population, gradually spreading from elites to commoners, mixing and coexisting with Incan elements (see Wachel, 1976 [1971]: 213-214, 223-225)[67]. The so called "Andean Viceroyalty fashion", namely the way that Indigenous nobles, called *curacas* or *caquiques,* and common people later on, were combining both Inca and Spanish clothing pieces and garments is widely represented in various iconographical sources from Guaman Poma de Ayala's drawings to paintings and figurative Inca ritual vases called *qeros*[68]. At the same time, the main Indigenous pieces of clothing such as the *unku* (masculine tunic) and the *lliklla* (feminine shawl) were still produced and used, even with some adaptations in form and decorative syntax that mirrored the ongoing sociopolitical reorganization (Beaule, 2018).

On the other hand, textile production in the Andes during the Viceroyalty was subordinated to Spanish colonial interests, which resulted in a decrease in production in traditional manners and for traditional purposes, and a change in meaning as textiles started to be seen largely as commodities in a European economic framework. The systems and dynamics of textile manufacturing saw

[67] At the same time, sumptuary laws in colonial Spanish America also restricted the use of European fashion for local people, reflecting an awareness of the transformative power of clothing to create identity it and to enable individuals to go beyond caste boundaries (Earle, 2019).
[68] See Santisteban-Delgado (2022: 41-72) for an in-depth bibliographic and iconographic report on the evolution and acculturation process regarding clothes in the Viceroyalty.

substantial changes with the introduction of new raw materials, such sheep's wool, and new technologies, like the foot-operated loom. The creation of textile workshops, or *obrajes*, which took advantage of Indigenous labour and local raw materials, transformed the role and significance of Andean textiles in society by incorporating them into a completely new model of production (Santisteban, 1964, Gisbert & al, 1987: 287-294). In addition, many indigenous groups sold off their herds of llamas and alpacas as a result of increasing Spanish fiscal pressures, upending long-standing subsistence and economic patterns (Murra, 1964: 83). Nonetheless, these animals remained vital pack animals across the highland regions, such as the region of Cusco in southern Peru. In these areas, especially if more isolated, ancestral textile techniques (see Desrosier, 1992; 1997), particularly those involving the spinning and weaving of camelid fibres, were preserved privately as a result of this continuity and went on to play a significant role in the local economy and culture (Ariel de Vidas, 2002: 29) also demonstrating their symbolic relevance.

During the Viceroyalty, Spanish and Indigenous symbolic systems clashed and the mixed expressions and readapted conventions that are typical of this period of passage are particularly visible in tapestry and carpets. These elaborated textiles were characterised by specific colours combinations and a diverse range of associations of both local and European motifs. While depictions of the natural world such as plants and animals, Christian elements and heraldry were typical, also local geometrical symbols and figurative representations resisted in textile art, even though they were progressively adapted and reinterpreted, or disappeared later on (Gjurinovic Canevaro, 1999). The need to adapt local technical knowledge to new communicative aims arose along with the emergence of the Church. New colonial decorative motifs progressively entered textile creation, while the Viceroyalty steadily suppressed or reinterpreted native iconographies to include them into manufacturing (Gisbert & al., 1987: 310; Gjurinovic Canevaro, 1999: 706-723). The permanence of Indigenous representation of their belief systems is pointed out and fought against, even from a legal point of view. In the second half of the 16th century, Viceroy Toledo stated that "Because of the custom [...] that the Indians have of painting idols and figures of demons and animals which they used

to worship, whether on their tierras, vessels, staffs, walls and buildings, mantas, shirts, lamps and almost on all the things that are necessary to them, it seems that in some way they preserve their ancient idolatry, you shall provide, upon entering each repartimiento, that no artisan from here onward shall work nor paint such figures, under grave penalties, which you shall execute upon their persons and goods should they do otherwise." And in an Ordinance issued in Chuquisaca, he also decreed "that no figures shall be worked on clothing, nor on vessels, nor in the houses [...] and since the said natives also adore some kind of birds and animals and for that purpose paint and carve them on the gourds they make for drinking and of silver, and on the doors of their houses, and they weave them into altar frontals and canopies, and they paint them on the walls of churches. I order and command that those which are found you shall scrape off and remove from the doors where they had them, and you shall forbid them also from weaving them into the clothes they wear."[69]. This iconoclastic war went on and exacerbated after Tupac Amaru II led huge parts of the population to rebel against the Spaniards between 1780 and 1783. After the suppression of this revolution, José Antonio de Areche, Spanish visitator of Peru and responsible for Tupac Amaru II execution, sentenced that "it is prohibited that the Indians use the garments of gentility, and especially those of its nobility, which only serve to represent to them those that their ancient Incas used, reminding them of memories that bring about nothing other than to reconcile them more and more to hatred of the dominant nation; apart from their appearance being ridiculous, and little in conformity with the purity of our religion, since they place in various parts of it the Sun, which was their first deity"[70]. These documents and the specimens that are conserved in

[69] Translated from "*porque de la costumbre [...] que los indios de pintar ido/os y figuras de demonios y animales a quien solían mocha o en sus tianas, vasos, báculos, paredes y edificios, mantas camisetas lampas y casi en todas cuantas cosas les son necesarias, parece que en alguna manera conservan su antigua idolatría, proveeréis, en entrando en cada repartimiento, que ningún oficial de aquí adelante, labore ni pinte las tales figuras, so graves penas, las cuales ejecutareis en sus personas y bienes lo contrario haciendo." And "que no se labren figuras en ropa, ni en vasos, ni en las casas [...] y por cuanto dichos naturales también adoran algún género de aves y animales y para dicho efecto los pintan e labran en los mates que hacen para beber y de plata, y en las puertas de sus casas, y los tejen en los frontales, doseles de los altares, e los pintan en las paredes de las iglesias. Ordeno y mando que los que hallasen los hagáis raer y quitareis de las puertas donde los tuvieron y prohibiréis que tampoco los tejan en la ropa que visten*" (Archivo Nacional de Sucre-Bolivia1, 574 ANB E.C. 1765 No. 131 in Gisbert & al.,1987: 10-11)
[70] Translated from "*se prohíbe que usen los indios los trajes de la gentilidad, y especialmente los de la nobleza de ella, que solo sirven de representarles, los que usaban sus antiguos incas,*

various museums and are a clear testimony of the resistance and perdurance of Indigenous Inca cultural and knowledge systems and their symbols. Within this framework, Andean textiles emerge as an autonomous medium of cultural expression that, during the colonial period, largely eluded Spanish control.

5.3.3 The Republican Period

From the second half of the nineteenth century, a process of modernization in textile production swept the Cuzco territory. By the end of the same century, the development of *obrajes* and/in the wool industry in the Cuzco region was considerably facilitated by the introduction of industrial machinery and the construction of the railroad (from 1870), followed later by the expansion of the road network. The *hacienda/obraje* of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción de Lucre, located at 25 km from Cuzco, was the most ancient and long-lasting textile industry in Peru, still working till 1970 (Flores Ochoa & al., 2011). Besides altering the local economy, these changes established Cuzco as one of the nation's most productive textile hubs, to the point where it provided uniforms for the Peruvian army during the Pacific War (Pease, 1993: 38, 56; Medina Suyo, 2012). Following the reorganisation of the textile market inspired by European production systems, at both regional and international levels, social, cultural and economic changes took place; with the replacement of traditional looms with mechanical ones, Indigenous labour was ultimately relegated to the provision of raw materials, mostly camelid fibre. These industries produced both local and industrial type of fabrics and clothing, while in the Cusco markets were also circulating traditional artisanal garments and imported fibres and attires. This great variety of options made Cusco society more susceptible to new, also foreign, fashion trends (Santisteban-Delgado, 2022: 75-80).

During the Republican period, Cusco territory was mostly occupied by agricultural and herd breeding *haciendas* that later on were re-functionalised as industries, as previously mentioned. The so-called *hacendados*, who owned these large and diverse territories around Cusco, were the “Cusco aristocracy” that more easily

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recordándoles memorias que nada otra cosa influyen, que en conciliarles más y más odio a la nación dominante; fuera de ser su aspecto ridículo, y poco conforme a la pureza de nuestra religión, pues colocan en varias partes de él al Sol, que fue su primera deidad” (Sentencia a José Gabriel Tupac-Amaru, su mujer, hijos, y demás reos principales de la sublevación).

accessed economic resources and European cultural practices, including high education and fashion (Tamayo & Zegarra, 2008). Indeed, when Cusco entered international commerce routes, European fashion progressively influenced the local society expressions, mirroring existing dynamics. *Hacendados* were highly influenced by European fashion, which became a social expression of their economic resources. Male *mestizos*[71], on the other hand, tried to imitate this fashion but using lower quality materials and models, while *mestiza* women maintained their garments and, at most, used more fine materials possibly because they weren't inserted in the workforce. The affirmation of social and economic superiority of these classes was clear in comparison to the clothes worn by *cholos* and Indigenous people, perceived as utilitarian more than anything. Until the Reforma Agraria (1969), their way of living nor their garments changes substantially as they still used monteras (just women, while men started using sombreros), *lliklla*s, *polleras* and *unkuñas*, whilst men changed their short trousers for longer ones (Santisteban-Delgado, 2022: 86-105).

Since the end of the 19th century, Cusco became the centre of a new intellectual trend called Indigenism, which had great repercussions in the artistic and literary production both at national and regional levels (Valcárcel, 1981). Despite this also called "*escuela cuzquena*" was promoting the defence, rediscovery and revalorization of the cultural relevance, especially in the Cusco region, of Indigenous people, it was never embraced by them as it remained an intellectual current. What most impacted Indigenous people conditions was instead the Agrarian Reform implemented by the Peruvian military government since 1969. Despite its shortcomings that mostly maintained economic imbalances (see

[71] The terms "*mestizo*/a" generally referred to the middle class formed through the union of Spanish and Indigenous cultures and was associated with with the city, sophistication, bilingual competence, and colonial-republican legacies; "*cholos/as*", as a cultural category, is more difficult to define because its connotations have changed throughout time as originally it referred to those indigenous peoples that migrate to the city, it was eventually used with pride by intellectuals and artists during the indigenist movement, turning it into a positive symbol; Indigenous people were considered as the lowest class, mainly constituted of those people who served in the haciendas, were thus were tied to the countryside, the periphery, the rustic, the Quechua language, and the imaginations of an Incaic past. For centuries, *Cuzqueños* have mobilized the categories mestizo, Indigenous/campesinos, and cholo to demarcate social rank, though such boundaries have remained unstable in daily practice (see Flores Ochoa, 1992; De la Cadena, 2005b; Mendoza 2006: 22-23). See Cánepa Koch (2008) and Cánepa Koch & Lamas Zoeger (2020) for a contemporary and throughout analysis of changing ethnicity in Peru and the role of folklore and cultural industries in defining and negotiating distinctions between Indigenous and mestizos.

Alberts, 1983), this reform can be considered as a sort of nation-building effort, aimed at reconstructing a new *campesino*[72] citizen through literacy and political participation (Cant, 2021). As much as the Agrarian Reform reshaped the social, economic, and political lives of Indigenous populations, it also influenced Cusco cultural aspects such as fashion. *Cholo* and Indigenous groups were given more options when it came to clothing, which led to the development of what can be called “rural Andean fashion” among Indigenous women. This hybrid and regional specific style were not strictly Indigenous nor Western, nor rural or urban, but a selective appropriation of Western dress adapted to local taste and economic. Indeed, it combines contemporary clothing items like cardigans and shirts with traditional garments like the *polleras*, *unkuñas*, and *mantas*. In order to keep up with changing trends, "rural Andean fashion" has continued to evolve over time, embracing new aesthetics, adapting shapes, symbols and materials, also including synthetic fibres. Through time, this fashion phenomenon started to spread among the lower classes and in the outskirts of Cuzco (Santisteban-Delgado, 2022: 100).

All the textile pieces preserved in the MUDEC collection and took into consideration for this study, date back to a period between the republican era and the second half of the 20th century (see appendix 1 and 2). Even though they have different aesthetics and technical characteristics, which confirm that they were culturally specific to their originating community, it is still possible to observe in them the evolutions of Andean fashion. Despite the difficulty in precisely locating them within a short historical timeframe, also because their form remained stable - or with small variations- for centuries, it is through a stylistic and technical analysis of their materials and colour that we are able to date them. For once, most ancient pieces of the considered lot are made of animal fibre, whether wool or alpaca yarn which were the only fibre available for indigenous people before the introduction of synthetic fibres. The antiquity of, for example, the *poncho* PAM01439, the *mantas* 01440 and PAM01441 and the *unku* PAM01444 (all from the Pitumarca district) is visible not only in their natural fibre but also in their

[72] During the 20th century, the term *indio* (indigenous) was replaced by *campesino* (peasant) under the Velasco government (post-1968), reframing claims in terms of class and land struggle rather than ethnicity.

opaque and lighter colours from natural dyes. The difference is clear from more moder pieces such as the chullo PAM01450 which was in turn made on completely synthetic fibre, that are more vibrant in colour. The inclination of weavers toward brilliance has been recognise as consistent throughout Andean textile history (Phipps, 2020).

5.3.4 Collecting Andean Biographies

The story Jhon Alfredo, a prominent collector of Peruvian popular art, told me, starts in the early 1950s while his parents were on their honeymoon in Cusco (see ICPNA, 2015). On that particular occasion, the two artists bought a *poncho* that had been left as bail at a local "bar" (*chichería*). After this episode, the owner's daughter, Josefina Olivera, would spend the decades that followed collecting as many traditional Andean textiles and clothing as she could. She initially set up shop close to the train station and then in the Plaza de Armas, where it is still in operation today under the guidance of her son Pablo. From this vast collection, numerous private collectors, as well as national and international museums, including MUDEC, acquired significant pieces. Working with Josefina there was Timoteo Ccarita, who's story is discussed in more detail later in this chapter, who at the age of 15, with no resources and no family, realized the potential of Andean textiles. After in Cusco someone offered him fifty soles for his mother's *chuspa*, which was then resold to passing tourists, he began traveling through highland villages, eventually reaching Puno, buying up inherited textiles from families who, through these transactions, gradually came to perceive their garments as forms of capital. Some of the pieces he collected in Pitumarca, a town where he later settled, applying what he had learned about textiles while starting his own production and a weaving association, are now conserved in MUDEC's collections.

Figure 25: Josefina Olivera's shop in Cusco central square

But Timoteo wasn't the only one who undertook this endeavour. Walter Rodriguez, a textiles (and antiquities in general) expert and artist who now co-runs a Cusco handicrafts store, invited me to his pueblo Raqcchi. I spent the night in his family's house, which was so close to the famous monumental archaeological site that the Ministry of Culture took away from them the space where they kept their animals because it was an ancient structure. When his father started guiding tourists to the site, he also began collecting antiquities and gathered a variety of items, including antique textiles. It was frequent for these people, who were traveling from village to village in pursuit of clothing, to trade traditional pieces in exchange for industrial Western clothing or aniline dyes, which were quickly becoming popular. By doing this, they paradoxically sped up the dissemination of new methods and styles while also preserving fabrics that may have otherwise been burnt. Even though far fewer families retain their ancestral cloth, and many of those who do are reluctant to part with them except in cases of pressing need, people who travel to isolated villages to buy traditional textiles still exist. These middlemen are still working even if many fewer families still own their traditional clothing, and those who do are often hesitant to give it up until necessary. At the Chinchero market, I came across one such trader who, while not being a weaver, revealed that he could

work with a sewing machine and often used it for altering the textiles he bought, cutting them into smaller items that were simpler to sell. Yet, in fragmenting textiles, he enacted a gesture that might reveal how the textile's entry into the market, and into a distinctly Western economic logic, could erode the Andean conception of cloth as a living entity, which should never be cut (see e.g. Desrosiers, 1992; Arnold, 2013).

If Andean textiles are more subjects than objects, the concept of the "biography of things" (Appadurai, 1986) proves particularly useful in this case study. The shifting biographies of Andean textiles illustrate how displacement exposes them to manipulation, reinterpretation, and new regimes of value, while also showing how Indigenous actors continually recalibrate their practices in response to changing economies, as a form of resilience. Before the phenomena of revitalization projects or market integration that are to be explained later in this chapter, traditional textiles were repositioned as soon as foreign tourists recognized them a marketable valuable. Traditional textiles produced before the influence of tourism, collected and sold since the 50' mainly to foreign (or of foreign origin) people, became objects of art in primitivist terms while remaining marginal within the formation of Peruvian "popular/folk art" as defined by Jhon Alfredo himself: "In Peru, we understand by the terms "traditional arts" and "applied arts," for the purposes hereof, those tangible visual expressions that, on one hand, trace their origins to the art of the ancient Peruvians, which developed without contact with other continental cultures -i.e., that which originated in a given place, that which is autochthonous, native, inherent, unique, different, and particular to or about the different peoples or ethnicities that developed or continue to develop within the territory of the present-day Republic of Peru, and that, over time, may or may not have evolved in response to necessities or realities. On the other hand, these types of art also comprise the material expressions that emerged during the Viceroyal and Republic periods to meet the necessities of different sectors of urban and rural societies, which may or may not be amalgamations of Indo-American elements with those of other cultures, with the result of this constant evolution being a "Peruvian art."" (Davis Benavides, 2014: 107; see chapter 5).

In short, these textiles underwent what Appadurai calls a “tournament of value,” are attributed a monetary value through a constructed narrative of artistry and authenticity (see e.g. Steiner, 2006), which is confirmed once (and if) they are absorbed into museum collections. At that point they are further “singularized” (or “decommodified”) (Kopytoff, 1986) and become art, inalienable heritage endowed with institutionalised authenticity in Western terms[73]. The MUDEC lot of Andean textiles epitomize this process of meanings layering as long as we look at each fragment as inscribed with successive interpretive accretions.

5.4 Traditional Textiles in Modern Worlds

Most importantly, when these textiles enter circuits of exchange, whether as commodities in the marketplace or as artefacts within museum collections, their ontology itself is shifted. In this process of resignification, they necessarily cease to be conceived as living subjects and become objects (and commodities) whose agency is reconfigured within different social networks. While losing their subjectivity, Andean textiles maintain or develop a renewed agency (see Gell, 1998) within diverse systems of social relations. Indeed, textiles exert agency through the relational nexus of human intentions, exchanges, and practices in which they are enmeshed. Textiles, alongside humans and other artefacts are “actors”, namely active entities within intersecting networks and have equal relevance in the formation of social situations (see Latour, 2005).

5.4.1 Revitalisation: Concerns over Modernity and Tourism

Despite its economic fallacies, the Agrarian Reform had a meaningful impact in indigenous people’s human rights, leading to profound cultural changes (Segarra Acevedo, 2022). At the same time, even if Indigenous peoples did not embrace it as an intellectual movement, Indigenism had as relevant effects on the perception of the poorest segment of Peruvian population, also working toward enhancing their

[73] The function of museum collections in the market is contradictory. They set the bar for value attribution that other things are measured against, but in order to maintain their cultural authority, they must be kept apart from commerce. Despite their upon-agreed claims to represent "pure" judgment, museum’s frequently buy directly from market circuits thus consecrate items that, at some point of their biography, were associated to commercial interests. In modern and capitalist traditions, while museums’ collections embody authentic representation of knowledge, time, and space and curators protect this sacred role by avoiding sales, the attribution of value within the market depends on such authoritative validation (Pearce, 1995: 386-391).

oppressed position (see De la Cadena, 2000)[74]. Aiming at addressing Indigenous position in Peruvian cultural and societal structure, Indigenism affirmed that Indigenous people "should have the right, like anyone else, to disseminate their traditions and artistic creations" (Valcarcel, 1981: 245)[75]. Concern for the dire condition of Indigenous peoples was voiced by intellectuals of the Indigenist movement, who emphasized then necessity to understand their way of life as well as their cultural manifestations including dance, song, music, and art (see Arguedas, 1989; Mendoza, 2006). Research in the fields of regional geography, anthropology, history, archaeology, and spirituality was promoted in order to advance a better comprehension of local realities. In this context, Cuzco's regional folklore functioned as the arena where social divisions were defined but also reshaped (Cánepa, 2008)[76].

Within this context of increased interest toward Indigenous cultural expressions, anthropological and ethnographic fieldwork develop in the area by both Peruvian and foreign researcher. As Garcia (2015) notices, these investigations have a recurrent element, which is the perceived need to collect data and material culture to face or favour upcoming modernisation. Anthropologists frequently positioned themselves in an active position within the process of change while the historical resilience and adaptability was not recognised and Indigenous people were stripped of their agency and perceived as "as passive recipients (if not victims) of the transformations taking place around them" (Garcia, 2015: 98). This idea of

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[74] In 1922, amid regional unrest, *Cuestiones Indígenas* was published the indigenist thinker Aguilar, who gained broad attention due to the proposed solutions to the difficulties related to complex stratification of Peruvian population, in particular of the situation of Indigenous communities. According to Aguilar, this so-called "Indigenous problem and the perceived social threat posed by Indigenous peoples stemmed not from the oppressive regimes that had historically subjugated them Indigenous people. Similarly to other exponents of the "*escuela Cuzquena*", Aguilar argued that those to blame for the resistance of the Indigenous communities were the exploitative powers (such as landowners and agents from Lima) that menaced Cusco regionalism (Aguilar, 1922; De la Cadena, 2000: 108).

[75] It is important to notice that the Indigenist authors like Valcárcel and Neo-indigenist intellectual like José Uriel García had different opinions of Indigenous identity: the first interpreted Indigenous people as a vestige from the Inca past, the second envisioned the 'new Indian' as the outcome of mestizaje (De la Cadena, 2000)

[76] In order to create a regional identity, indigenous elites in the early 20th century institutionalized popular dances and music. Through competitions, schools and academic research, they promoted an "authentic representation" of *Cuzqueño* culture. This gave them the power to establish social divisions, while marginalized groups reshaped performances to renegotiate Mestizo and Indio identities within the social hierarchy, subverting these categories (idem).

"dying culture" was particularly clear in the work of Christine Franquemont, who lived in Chincero (Cusco) with her family for almost a decade (1977-1986). Her end her husband Edward both did ethnographic work in the area, particularly focusing on traditional textile production and ethnobotany, highlighting their interrelation within Andean ontology. Becoming expert weavers, the Franquemonts were able to understand the relevance of textile work in its complexity as a way to "put culture into practice". Not only underlining the cognitive relevance of techniques and iconographies but also demonstrating the connection between the physical actions of the weaving process as a whole and the related intellectual and symbolic endeavours in representing the weaver reality (Franquemont & al., 1992; Franquemont & Franquemont, 2004). An additional connection between the way textile structure is understood and the way the natural environment, especially plants, is learnt in Chinchero community, pushed further for Fraquemonts' preoccupation over the disappearance of Chinchero textile tradition. Indeed, since the late 70s, the expansion of the cash economy reshaped local agricultural practices. While traditional methods of crop rotation were increasingly abandoned in favour of more intensive cultivation, the attraction of urban employment opportunities further disincentivized engagement in farming. Textile traditions were at risk of being forgotten because the local way of living was changing, in particular in terms of people' relationship with nature and their surroundings, as much as Andean ontology subjected to substantial pressures, including from tourism (Franquemont, 1988 in Garcia, 2015: 96).

The Franquemonts were influential in the spreading idea that Andean textile tradition was at risk of disappearing, which pushed toward the realisation of different programmes of revitalisation in the Cusco region since the 70s. Over the subsequent decades, Western researchers often undertook extended periods of fieldwork aimed at assisting local communities in recovering traditional practices that were gradually being abandoned. As I realised during my fieldwork, some of these initiatives evolved into complicated relationships between weavers and anthropologists that, in some cases resulted in forms of unethical exploitation. On the other hand, in the cases I came across, such processes of rediscovery and revitalization were consistently followed by an imperative to adapt the production

of handmade textiles to the evolving lifestyles of these communities, a dynamic that ultimately gave rise to various forms of economic enterprises that favoured the communities or at least part of them. This necessary link between cultural revitalisation and economic needs was clear in the case of Parubamba, a small, isolated village in the district of Paucartambo (Cusco). Located on an Andean steep slope characterized by a wide range of climates, from top to bottom, it provided access to various ecological regions, from the edges of the *Puna*[77] to the *Ceja de selva*[78]. Because of its location, and the consequent possibility it gave to access a wide range of botanical different species, it was selected by the anthropologist Gail Silverman to carry out her research on natural dyes and their disappearing use in textiles. During the 1940s and 1950s, the introduction of chemical pigments such as aniline into the Cusco region profoundly transformed local dyeing practices. Aniline, easier to apply and offering a broader spectrum of brighter shades (though less durable on the fibre) gradually supplanted the traditional reliance on botanical sources. As a result, the time-consuming and technically demanding processes of gathering, preparing, and applying natural dyes were progressively abandoned and, in many cases, forgotten. This shift also had significant cultural implications: the distinctive chromatic repertoires that had traditionally characterised each village, and that were intimately linked to the flora of specific ecosystems, began to disappear. As a result, the disappearance of plant-based palettes contributed to a broader homogenisation of colours and aesthetic features, eroding the identity markers embedded in local dress and its chromatic symbolism. To prevent the complete disappearance of this knowledge, Gail Silverman not only documented dyeing practices but also promoted their revitalisation, recognizing that the mere rediscovery of traditional techniques would not have sufficed without their continuous application. However, industrially created clothing had already entered the community despite the village's relative remoteness, making it much more difficult for such weaving techniques to survive. Because of this, she also

[77] The Puna is one of the eight most important eco-regions of Peru. It extends between 3,000 and 5,000 meters in the high Andean regions and is characterised by strong winds, scarce precipitation, atmospheric rarefaction and intense solar radiation.
[78] The Ceja de Selva is another important eco-region of the Peruvian ecosystem. The term indicates the forests located at the foothills of the eastern Andes, at an altitude ranging from approximately 2,500 to 800 meters, constituting the upper limit of the Amazonian region.

supported Parubamba's ancient weaving techniques being reintroduced through the support and involvement of many women from the community who, for being able to dedicate their time to weaving, need it to become economically sustainable. During her long fieldwork in Parubamba, Gail Siverman thus also involved Olga Zaferson, a famous designer in “ethnic fashion” (see chapter 6) for her to help design new pieces to sell and start a business that would economically support the community. This dynamic disrupted the social organisation of Parubamba, to the point where the economic power of local women surpassed that of the men in various families. Martina Quispe was among the earliest collaborators of Gail Silverman and has since become a master weaver of national and international renown. Her children, David and Ruth Pimentel, have likewise achieved distinction in the field, being recognised by UNESCO, and currently oversee a textile atelier that offers immersive workshops for visitors. These activities range from plant gathering and fibre dyeing to the weaving process itself, all carried out under the guidance of Parubamba artisans who, often monolingual in Quechua and dressed in customary attire, welcome predominantly Western participants. Although Silverman’s intervention left behind a complex legacy (one that exposed the profound asymmetries of such cross-cultural engagements) Ruth and David underlined in our conversations the tangible benefits of the revitalisation of textile traditions. According to them, the revalorisation of weaving not only transformed the social and economic fabric of the community but also enabled many families to finance the schooling of their children. Over the subsequent decades, weaving came to represent the principal source of monetary income in Parubamba, leading even men, who had initially regarded the practice with reticence, to take part in textile production. The paradox is however that in Parubamba most families do not have their own alpacas. Even though David and Ruth recognised the cultural relevance of these textile traditions, they also highlighted how economic return is compelling for textiles to continue to be produced. Considering the village isolated position, everyone who weave for profit, needs to sell their products to intermediaries or directly to sellers that own or rent shops or market posts located on touristic routes. The textiles, produced expressly to appeal the buyer, are passed down a chain that frequently underpay the weavers. Currently, mine companies are acquiring lands around Parubamba, hiring more and more people from the

village and offering higher incomes. David believes this means that textiles would be abandoned soon, and the knowledge reacquired a few decades ago, would be lost once again. This dynamic highlighted the precarity of this system of revitalisation that, in practice, is not based in living customs that are still culturally relevant to the community.

At the same time, the increasing number of international tourists arriving to Peru, was affecting particularly those weaving communities that were located in the Cusco-Machu Picchu corridor. This trend started in the beginning of the 70s and would sharply increase in the 1990s to reach its peak in the first 10 years of the 21st century. Chinchero, the village were the Franquemont were carrying on their research was exactly along the most frequented touristic route. Tourism literally changed the relationship of locals with textiles, as Fidel was able to remember. His family lived close to the local church, and his mother was involved in the first attempt to introduce foreign tourism in Chinchero. The local priest, who had previously travelled to the US, was the first one to see textiles and local traditions as a business endeavour for the local community and he organised the first "tours" in Chinchero. After the community took part in the mass in Quechua and in the procession dedicated to Virgin Mary, patron of Chinchero, all women weavers were invited to show and sell their textiles within the spaces of the parish itself. According to Fidel, that was the first moment when weavers realised that foreign tourists had an interest toward their textiles "*Yes, I mean, before the priest organized them, nobody thought either about selling as a street vendor or laying out in the plaza, nothing before, before it was for daily use. So before, one wove only for the family, nothing else*". After that experience, vendors started to regularly lay down their textiles in the central plaza or Chinchero, every Sunday, when tourists roamed around the city. Besides the advent of a monetary economy and urbanisation, this dynamic was perceived by the Franquemonts as a threat to the community relationship with their natural environment and thus to their social and symbolic traditional textile techniques. At the same time, the drive and dedication of the women who had started making profits by creating what was marketed as "authentic Indian crafts" for an expanding tourist market turned out to be crucial for what was, at the time, the biggest cultural revitalization project in

the area. The "Chinchero Cultural Centre" was established in 1996 as a result of the long-term cooperation of anthropologists Edward and Christine Franquemont, the local weaver Nilda Callañaupa[79], and a wider network of national and international supporters. Soon after, the project was reorganised in Cusco under the name of Centro de Textiles Tradicionales del Cuzco (CTTC) and it then extended its operations to neighbouring villages and districts across the Cusco region. From that moment, Chinchero increasingly came to embody Andean textile traditions, acquiring not only the concrete appeal of a tourist destination but also the symbolic role of representing regional cultural identity. As Nilda recalled during an interview, the initial purpose of her collaboration with the Franquemonts was not driven by economic purposes. However, the women had to balance their involvement in the initiative with their families' expectations, who required that the time invested yield a tangible benefit. Activities that were not viewed as economically useful could not take up time in families where poverty was pervasive as many families relied directly on their agricultural work and livestock for subsistence. Weaving through the CTTC gradually generated a modest but steady income that could cover household expenses, support children's education, and -most importantly- offered an alternative to the main other viable source of work in the area: employment in the mines. The role of Nilda remains controversial and, as Garcia recorded (2018: 7-8), the CTTC in Chinchero started a process leading to an extensive commodification of weaving, an outcome that Nilda herself later regretted as it steered local textile practices in directions she had not foreseen, including troubling social consequences. This organisation, or at least some aspects of it, was used as a model for the creation of a great number of textile centres in Chinchero first and then in other villages too.
Hierarchical dynamics are prevalent in the centres, and they revolve around the *dueña*, the owner who mobilised others to join her enterprise and initiated the centre and maintains exclusive power, manage the money and assigns responsibilities. Additionally, she dictates labour hours and approves absences. What put weavers in a difficult position was also their original lack of familiarity with the idea of having a salary, as Justino from Cuyo Grande, in the higher part of

[79] See Callañaupa, 2007, 2012; CTTC, 2005.

Pisac district, told me. Especially in the beginning, weavers who worked for these centres expected to receive a "*propina*" literally a tip, for their work and a percentage for the pieces that are sold.
Even though under the surface they are full of tensions and dissonances, these textile centre public image lay behind a rhetoric of valorisation. While these centres are marketed as egalitarian organisation that give weavers the opportunity to directly receive an income without intermediaries, the women reduced to the status of dependents under the *dueña* supervision to the point that some participants openly compare this arrangement to a quasi-feudal society (Garcia, 2018). However, the dominant discourse around weaving centres as key players in the cultural recovery efforts initiated in the 1970s was one of celebration. Travel agencies, tour guides, and even academic works (Heckman, 1998; 2006; Callañaupa, 2000) praised these initiatives as essential for women to go back to weaving techniques that were believed to be disappearing. Textile centres weren't the only project for revitalise Andean textile tradition (see Heckman, 2006). However, they are the most long-lasting and discussed. The success of textile centre was possibly due to their attractiveness for the developing tourism industry of the last decades.

5.4.2 Tourism In Cusco: Marketing Authentic Andean Culture

Since the 1960s and 1970s, Peruvian tourism policy was firmly anchored in the narrative of a nation rooted in its indigenous origins and seeking to reassert its cultural heritage as a central definer of Peruvian identity. The new national agency for tourism aimed at promoting Peru as a destination defined by cultural and natural wealth: to do so, archaeological and historical sites were extensively restored, and a systematic effort to "rescue" and revalorize intangible heritage was made. As a result, festivals of popular art and dance as well as handcraft fairs were held all across the nation, and artisanal production was promoted as a way to give rural and indigenous populations more revenue (Fuller, 2008: 122-124)[80]. After years of violence and instability, the advent of the Fujimori administration (1990-2000), was accompanied by a gradual economic recovery of Peru which steered

[80] The Project *Corredor Puno Cusco* developed in this context (see Comunidades Campesinas Ccachin, Ccollana, Choquecancha, Quishuarani, Rosaspata, 2005; Comunidad Campesina Racchi, 2004; Comunidad Campesina Patabamba, 2004; Proyecto Corredor Puno-Cusco-Urubamba, 2003)

decisively toward a neoliberal model, even in tourism management and marketing (Fuller, 2008: 126-133). In this context, PromPerú was created to increase tourism, forge international alliances, and advertise Peruvian products throughout the world. It functions not only as a marketing organization but also as a political initiative that aimed at creating an image of a "safe Peru" and distance the tourists experience from the country's most recent social and political difficulties (Babb, 2010. 67-91). This marketing efforts followed during and culminated in the government launching a formal campaign in 2002 with the tagline "Where history lives," which was later changed to "Peru, country of the Incas" in 2003. This way, Inca culture was internationally established as national symbol (Fuller 2008: 126-133).

Once the centre of the Inca Empire, Cusco is now the capital of the homonymous region in Peru's southern Andes. Dismantled by the Spanish and later relegated to provincial status after political power shifted to Lima, Cusco regained economical and then political relevance during the last century, also because of the development of tourism in the area. Important twentieth-century events, most notably the extensive reconstruction after the archaeological restorations of the 1930s and the disastrous 1950 earthquake, influenced Cusco's development into a prominent tourist destination. These interventions not only modernized the city but also elevated its surviving Inca architecture and restored ruins into emblematic markers of cultural identity, fusing urban aesthetics with collective memory. This same period was fundamental for artistic expressions such as dance, music and theatre for shaping regional identity, ethno-racial identities, and the Cuzqueños' projects of national and continental identity (Mendoza, 2006). In the decades that followed, municipal authorities built new monuments and financed archaeological excavations to enhance the layered historical relevance of its centre where Inca, colonial, republican, and modern elements coexist. This recast of Cusco as a timeless "Inca capital" and vast open-air museum was intended to make the city a main centre for tourism. This project of "incaization" also passed though the symbolic renaming of the city as Qosqo, the use of the rainbow flag recalling the Incan *Tahuantinsuyo* (the Inca empire) and the annual staging of *Inti Raymi*, a "theatrical simulation of memory" (Lipovetsky, 2022) of the Inca religious

ceremony in honour of the god *Inti*, the Sun, which all contributed to the construction of what Silverman defined a heterotopia in Foucaultian terms (Foucault, 1986; Silveman, 2002: 887). Now visited by most foreign visitors to Peru, the battle for control of its cultural heritage and tourism earnings is now inextricably linked to larger conflicts over regional autonomy, economic survival, and most importantly local identity, especially against Lima's hegemonic influence[81].

Nowadays, tourism in Cusco (and some other villages along the main touristic routes, such as Pisac) is a totalizing phenomenon to the point where the city's historic centre has the appearance of a globalized, cosmopolitan hub. As one left the small historic centre, this delusion ends, and it is clear how different the reality for locals is. However, most tourists won't see other that a sort of touristic bubble, a commodified space (Hall & Page, 1999) with high-end shops and international firms where foreigners fill up the streets day and night taking over the public space. Indeed, tourist services are predominant with hotels, restaurants, street sellers, artisan stalls and a number of tourist agencies that offer various tours and experiences, including mystic ones such as *ayahuasca* ceremonies and other spiritual practices, promoting the strongly "exotic" and "orientalising" portrayal of Andean culture that characterises the prominent narratives and strategies of Peruvian institutions and official agencies for tourism (see e.g. Vich, 2007). This is part of a constructed image of Andean culture and Cusco in particular, produced through a selected history, essentialized, eclectic, and sometimes decontextualized to give preference to spectacle above historical or cultural authenticity, for the sake of tourism. Therefore, authenticity in Cusco is actively created and produced rather than innate or retrieved.

Within this bubble, Andean textiles are ubiquitous and inevitably contribute to constructing the "authentic" Andean aesthetic. A great percentage of the foreign tourists that walk around Cusco wear some kind of *poncho* or sweater or backpack they bought during their travels in the region. They are mostly synthetic, industrially made and with evocative random designs and symbols, even if they

[81] To better understand the historical and political implications of this process, see Silverman (2002: 884-893)

were told to be acquiring something “authentical” and “traditionally made”. Mass-produced souvenirs (often produced in China) saturate every shop, stall, and travel agency, forming the ubiquitous visual texture of Cusco’s tourist economy. Despite their standardized and industrial origin, these items are among the most frequently purchased by visitors and provide all vendors an almost assured, while small, income[82]. Weaved fabric is used in restaurants, cafés, and businesses not just as ornamental items but also as visual cues that connected the city to its imagines "traditional" Andean past. Cusco's urban centre functions as a performative platform for the representation and commodification of Andean culture for the tourist gaze. A peculiar form of commercialization that was shown in the same city centre consisted in women wearing Quechua-stereotyped clothing with baby llamas or lambs in the major plaza and the surrounding streets, asking for tips from tourists for posing with them for pictures. As noted by Akins (2022: 75), many of the ladies who took part in this practice were urban actors presenting a stylized kind of "authentic" indigeneity rather than necessarily being Indigenous people.

In the contemporary context, Andean textiles have become a central element in defining the commercial sphere of what is marketed as “authentic” Andean culture. Their significance extends beyond conventional tourism into the realm of “responsible” or even of mystical tourism. In both cases, the final aim is to encounter the “Other” and the “elsewhere”, or at least have the impression of it, yet these forms of tourism remain deeply entangled in the neoliberal commodification of local traditions. Consumables are transformed into emotionally significant items through this process, but it also creates opportunities for mass-produced souvenirs and kitsch to be exploited for profit (see e.g. Ariel de Vidas, 2002)[83].

[82] Sellers usually buy these kinds of souvenirs at the Baratillo, Cusco's extensive artisanal market in the outskirts of the city. At dawn, huge number of sellers, many of whom come from Puno, Juliaca, or over the border from Bolivia showcase the goods they have brought overnight. The Baratillo offers a diverse range of items, including textiles and other handicrafts, items of authentic antiquarian value (usually destined for resale in high-end shops), items that are easily adapted to mystical or esoteric narratives, and, most notably, the mass-produced souvenirs previously mentioned.

[83] The phenomenon of souvenirs in the globalised world is particularly interesting, especially when associated to the idea of exotic. The characteristics that distinguish different classes, families, and people tend to disappear in societies that are becoming more homogenized by mass-production. Foreign "exotic" arts are imported and consumed as status symbols in order to make up for this, especially in markets that prioritize status. Whether they are pricey imports or cheap mementos,

Within these frameworks, textiles are not merely souvenirs but may acquire new functions and meanings. Mystic (or spiritual) tourism is a phenomenon rooted in New Age movements in which travellers that seek an "authentic" indigenous Andean spiritual experience are drawn to Peru, and particularly the old Inca city, Cusco, which is marketed as a "magnetic centre of spiritual energy" (see e.g. Hill, 2007). Spiritual tourism's growth has changed the way textiles are viewed, made, and distributed, including them into new regimes of value. One relevant location where these dynamics come together is Pisac, in the Calca District, where communities of foreigners, who are mostly white and come from Europe and the United States, frequently move there and live embracing New Age worldviews[84]. In shops like Xunior's family-run store named *Imperio del Sol: Mistic Shop*, in Pisac, a variety of items related to mystical/spiritual tourism are on display next to textiles presented as "traditional." Foreign visitors commonly buy these textiles for uses very different from their original settings, such as framing them as artwork or incorporating them into contemporary home design, but mostly to employ them in spiritual or ritual practices, according to Xunior. When textiles are sought explicitly for ritual use, the expectation of authenticity becomes crucial as people are drawn to items that they think would help them re-establish a connection to a fictional and stereotyped Andean spirituality.

On the other hand, what is commonly defined as “responsible tourism” encompasses those forms of travel that claim to pursue sustainability not only in environmental and social terms, but also in cultural and economic dimensions. The so-called *turismo vivencial* (community-based tourism), a form of hospitality where communities should receive directly the earnings deriving from tourism, has become more popular in recent decades (see Zorne, 2004; Gascón, 2005). In many

owning such items evokes yearning for the handcrafted in a society that is largely "plastic" while also conferring status due to their associations with travel, adventure, and diversity (Graburn 1976: 2-3). In this sense, the souvenir, as an emblem of authenticity’s functions as a narrative device for what must be remembered. Such objects render possible both to recall one’s own existence and the appropriation of cultural alterity. Exotic souvenirs function both as specimens of distant cultures and as trophies of personal experience. They meet a nostalgic desire for authenticity while also enabling tourists to fashion an “exotic” version of themselves. Yet their demand fosters markets distinct from traditional craft, producing mass-made goods shaped from the outset by consumer expectations. Ultimately, the tourist aesthetic ensures continual estrangement: objects once valued for their ties to holistic traditions are reshaped and exaggerated by market pressures (Steward, 1984: 135-149).

[84] See Lau (2000) for an analysis od New Age consumism.

cases, community-based touristic packages included that guests would stay the night in a local community and participate in certain aspects of everyday life. Yet behind this appearance of "authenticity" lies a long preparatory process: families undergo training programs led by tour agencies, so that they can adequately host foreign guests, prepare meals, and provide services which, while enveloped in an aura of rustic simplicity, remain acceptable and comfortable for tourists[85]. Visitors are frequently asked to participate in community events including harvesting or dancing, while wearing "traditional" clothing, to participate in staged performances. The majority of organized tours that reach surrounding attractions in the Cusco area usually make stops in communities along routes or, more commonly, at weaving centres, especially in Chinchero which is considered the main textile tourist attraction. There, upon the arrival of each group, weavers enact a ritualized form of hospitality: they welcome tourists by dressing traditionally and giving standardized weaving and dying demonstration, a true "command performance" of heritage for "self-marketing" in Clifford's terms (2013: 47-48; see also Terry, 2019: 263-302). These weaving centres are presented as "responsible tourism" in practice, as family-run cooperatives that allegedly remove middlemen and ensures women receive a fair wage for their labour. Furthermore, framed as concrete evidence of a cultural revival, they are praised within a narrative of uninterrupted continuation of an imagined Inca past and live examples of "traditional indigenous" ideals like equality and cooperation[86].

If tourism is conceived, in Fuller's terms, as "a great discursive machinery that generates representations about the nation and about the different groups that make it up" (Fuller, 2008: 10) and if "Otherness is an essential component of tourism, for encounters with the 'other' have always provided fuel for myths and mythical language" (Hall, 1998: 140), questions concerning identity and authenticity of such representations inevitably arise, especially if observing this phenomenon through a post-colonial lens (see Hall & Tucker, 2004). Modern tourists are aware that the travel business is quite structured and that the products

[85] It is relevant to mention that the participation of some communities (or part of a community) in this kind of endeavour often also create power imbalances (see e.g. Cornelisse, 2019)
[86] See Garcia, 2015; 2018 for an in-depth analysis of how these centres work, especially in Chinchero.

they are sold have been meticulously prepared for consumption. They also understand that authenticity is a constructed concept; the quality of the portrayal is what counts. According to this viewpoint, tourism creates a reality that is especially designed for a certain audience. These tourist performances, even if they are rooted in local cultural matrices, can thus be considered as "newly produced" independent cultural phenomena (ibid: 23-29). Textiles, mobilised as markers of authenticity, thus serve as symbolic instruments of identity and as concrete ties to a heritage that is as much manufactured as it is idealized. This dynamic is embedded in the foreign tourist market of the Cusco region, which has been portrayed and acknowledged internationally as the centre of Inca history, the focal point of non-Western spirituality, and a living hub of Andean lifeways that in their original purity. Assuming that the concept of authenticity is a Western construct (see chapter 2), textiles give shape to this perceived authenticity after such stories, myths, and conceptual projections of the authentic Incas or of the traditional native gain traction through tourist processes[87].

5.4.3 The Condition of Weavers Within the Tourism Economy

In general, the production and sale of textiles in both textile centres and independent sellers' spaces depend on the fluctuations in the number of tourists as well as the changing styles and aesthetic tastes that these tourists bring with them. During fieldwork, I was able to recognise the general disappointment of many weavers and sellers regarding the recent trends of tourism. Besides the very slow and dissatisfactory recovery of international tourism after the COVID-19 pandemic, the dynamics observed by Garcia almost a decade ago were still relevant (2018: 7). In order to improve incoming tourists, weaving collectives or even textile shops are in need to build relationships with one or more tourism agencies, that are often based in Cuzco. These organizations bring tourists to them to buy their products, but their mediation is never impartial. Guides normally want a sizable financial share of what is sold, in addition to their normal pay from the agency and regardless of whether the weavers' overall revenue is sufficient. Thus, the survival of these centres and shops depend on the interconnection of different group of people, with different interests, which produce marked asymmetries of power even

[87] A similar scenery was observed in Taquile (Puno region) (Escobar López, 2012).

in term of gender (see Ypeij & al., 2018; Terry, 2019: 303-346). When I visited Fidel's weaving association *Apus Antasaqa* in Chinchero, he confirmed what many other weavers had already told me: the process of weaving with the traditional backstrap loom took too much time for the price that tourists are usually willing to pay. It was not economically sustainable for any weaver to spend months working on a piece to be sold at the same price of something industrially made, considering the tourists cannot tell the difference most of the time. Thus, he and the other associated weavers used not only the conventional backstrap loom that represent the revitalisation efforts of textile centres, but also pedal looms (managed by a male associate) to speed up output. To make purchased yarn suitable for weaving, Fidel himself spent a significant amount of time re-twisting it through a mechanical system he himself created and of which he was very proud of. Later, upon my arrival at the *Inti weaving centre*, directed by Roxana and linked to Fidel's association, I encountered a woman from Parubamba who had come specifically to sell her textiles as her products found no viable market there. Roxana further clarified that many of the items displayed in the weaving centres of Chinchero are, in fact, produced elsewhere (and paid once sold to the tourist). This practice, widely documented a decade ago (Garcia, 2015), was definitely rooted in pre-covid touristic dynamics, when demand was so intense that local women could not keep pace. At that time, weavers based in these centres were often more occupied with the performative aspects of hospitality already mentioned than with actual textile production. Such work consumed most of their time, leaving little opportunity for weaving itself[88]. Altogether, these practices seem to me to constitute the lingering vestiges of an earlier period, one in which the textile market was far more buoyant than it is today. Nowadays, weavers instead struggle with a market that seems saturated.

[88] As a result, the centres resorted to acquiring textiles from villages without direct access to the market. Furthermore, a significant amount of textile products come from the prison in Cusco, where incarcerated men—often from other regions—learn to weave on backstrap and pedal looms. They are able to commercialize their goods and produce a small income to support their family with the logistical help of their spouses outside. My discussions with Roxana confirmed this pattern, which García (2015) had already identified, and which was further confirmed to me also by David Pimentel, from Parubamba. Without much secrecy, he told me that he uses his connections with incarcerated weavers to get souvenirs to bring and sell during bigger fairs.

On the other hand, the situation in those centres where tourism isn't prevalent, the dynamics inevitably change. During my fieldwork in Pitumarca[89], I frequently attended the Saturday gatherings of *Munay Tiqlla*, a weaving association affiliated with the CTTC network, whose members produce textiles destined for sale in Nilda's shop on Avenida El Sol, in Cusco. Munay Tiqlla is the evolution of the first weavers' association of Pitumarca, originally founded in the 90s by the local mayor Timoteo Ccarita, once again with a revitalising intent. Promoted and supported by government initiatives, the "local's mothers club" had the aim of reintroducing weaving skills to women who had lost this knowledge and, subsequently to revive the ancient technique of discontinuous warp weaving (warp scaffolding) once employed in archaeological textiles. Interestingly, despite their participation in these activities was frequently ostracized by their families, the project has also drawn the attention of several men, traditionally not involved in weaving, such as Alipio, the young man serving as supervisor in Munay Tiqlla at the time. Participants in these sessions ranged from young children to elderly people, and each one contributed in accordance with their degree of expertise: under the careful supervision of experienced tutors, younger members were led step-by-step through increasingly complex weaving projects. The association activities were managed under the direction of an elected supervisor who kept track of attendance, assigned responsibilities, and imposed fines on individuals who were absents without a justification. Alipio, also administered the revenues: once the textiles were sold, he distributed payments to each contributor in accordance with their labour. When large commissions arrived, intergenerational collaboration was the norm, with people of all ages working collectively on a single piece[90].

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[89] Currently off the most popular tourist routes, Pitumarca is a small town in the province of Canchis, southeast of Cusco. When Vinicunca, also called the "Rainbow Mountain," gained popularity around 2015, the town temporarily became a stopover for the long lines of tourist buses traveling to the location. This temporary relevance in the tourist industry disrupted the local balances to the point where younger and older generations were clashing regarding the attitude toward international tourists. However, tourism in Pitumarca soon diminished when alternate routes were eventually preferred by agencies, leaving the village in the maps of just for rock climbing and mountaineering.

[90] Dyeing was certainly the most important collective endeavour caried out by the association. Happening once, every few months, it involved around 30 people to obtain more than 10 shades of colours. Local participants were not the only ones involved in the process; coordinators and support personnel sent from the CTTC offices in Cusco also participated, bringing pigments, mordants, and the large pots, basins, and other tools needed to complete the operations as efficiently as possible. For weavers without animals that would supply them with fibre, they also

Figure 26: A day of dyeing in Munay Ticlla, Pitumarca

Despite the clear relevance of power hierarchies within the association management, a few personal stories shared to me by both male and female weavers I met at Munay Tiqlla highlighted the opportunity that the association gave to them in terms on being able to being economically independent, study or give and education to their children, and travel (even internationally) as representatives of CTTC. Even though the CTTC may display concern for the welfare of the community by implementing the free distribution of medical supplies, which positioned the organisation within the frame of social support,

provided with alpaca fibre purchased from Mitchell, the most famous provider, based in Arequipa. The cost of the fibre would be covered by the weavers themselves through the revenues of their textile sales.

Nilda nevertheless came under severe criticism from both inside and outside the associations. The compensation provided to weavers was frequently considered insufficient in comparison to the prices the objects are sold for in Cusco, and she was criticized for allegedly failing to provide support for the elderly once they cannot weave anymore. Nevertheless, frequently the same people who made those complaints to me, also admitted that there were few, if any, feasible alternatives that could provide similarly consistent profits. Most other associations, in contrast to the CTTC, lacked a dependable and profitable outlet for the selling of their goods. Weavers who lack the affiliations with textile centres are frequently at a significant disadvantage. My conversations with independent-working women gave me a more comprehensive understanding of the complex processes that take place outside the weaving associations' formal structures. The lack of a personal store or a permanent stall in a local market usually forces people who live in remote locations with little to no tourism to rely on middlemen or make the occasional trip down from their villages to reach those who have direct access to the market. Because intermediaries or sellers take a significant portion of the profit they make in sale, weavers usually do not make enough profit for the time they spend weaving.

In general, weavers struggle to survive in a global capitalist market that is overrun by factory-made, synthetic duplicates that resemble the look of authentic handwoven items because of the quick, and often disastrous, rise of mass tourism and unrestrained growth. The technical and cultural differences that distinguish genuine art from imitations are often not understood by consumers, and many are still unaware of the negative effects that tourism and globalization may have on Indigenous people (see Akins, 2022: 65-85). A single handwoven textile entails a long production consisting not only in a full month of meticulous weaving but also the preceding, labour-intensive tasks of shearing alpaca, spinning fibre, harvesting and preparing the dyeing plants, dyeing the fibre and setting the warp. This kind of textiles are marketable for tourist markets for around 200 PEN (around 50 euros). Once one takes into account both the cost of materials and the cumulative hours contributed by more than one artisan, it becomes evident that such prices cannot sustain weaving as a primary livelihood.

Figure 27: Antonia, independent weaver, showing me her work

As noted earlier, all of the weavers I spoke with rely primarily on what their land and animals provide, using textile sales merely as a supplementary income to cover household expenses (sugar and oil, which they cannot produce on their own, for example) or, in many cases, to finance their children's education. This reality is best shown by Augusta, a lady from the isolated community of Amaru. She and her spouse own a modest handicraft store in Pisac (Calca area) where they sell textiles and pottery. She described how her mother was no longer able to pay for her education once she was twelve. But weaving gave her a way forward: she was able to pay for her daily meals and bus costs by making small items like bracelets, which she sold to tourists for 5 soles (1,20 euros). Without the abilities her mother thought her since she was eight -as "any Andean woman should know how to weave"- it would not have been possible for her to continue her education and finish secondary school.

5.5 Contemporary Life for Andean Textiles

PromPerú has long projected the nation internationally through an imagery deeply anchored in its Andean traditions. This approach was best exemplified by the 2011 opening of the new Marca Perú, which combined traditional cultural heritage with

modern popular expressions such as music, cuisine and traditional craft, including textiles (Silverman, 2015b), de facto exploiting and monetising diversity in a neoliberal prospect while reimagining the Inca past (Cánepa & Lossio Chavez, 2018; Safra & Zevallos Díaz, 2020). In the Peruvian pavilion at Expo 2020[91] in Dubai, Andean textiles aesthetic dominated the scenography, highlighting their role as a fundamental component of the country's visual identity. While Andean traditional textiles often take centre stage in these marketing tales, serving as a visual signifier for authenticity and cultural continuity, they also still play a role in long-standing racial, class, and gender disparities for indigenous campesinos people.

The relationship between Spanish and Andean peoples, and later between *Mestizo* elites and *campesinos*, was inherently characterized by discrimination, which had a significant impact on gender dynamics, linguistics, social practices, culture, collective memory, and the political and economic standing of Andean communities (see Abercrombie, 1998). Discrimination toward Quechua-speaking indigenous people is clear in the stories of local residents who describe how those wearing traditional clothing are still sometimes excluded from the use of public transit. This discrimination still exists, and it is evident in the ordinary life of villages such as Pitumarca, Amaru, Sacaca, Chahuaytire, Cchilca and many others, located just outside the tourist circuits, where the majority of senior citizens can only speak and understand Quechua and are frequently illiterate or inexperienced with reading and writing. While I observed that many elderly people at Munay Tiqlla, in Pitumarca, couldn't read nor write and had to sign documents using their fingerprints, literacy challenges sometimes persist even among younger generations, demonstrating how limitations in the educational system continue to influence the social fabric. In the rural villages surrounding Cusco, Quechua remains the primary language within communities, despite Spanish being the official language of education and state institutions. This linguistic gap often complicates interactions with institutions and, on occasion, has also affected my interaction during fieldwork.

[91] See https://www.expo2020dubai.com/en/understanding-expo/participants/country-pavilions/peru (accessed on October 20th, 2025).

In the course of my research into the textiles identified in the MUDEC collections as originating from the Pisac area, I decided to travel to the village of Chahuaityre, located approximately 53 km from Cusco at an altitude of 3,850 metres above sea level. After reaching the village by combi, a small public minibus which sporadically departs from Pisac, I walked through the largely quiet village, looking for the local CTTC-affiliated weaving association, in the hope of speaking with weavers. I approached a young woman to ask for directions to the textile centre, and she not only helped me but also revealed that she was a weaver herself and offered to teach me, as she had done previously with another French girl. We arranged a paid weaving session for the following week, which became a valuable opportunity to me for fostering interaction. As I worked with her assistance in the backstrap loom, our conversation developed in parallel with the practical activity. Communicating in Spanish often proved challenging, and her young son played a crucial mediating role, as some of my questions were not immediately grasped by her: he paid close attention to our exchanges and frequently intervened to assist his mother. These disparities frequently lead to discrimination against Quechua-speaking campesino people, particularly impacting younger generations that have moved to urban areas. As a result, many experience a sense of shame connected to visible cultural markers, such as the use of traditional clothing or other easily recognisable elements of their cultural identity.

Figure 28: Streets in Cahuaytire.

The shifting role of indigenous people's place in regional identity caused the changing perception of traditional dress in the Cusco region. The recent history of ambivalence, between shame and pride, is revealed by the changing fortunes of traditional attire in the Cusco area. What had been reason of derision and humiliation in the 1960s (see Franquemont & al., 1992), has been somewhat restored in the last several decades as a resource for the tourism industry and as a symbol of local identity. Yet this trajectory has been fragmented and deeply entangled with broader social, cultural and economic transformations. According to Yanett, a highly accomplished weaver raised and schooled in Pitumarca who later studied tourism before joining the central office of the CTTC in Cusco, by the late 1990s, when Pitumarca established its first weaving association in partnership with CTTC (at the behest of Timoteo), traditional attire had virtually disappeared from everyday life. Weaving and wearing traditional clothing during meetings were prerequisites to be admitted in the group. While having a hot chocolate together, after one of her long days at work, Yanett recounted to me that many women would actually change at the threshold before attending weaving sessions because they were embarrassed to be seen wearing polleras or other traditional attire. Over time, CTTC's work promoted a slow revalorization, and she now pleasingly

observes the return of polleras and ponchos to public events, which had previously been dominated by Western-style dresses and suits. While in tourist contexts, as previously seen, the use of traditional clothing acquires a distinctly performative dimension, carefully staged for external audiences, ambivalent habits also coexist with this apparent revitalization. I went to a local wedding in Pitumarca where the couple and their guests were dressed exclusively in Western fashion. In contrast, as a sort of performance of “ethnicity” or “heritage”, a practice put together for a specific audience -in this case institutions- (Clifford, 2013), representatives from all of Pitumarca's communities marched in traditional attire at municipal celebrations like the national parade on July 28th, while institutional delegations came in uniformed attire[92]. This complexity persists at the generational level too. Alipio admitted to me that shame persists, particularly among teenagers. Youngsters may start weaving in CTTC, but as they get older, frequently because to peer pressure, they start to feel uncomfortable wearing traditional attire and finally leave the group. More generally, in recent decades, the majority of Indigenous people living in the region have adopted "*mestizo*" or "*campesino*" clothing, characterised by items that are more easily accessible, less expensive and this more useful for daily wear. Gregorio, an experienced member of the Pitumarca CTTC, a close associate of Timoteo, master weaver, and president of all the weaving associations in the district, emphasizes the pragmatic dimension of this shift: industrially produced clothing costs less, demands no labour to make, and thus becomes the rational choice for daily wear. At the same time, Andean weaving's cultural vitality seems to remain alive through regional fairs, from big district celebrations to small, isolated village events where textiles are always present but never targeted to tourists as I was frequently the only foreigner in sight. Alongside livestock contests, guinea-pig races, and other competitions, weaving was displayed, demonstrated, and paraded by local associations, then judged and awarded prizes such as sacks of rice. The role of Andean textile as a communal practice -independent of tourism- is clear in these gatherings as much as it is in local events such as the celebrations I witnessed in Pitumarca, when the

[92] See Santisteban-Delgado (2022: 210-252) for an in-depth analysis of the social role of traditional Andean clothing and its contextual use.

municipality received two tractors as a gift and covered them with textiles to welcome them.

Figure 29: The main square of Pitumarca, after the Fiestas Patrias celebration

Figure 30: A competition for guinea pigs dressed up with traditional clothes during a regional fair in Pitumarca

Figure 31: Pitumarca people celebrating the arrival of two tractors donated to the village

When considering the history of textile manufacturing and the knowledge systems that support it, almost all interlocutors articulated a pervasive narrative of loss. Through her mother's memories, Yanett recalled when weaving was a crucial part of how people presented themselves: people who couldn't weave "*dressed like the poor*", while being able to create elaborate traditional clothing improved one's social standing. In her opinion, nowadays weaving has mostly been refocused on the business world, in particular depending on tourism. However, the causes of this transformation are multiple and interwoven, but a recurrent theme is that the exclusion of traditional practices from public education do not leave children the time to learn how to weave. This concern has been voiced to me by internationally recognised Quechua activist Tarcila Rivera Zea, member of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and now president of CHIRAPAQ (Centre for Indigenous cultures of Peru). Rivera Zea argues for the reintroduction of traditional knowledge, materials, and practices into public schools' curricula,

viewing such integration as indispensable for cultural continuity. The case of textile knowledge demonstrates the stakes of this omission. Through personal and intergenerational learning methods based on observation, women are the primary carriers of textile techniques and symbolism that have been adapted throughout ages. Girls start from a young age by observing, then work their way up to copying increasingly intricate patterns until they are able to artistically mix themes to create their own pieces. The most elaborate designs are usually made for weddings and other celebrations by single women who have more free time. The "intimate and familiar" aspect of textiles, which were traditionally made inside the family and geared toward kinship circles, was intended to be read and understood by those who shared the same symbolic realm (see Franquemont & al., 1992; Callañaupa, 2007: 75; MINCUL, 2019). Yet such forms of transmission are now strained. As an example, Yilmar, a thirteen-year-old from Pitumarca, told me that homework left little time for him to teach me how to weave throughout the week, demonstrating how children's school obligations limit the amount of time available to them to weave. The recounts of Lucia, an Amaru weaver (and Augusta's sister) who now runs a textile store in Pisac and coordinates many weavers around the area, are influenced by a similar experience. Her work as a weaver, a shop owner and a weaving teacher in a local school shows how fragile family-based transmission has become due to economical restrains and different social dynamics, and how new efforts are being made to revive it through institutions, besides its limits. At the same time, every informant I asked about their preference on their children being weavers or professional with a relevant scholar degree, they all opted for the second one, albeit with some reservations. Some of them specified they could do both as being able to weave would make a useful additional economic recourse in case of necessity.

5.5.1 Textiles to sell and textiles to use

At this point, it is crucial to differentiate between textiles made for the market and those woven for personal and family use. Once weavers recognized that their labour carried tangible value in the tourist economy, weaving was reconfigured as both a means of survival and a pathway toward socio-economic uplift. "*Now everything has a dollar on it*" as succinctly and sadly observes Rosie Barnes, the

previously mentioned specialist from the US who moved to Cusco more than 20 years ago to learn more about weaving processes, help craftsmen join a sustainable market, and eventually establish an ethical boutique of curated crafts and antiques named *Arte Antopología*. As she said to me, the proliferation of NGOs across the region has sought to capitalise on this potential of Andean textile, with varying degrees of efficacy, sustainability and ethical plans and basing their efforts on diverse levels of awareness of the cultural relevance of textile practice. Lidia, who leads an organization in Pitumarca that is entirely made of female women, many of whom are single mothers, told me how her own and her friends' livelihoods changed when a foreign NGO with a strong gender focus worked with them for two years before the COVID-19 pandemic. They were taught to reconceptualize weaving as an intrinsically female economic resource. Around a decade before, Mosqoy was developing its long-term project. According to Cusi Saco, one of its workers, founder Ashli Akins had a vision for a sustainable model that would allow remote villages to turn their traditional weaving skills into a reliable source of income (2022). Revenues from textile sales were reinvested in scholarships for youth, among them the daughter of a weaver who pursued specialized training to internationally promote Cuzqueño textiles. Designers like Rocío del Barco, who oversaw creative initiatives for the TUI Foundation, have tried different approaches. TUI launched a project to assist weavers in five remote communities in the Ollantaytambo area following the pandemic's impact on tourism. The textiles were displayed as pieces of decorative art in Lima's Dédalo, one of the most esteemed craft galleries in the capital, which reframed their pieces as high design. Across these varied interventions, including those of CTTC, the pivotal shift occurred once weaving ceased to function solely as an internal cultural practice and was redefined as an external economic resource within the renegotiation of indigeneity in a neoliberal framework (see Clifford, 2013). These changes inevitably required adaptation: backstrap looms, which allow for faster production but also put strain on the body, frequently replaced traditional four-stake looms that allowed more regular textiles; *ponchos* and other culturally significant items, were replaced by smaller, more marketable pieces like table runners and cushion covers; and colours and patterns were adjusted to appeal to tourists. While this also usually resulted in the abandonment of more complicated techniques and

designs whose complexity made them unprofitable, new or revitalised archaeological techniques occasionally made their way into use, which could unexpectedly change local repertoires. A telling example that I witnessed in Pitumarca was the collective production of a big textile dyed with tie-dye techniques. The effort served as evidence of the association's collaborative approach as well as its support to innovation, recovery of pre-Hispanic practices, and reproduction of archaeological or historical textiles. Moreover, it was not unusual for renowned and successful master weavers from other communities to be brought in to teach the local practitioners of the new weaving centre when it was to be opened. A parallel practice unfolded in the form of so-called “exchanges”, structured encounters in which specialists in distinct domains (e.g. dyeing, finishing techniques) exchanged expertise across communities. Gregorio, for instance, recounted how, when a mining enterprise was establishing in Apurímac, he and another weaver were invited, in their capacity as experts, to conduct workshops for local residents[93]. The above examples highlight how weaving knowledge has spread beyond geographical barriers, inevitably creating new hybridizations. As a result of these interactions, textile knowledge has constantly undergone change, further pushed by the monetary attention weaving has obtained.

In addition to the fabrics intended for export, there is still a manufacturing that is largely for domestic use, most obviously associated with collective celebrations and events. Such garments are, at times, commissioned from renowned village weavers -such as Gregorio or Lucia, two of my interlocutors- who receive explicit requests concerning preferred colours and motifs tailored to specific communities or events. But more often than not, these commodities are bought at markets and are made industrially or on pedal looms, which makes them less expensive. During local festivals, the majority of participants wear their “traditional” attire. Only in rare cases do these garments correspond to ancestral pieces transmitted intergenerationally within families; most are relatively recent creations. Above all,

[93] These weaving workshops were not isolated events; rather, they were a component of a larger training program that was directly funded by the mining corporation, which also arranged other types of courses to go along with its establishment in the area.

their chromatic vibrancy is what makes them recognizable: *ponchos, mantas, chullos, golones* and *polleras*, which are increasingly made of synthetic fibres, stand out by their brilliant colours, which are now further accentuated by the rising popularity of metallic threads in silver and gold that shimmer in the sunlight.

Figure 32: Selling mantas and polleras in the Sunday market, Pitumarca

Transformation is not limited to textile materials or colours but extends to design repertoires. During a visit to Choquecancha in the district of Lares, for instance, local weavers, upon examining antique textiles held at the MUDEC, identified them as originating from their region yet immediately noted their antiquity as they clarified that figurative themes, especially animal shapes, are preferred in current taste over the extensive geometric patterns that were formerly prevalent[94]. At the Sunday market in Pitumarca, amidst stalls selling indigenous campesino-style clothing, one encounters an abundance of ponchos and polleras not typical of the area. According to one merchant, the reason these things sell so well is because of

[94] According to Rosie Barnes, this change in style was due to the intervention of her teacher Narciso Huilca Huaman, with whom she deepened her academic knowledge once she moved to Cusco. Apparently, during the second half of the last century, he was traveling looking for textiles all over the Central and Southern Andes, and he brought some figurative belts from Bolivia with him. Choquecancha weavers liked them so much they asked him to leave some of them for them to copy the designs.

the recent migration from nearby valleys, where these styles are typical. The perceived relevance of local or regional contests and fairs by weavers possibly contributes to these processes as well. This became clear to me on one particular occasion when I was informed that a local fair was to be held in Chillca, an isolated village situated at an altitude of over 4,000 metres. I reached it on the only bus that travelled back and forth from Pitumarca once a day. The small village, which was normally very quiet, was instead packed with herders showing llamas and alpacas, farmers showing potatoes, and many weavers with their textiles. They were pretty bothered by my presence and didn't want to talk to me nor sell me anything. Indeed, they didn't want me to take an interest in their best pieces as they needed to use them to compete in the contest to get the prize. Walter Rodriguez, the previously mentioned artist and textile specialist who is regularly asked to judge weaving competitions, revealed that the awarding process itself may unintentionally change the way textiles are made: Associations from different villages often replicate award-winning designs in subsequent editions, leading to a diffusion and standardisation of motifs. Furthermore, the large regional fairs, which bring together various communities in one setting and feature dances, livestock contests, and craft exhibits, act as incubators for fresh ideas and cross-cultural visual borrowings. Ultimately, changes in fashion and taste have been inevitably facilitated by the expansion of communication networks and the increased interaction between communities. A significant and continuous process of evolution and adaptation currently defines Andean textile practice in all of its modern manifestations. It is a clear and acknowledged change that applies to all types of Andean weaving, regardless of form, purpose, or typology.

In this sense, tradition is best understood as a culturally situated practice that is constantly regenerated, transformed, and reinterpreted in the present rather than as a static inheritance. Although weaving remains, and continues to be, a significant cultural marker within the Andean world, revitalization initiatives have simultaneously produced a framework of “tradition” imposing a materialised collective memory and a sense of communal identity that was crystalised on touristic demand instead of corresponding to the ongoing evolution of personal

textile practice[95]. Even though collective memory, whether accurate, reconstructed, or invented, matter less for its factual truth than for their capacity to be accepted as meaningful, sustaining identity (see Climo & Cattel, 2002), this very dynamism that intrinsically characterises Andean textiles raises a question: what, then, constitutes the "authentic" Andean textile tradition worthy of preservation? Is it the body of work that meticulously reproduces ancestral techniques and chromatic repertoires, now largely sustained through the circuits of tourism, or rather the garments actively worn and reimagined by local communities in their communal lives? While considering power dynamics that inevitably influence the relations of Andean indigenous minorities, the agency of Indigenous actors, who have long mobilized artistic practice not merely as a vehicle of creative innovation, but also as a means of cultural self-affirmation and economic endurance, cannot be overlooked (see Morphy & Perkins, 2006).

Prior to tourism's influence on local economies, subsistence depended on agriculture and herding, textiles were woven solely for domestic use and were never exchanged for money. External attempts to recover traditional weaving within its communities of practice, did not favour its reviving but instead detached it from evolving lived experience and transformed it into a cultural product and a commodity. Indeed, weaving was reinvented as a new source of income with the growth of tourism, helping the community adapt to monetary economies and, most crucially, drawing women into market systems. What was formerly a social and cultural activity has been reoriented into a transaction-based practice, where trade value has supplanted symbolic and use values. However, the story of Andean textile commoditization cannot be boiled down to a passive reaction to global demand or an external imposition. These changes were actively shaped by indigenous people, who have long been familiar with employing culture as a means of development, identity building, and survival. The diversities of textile production into items intended for tourists and garments for personal and communal use demonstrates how weavers have simultaneously adjusted their

[95] In this sense, it is particularly interesting what happened with the "calendar belt" in Taquile (Puno region) which is now considered the epitome of traditional weaving on the island while it was instead a creation for the tourist market, inspired from a previous local clothing element (Zorn, 2004: 97-105)

methods to satisfy the demands of tourists while preserving and distinctly changing the traditional aesthetic and purpose of their still living textile practice and use. In short, current Andean textile production oscillate between the coexistence of an (invented) “tradition” and communities’ “customs” (see Hobsbaw & Ranger, 1983).

My sense is that, in the last century, each district (or indeed, in some cases, each village) drew upon the resources of its immediate ecosystem to articulate, through its cloth, a particular relationship to the environment, visible in iconography, colour palettes, and technical repertoires. The connection between community, ecosystem, and unique aesthetic has become less strong in today's world of increased interconnection, where fibre is bought from the same regional provider, chemical pigments are the most common, and synthetic yarns are frequently preferred for convenience. This is not to say it has disappeared entirely: elder generations can still discern, with trained eyes, whether a textile originates from one community or another. However, such information, which was historically and culturally rooted in the connection between community identity and traditional textile practices, is frequently forgotten among younger people whose life experiences have been impacted by western education, migration to bigger urban cities, inter-village fairs and festivals, and the demands of the tourist market. While distinct patterns and styles continue to exist, intermixtures are becoming more common and accepted. The result is a broader change: *Cusqueñan* identity has solidified as ties have become stronger and national identity has been recreated in composite terms. These days, textiles serve more as symbolic identifiers within broader scales of belonging -first regional, then national, and, with the rise of mass tourism, even international- than as indicators of micro-local difference. What emerges, then, is a broader transformation: as interconnections have intensified and as Peruvian national identity has been reconstructed as multicultural -at least in appearance- *Cusqueñan* identity itself has undergone a process of consolidation and integration. In this framework, textiles no longer function primarily as markers of hyper-local differentiation, but rather as emblematic signs within broader scales of belonging: first as regional symbols, then as elements of national heritage, and, with the rise of mass tourism, as visible

emblems of Peruvian culture on the international stage. As Clifford stated (1988: 16): “Throughout the world indigenous populations have had to reckon with the forces of "progress" and "national" unification. The results have been both destructive and inventive. Many traditions, languages, cosmologies, and values are lost, some literally murdered; but much has simultaneously been invented and revived in complex, oppositional contexts. If the victims of progress and empire are weak, they are seldom passive.”

CHAPTER SIX. Threads of Equity: Museums' Ethical Stewardship of Andean Textile Heritages

Andean textiles, in a variety of forms, have been circulating as commodities in both national and international markets, particularly since the final quarter of the 20th century. In certain instances, these paths ultimately favoured patrimonialisation processes that incorporate them into institutional museum structures of knowledge transmission. In these settings, fragments once embedded in lived practice are singularized as inalienable heritage—recast for display and preservation and endowed with an aura of authenticity that positions them as art, artifact or both. In museological contexts, they are reduced to "fragments" of material culture, detached from their original cycles of use and placed in the contemporary setting of the museum's where (and when) museographic mediation and interpretation have the potential to detach them from their origins to be reimagined within modern cognitive experiences (see Lattanzi, 2012: 11-14). By removing Andean textiles from their original contexts and displaying them in a museum, they gain virtually limitless possibilities for reconfiguration and reinterpretation, becoming objects of aesthetic appreciation and/or cultural meaning, markers of authenticity, and instruments of institutional authority.

Because local communities are frequently cut off from the TCE of their own traditions when stored in museums, this displacement poses important problems regarding ownership, representation, and access. Andean indigenous TCE's contribution to the formation of the so-called "idea of Latin America" can only be fully understood via the lens of what Mignolo (2005) refers to as the "geo-politics of knowledge from the perspective of coloniality". This lens is fundamental when analysing the inscription of Andean indigenous TCE into the Western epistemology of tangible and intangible heritage first, and then, more specifically, when incorporated into the museum as a political institution of knowledge production and identity formation (see chapter 3). Even though they are perceived as neutral, the most common organizing axes for collections (time, geography, or the inherent characteristics of objects) are ultimately arbitrary. Beside this, museums display decontextualizes artifacts and uses them as representations of

cultural wholes, giving the impression that whole cultural groups are exhibited (see chapter 1). In this sense Andean textiles are not only relocated within a reconstructed and for definition partial narrative but also transformed into metonymical messengers of Andean culture. The collection is never a comprehensive portrayal since it is always balancing what is publicly accessible and what remains hidden, what is shared with the public and what is kept overlooked in deposits. These partial representations frequently disguise the power relations implicit in acquisition processes, giving the perception of coherence while concealing the social and historical dynamics that underpin the collection (see Stewart, 1984).

For many years, the selected textiles from the MUDEC collections had remained, in Kummels' (2018) evocative words, "dormant", namely inactivated within the museum's environment. Prior to this study, most had never been displayed[96] nor had they been the focus of any dedicated research. Within the framework of this doctoral research, however, the drawers in which these textiles had been preserved in the MUDEC deposit, were opened once again. As the objects underwent conservation treatments, they were handled, examined closely, researched and relocated. Though they could not physically leave the museum, their photographs were part in what might be described as an imperfect form of visual repatriation, or "photo-elicitation" aiming at favouring knew knowledge formation (see Introduction; Harper, 2002; Pink, 2013). Through these images, the textiles became symbolic dialogic spaces with Andean weavers, what Peers & Brown define "contact zones" (2003: 5). Through this interaction, they were resigned and turned into active tools for initiating discussions on Indigenous cultural rights in relation to Western museum collections' TCEs.

[96] The only item that was exhibited regularly was PAM 01427, a camelid collar made of coloured fibres with rattles, which remained on display at the temporary exhibition Travelogue until a few months ago. Like the exhibition Qapaq Ñan (2021), Travelogue situated the item within the larger concept of travel in the Andes. Indeed, this object is usually attached to the alpaca herd's "captain". At the 2007-2008 Castello Sforzesco exhibition Indoamerica, the poncho PAM 01432 and the Q'ero manta PAM 01433 were displayed. In the meanwhile, Milano Città Mondo palimpsest devoted to Peru (2019), included the montera PAM 01435 and the chullo PAM 01450. See Appendix 2.

6.1 Andean Textiles as Peruvian Heritage

Cusco's historical Andean textile collections are almost non-existent, except for a few private collections, such as those of Rosie Barnes and Josefina Olivera, which were previously discussed (see chapter 5). The Museo de Arte Popular of Cusco do not hold any Andean textiles, perpetuating the exclusion that this cultural expression has suffered within Indigenism definition of folk arts (see below). The Museo Inka, which was formerly intended to be the Archaeological Museum of the University of Cusco and located in the city's historic centre, is oddly off the major tourist route. Its textile collections are constituted by two donations: one collection gifted by Gail Silverman, and another transferred by Nilda Callañaupa on behalf of the CTTC (see Chapter 5). Only a handful of pieces are included into the museum's broader historical narrative, while the majority are displayed in a dedicated ground-floor gallery, where the curatorial strategy foregrounds the technical elements of weaving as well as the practical functions of the cloth. Alongside this institutional repository exists a smaller, yet relevant, museum: the private museum of the CTTC itself. Located inside the central offices and easily accessible from the store, accompany the visitor through a multifaceted itinerary that includes weaving methods, natural dyeing methods, raw materials, and the cultural logics of textile production and use in the region, also drawing attention to the distinctive elements of the communities involved in the project. On the upper floor, the textiles set out for purchase are presented more like "works of art" that mere commodity as Nilda herself recognised the artistry in these pieces. Alongside there are carefully crafted replicas of historic weavings, collective works and textiles executed with complex techniques, each given particular prominence. The same area is used for workshops where expert weavers who have been invited from their local communities teach guests hands-on. The store on street level, on the other hand every day, host indigenous weavers working at their waist looms.

These interpretative frameworks demonstrate how the distance created by the museum also operates locally, despite Cusco proximity to textiles' context of origin. This also reveals the agency of the institution, influenced by its Western colonial history and its current role as a heritage preservation space in the face against globalisation.

6.1.1 Andean Textiles as Tangible Heritage

Moving to the centralising Lima, the situation is different and historical and cultural tendencies that materialised in Anden textiles collections and their management. During the 20th century, the indigenist movement began to reshape how Peru's intellectual elites conceived of national material culture—a culture that was socially and ethnically heterogeneous, fractured across regional and geographic lines. A more cohesive framework for these perspectives when the official "cultivated" artistic field achieved legitimacy though the establishment of the National School of Fine Arts in 1919. It became more and more clear that the concept of "cultivated art" was not created in a vacuum but rather developed in constant opposition with its perceived counterpart, "popular art". Therefore, it is no accident that the most famous Peruvian indigenist artist José Sabogal, who was both a professor at the School of Fine Arts and a vocal supporter of "popular arts", was instrumental in establishing the basic parameters of both categories (Kusunoki & Majluf, 2019). However, indigenismo's notion of the "popular" was not as broad as it claimed to be. While it purportedly supported a wide range of creative acts, it still was selective, rarely taking into account the socioeconomic backgrounds of producers or consumers, and ultimately favouring certain expressions over others. Indigenism' inclusivity was rather a curatorial operation that elevated some forms of material culture while silencing others[97]. Andean textile tradition of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was among those cultural expressions from the central highlands that were erased from the indigenist artistic canon, not being considered in Sabogal's discourse on mestizaje nor in local collecting practices (ibid.; Stastny, 1981: 212). Andean traditional textiles were not completely ignored by Indigenist artists, rather they meticulously documented regional costumes with almost ethnographic precision and assembled extensive visual catalogues of watercolours for the Museo de la Cultura Peruana[98]. This taxonomic impulse fashioned a diverse and autochthonous image of Peru, yet in so doing so textiles were excluded from the artistic discourse and reducing them

[97] See Carpio & Yllia (2017) to understand the relevance of the indigenist circle Peña Pancho Fierro in the development for a taste in "popular art".
[98] On the other hand, pre-Columbian textiles were widely appreciated both locally and internationally, thanks to experts such as Anni Albers (1965) and Elena Izcue (Majluf & Wuffarden, 1999).

to mere ethnic markers of alterity against mestizo customs. Moreover, while Andean textile tradition might have best substantiated the indigenist ideal of cultural continuity reaching back to ancient civilization, its advanced technical refinement resisted any association with the primitivism often ascribed to notions of the "popular" and its abstract visual qualities stood at the antipodes of indigenismo's figurative vocation (ibid.).

At the same time, from the 70s, Quechua and Aymara textiles went through a collecting boom from foreign (mainly North American) collectors that caused the scattering outside of Peru of the majority of historical collections, especially those gathered prior to the emergence of mass tourism. These textiles are now spread throughout museums in North America and Europe. Acquisitions were no longer restricted to inexpert tourist purchases in local marketplaces or anthropologists' fieldwork materials as had been the case with prominent university collections such as Harvard's Peabody Museum. Rather, connoisseurs that were jokingly referred to me as the "*mafia boliviana*" by Jhon Alfredo started to choose items with a discriminating eye leading to this unparalleled surge in demand led to a sharp increase in prices[99]. The market value of these fabrics was greatly influenced by dealers, but also by artists and curators, who frequently framed them in relation to North American abstract aesthetics. An especially remarkable illustration of this interpretative strategy is seen in César Paternosto's The Stone and the Thread (1996), which puts Andean weaving in close conversation with modernist abstraction. According to this paradigm, traditional woven items, particularly Aymara textiles, occasionally resemble the canvases of artists like Rothko or Newman. By placing these fabrics in the interpretative realm of "art," these comparisons highlighted an aesthetic attraction that went beyond technical or cultural ingrained considerations. However, this approach frequently had a primitivist undertone, with Andean works valued more for their seeming similarities to the visual language of Western modernism than for their own cultural logics[100]. As a consequence, many valuable Andean textiles have made

[99] These efforts are documented in a series of catalogues such as Femenias & al. (1987), Siegal & Guntermann (1991), Adelson & Takami (1978); Adelson & Tracht (1983).
[100] Natalia Majluf, director of the MALI - Museum of Arts in Lima, go through these topics in her interesting lectures held for the University of San Marcos in Lima (see

their way into American art museums in recent decades through significant donations, resulting in collections that are far larger and of higher quality than those found in South America, particularly in Peru. One example of this is the Metropolitan Museum of Art's collection. Moreover, until recently, the majority of research and publications on Andean weaving was created by foreign experts for foreign readers.

In fact, while the Pre-Columbian collection of the Museo de Arte de Lima (MALI) was quite rich, republican-period textiles only received special attention during the extensive process of reevaluating its collections that the museum embarked since 2010s (Kusunoki & Amjluf, 2019). Since then, the curatorial staff has received the great collection of Christiane Lefebvre, a Canadian textile expert who had spent many years in Puno and especially in Bolivia and gathered an extensive collection of Aymara and Quechua pieces from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Besides, although a few items could still be purchased in Cusco, most pertinent items had to be found in private collections and at antiques shows in Argentina and the US[101]. Currently, MALI's ethnographic Andean textile collection does not include many Quechua textiles from Cuzco as those found on the market were not of museum -artistic- quality according to the curatorial staff, not even those left on the Josefina Olivera shop. Popular arts are incorporated into the Museo de Arte de Lima mostly through historicization, but art-historical assessment continues to be the predominant standpoint. The institution's partnerships with Shipibo-Konibo artists[102], whose work lately has taken the forefront on the national (especially in Lima's cultural circuits) as well as the global art scene, demonstrate this perspective. However, as suggested to me by a curatorial staff member, no such efforts have been made with Andean weavers, whose work is still tied to the concept of "tradition" rather than acknowledged as a member of a contemporary creative culture nor artistic scenario. Thus, the long-standing dichotomy between work of art and cultural artifact that influenced the way objects

https://youtu.be/0nFckxIk2-g?si=BlB2tEF_D_Dq-e6V) and for the Max Plank Institute (see https://vimeo.com/683689276) (accessed on September 20th, 2025)

[101] See note 4 and Kusunoki & Majluf (2019).

[102] The Shipibo Konibo people are an Amazonian indigenous group that lives in the Ucayali, Madre de Dios, Huánuco, Loreto departments. See https://bdpi.cultura.gob.pe/pueblos/shipibo-konibo (accessed on September 25th, 2025)

from non-Western contexts have generally been classified within museums since the early twentieth century (see Clifford 1985: 242) continues in a renewed form in the sharp contrast between the aesthetically original work of Shipibo artist and the culturally significant Cusqueñan anonymous artisan. Currently, the MALI Andean republican textile collection hasn't been exhibited yet. The opposition between foreign appreciation and local disinterest was clear in a story Ester Ventura told me: of Argentinian origins, she moved to Peru in the 70s to work as a filmmaker and Andean textiles caught her eye, as she started to collect them and became interested in their cultural value as well. During the 80s she was staying in a friend's hotel in central Cusco, where she saw a traditional textile used as a carpet and considered a "*trapo de indio*", namely an Indigenous rag in discriminatory terms. Outraged, she decided to trade it and keep it in her collection.

Most relevant collections of Andean textiles from Cusco are preserved in private collections, such as that of Rosie Barnes and Walter Rodriguez in Cusco, Mari Solari's collection, who own the famous craft shop Artesania Las Pallas, and Ester Ventura's collection, both in Lima. I had the luck to see them and hear the collectors' shared preoccupations for their pieces that seem not to find space in museum collection because of a substantial lack of interest of the Ministry of Culture and the main national institutions, all located in Lima. The only small collection of textiles from Cusco held by the Museo de Artes y Tradiciones Populares "Luis Repetto Málaga", related to one of the main universities of Lima (Pontificia Universidad Catolica del Peru) and now in a reorganising phase (see López Infantas & Mendoza Castro, 2025), comes from a donation made by Gertrude, Mari Solari mother-in-law and an avid collector of popular art. The collection of the Museo de Arqueología y Antropología (MAA) of the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos (Lima's other principal university) is even more limited, consisting only of two *mantas* and a single *montera*, acquired during the 1970s. The marked absence of Andean textiles in the holdings of the city's leading university museums reveals not merely a *lacuna*, but a deeper indication of the limited valuation accorded to such artifacts within the national academic sphere.

6.1.2 Andean Textiles as Intangible Heritage

On the other hand, another relevant Limeña institution had a different relationship with popular art during its history. Being the only national ethnographic museum in Peru, holding a vast collection of popular art from every area, the Museo de la Cultura Peruana aims at promoting awareness of cultural diversity. Through its life, the museum has been entwined with Peru's artistic, cultural, scientific, and intellectual developments, including notable personalities from these fields as both protagonists and interlocutors (see Espinosa Puentes, 2018). Between 1946 and 1956, the MNCP became the emblematic stage of Peru's indigenist project, blending scholarship, aesthetics, and politics to valorise mestizo and Indigenous traditions. Under Valcárcel's direction, Sabogal and Arguedas envisioned it as a place to tell the story of Peru's cultural development from pre-Hispanic antiquity to the present: "For quite some time we had been thinking with José Sabogal about a museum that would bring together all the production made by the Peruvian man, from his earliest times to the present."[103] (Valcárcel 1981: 359). It defined the country's cultural continuity in accordance with indigenous beliefs. In addition to documenting syncretic popular art, the museum's activities—anchored by the Instituto de Estudios Etnológicos, the Instituto de Estudios Históricos, and the Istituto de Arte Peruano, which was founded by a group of indigenous artists—accumulated collections and produced scholarship that repositioned it against the changes of modernization, emphasizing on aesthetic dignity and cultural endurance (see Valcárcel, 1981: 358-370; Espinosa Puentes, 2018: 45-46). During the following decades, with the disappearance of Indigenismo in the artistic and public debate, the MNCP evolved from an artistic to a largely scientific function, prioritizing archaeology over anthropology. The IAP's artistic vision was partially restored in the 1990s but, since archaeological collections were transferred to the Museo de la Nación, the characteristic *neoprehispanico* building of the MNCP was redesigned to store popular art only.

During the last couple of decades, the MNCP was absorbed into the Ministry of Culture's new Directorate of Intangible Heritage (Alfaro 2005), which had a

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[103] From the Spanish "*Desde hacía buen tiempo habíamos pensado con José Sabogal en un museo que reuniese toda la producción realizada por el hombre peruano, desde sus primeros tiempos hasta los actuales*."

twofold outcome. On the one hand, it weakened its autonomy and favoured the decline of its facilities and management, on the other, the institutional discourse changed, and immaterial heritage gained more legitimacy. This became particularly true with the approval of Peru's 2004 Cultural Heritage Law and UNESCO's 2003 Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage. In this context, the museums focus changed from documentation to communication (see e.g. MNCP, 2008). Exhibitions, traveling programs and valorisation initiatives increased awareness on the tangible and intangible expression of the diverse Peruvian indigenous and traditional cultures, attracting wider audiences (Espinosa Puentes, 2018: 47). Still, the MNCP has been marginalised since the 80s, within a context of urban degradation that made the area still dangerous today. Not very visited, it remains outside of touristic routes.

The MNCP’s perception of historical Andean textiles diverges strikingly from that of MALI, revealing two institutions guided by different logics. MALI used a historicization lens to approach Andean weaving, choosing and purchasing works based on their aesthetic value and historical significance. In contrast, the MNCP has taken a completely different approach. Despite having a sizable collection of textiles that were donated by the Touring y Automóvil Club in the early 1960s, the museum has maintained this collection out of the general public view and outside of its curatorial narrative. Instead, the MNCP has been situating itself within a discourse that emphasizes the living, intangible dimensions of cultural heritage rather than the construction of historical or artistical narratives. In fact, almost all of the Andean textiles and traditional Cusco clothing on display (both marked as works of art and on mannequins as functional garments) were purchases made in 2020 under Decreto de Urgencia Nº 058-2020, a law designed to implement extraordinary economic mechanisms to mitigate the socio-economic disruptions caused to the arts, cultural industries, and expressions of intangible cultural heritage during COVID-19 sanitary emergency. In this sense, financial assistance for the preservation of traditions, manifestations, and expressions of intangible cultural assets was intended to protect bearer communities' processes of production, identification and transmission (art. 9). Meaning that the Ministry of Culture itself (art. 10) was authorised to acquire cultural expressions including

literary, bibliographic, musical, theatrical, cinematographic, audiovisual works, and other materials tied to intangible heritage; in this case, the direct products of that traditional knowledge: textiles.

6.2 Intertwining Heritage Safeguard and Economic Support

As we already saw (chapter 5), in areas of leisure and consumption, textiles served as a kind of semiotic brand for Cusco, always reinforcing local identity for the foreign. In this context, ordinary items can be viewed as collectibles or heritage, blurring the distinction between a museum, boutique, and store. This is particularly interesting for luxury fashion retailers, which sell clothing made from high-end alpaca fibre, using design elements that alluded to an "Andean" style while yet being consumable by customers throughout the world. The Peruvian Andes, which are currently home to about 85% of the world's alpaca population, are now at the centre of global fashion industries, whose interactions with biodiversity -and indigenous people who manage it- vary from more extractive to sustainable practices[104]. Boutiques performatively reproduced this relationship with the Andean past and tradition by showcasing weavers as living representations of an imagined Andean past in their shopfront windows. This kind of marketable culture reconnect to Pearce's (1995: 382) claims that shopping has evolved into a cultural experience in which goods are showcased through spectacle, exoticism, and tradition (while museums themselves increasingly resemble department stores). This entanglement of museum and boutique, cultural heritage and market, becomes evident in the collaborations forged between certain museums and fashion houses. For instance, the private Amano Museum (Lima), home to one of the country's most significant collections of pre-Hispanic textiles, hosts a stand in its own shop dedicated to Sol Alpaca, one of the most famous Peruvian fashion brands of luxury alpaca clothes. At the same time, the museum displays a selection of its textiles within the store of Sol alpaca at Lima's Jorge Chávez International Airport. Sol Alpaca even developed a Museo Amano line, which draws inspiration from the Pre-Columbian Textile Museum's collection. The

[104] Recently, a controversy regarding the high-fashion brand Loro Piana casted a harsh light on the structural inequities embedded in luxury fashion's promise of exclusivity. See Rochabrun (2024).

purchase of these pieces which offer a contemporary reinterpretation of ancient Andean weaving contributes to sustaining the museum's work[105].

The coexistence -at times overlapping, at times conflicting- between the patrimonial and the economic values attached to craft production becomes especially visible in Lima, where two major fairs take place simultaneously in highly symbolic urban settings. On one side is *Ruraq Maki*, which is organized by the Ministry of Culture within its own institutional grounds; on the other is *De Nuestras Manos*, which is sponsored by the Ministry of Tourism and held at one of the Miraflores district's main urban tourism transit parks.
The Peruvian Ministry of Culture introduced *Ruraq Maki* in 2007 as a state initiative to safeguard and promote popular and traditional art as ICH. By acknowledging crafts as repositories of Peru's cultural diversity, it seeks to improve the networks of craft production, distribution, knowledge, and appreciation. The initiative aims also at increasing knowledge, promote cross-cultural communication, facilitate entrepreneurial exchanges, open up new markets, build craft-based cultural businesses, preserve traditional knowledge, and use traditional creativity as a vehicle for social inclusion and advancement. With over 150 collectives each edition, international connections, and a commercial network that links artisans with exporters, designers, and retailers to sustain production throughout the year, *Ruraq Maki* has grown to become one of the nation's largest cultural endeavours[106].
On the other hand, the De Nuestras Manos[107] fair is a component of this larger series of initiatives, events, and competitions aimed at promoting the expansion of traditional handicraft from the standpoint of both domestic and global economic development. Implementing and overseeing management tools and regulations in the artisanal sector is within the mandate of MINCETUR (Ministry of Foreign Trade and Tourism), acting through the Directorate of Artisanal Development. In

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[105] See https://www.solalpaca.com/pages/museo-amano?srsltid=AfmBOop1DHhFh3Z65rBW3kxWiJAaJKwS2xsMvtl-1oikDxFJ4lAehoRE (accessed on September 27th, 2025)
[106] See https://www.unesco.org/creativity/en/policy-monitoring-platform/ruraq-maki-hecho-mano and https://ruraqmaki.pe/index.php/que-es (accessed on September 27th, 2025)
[107] See https://www.artesaniasdelperu.gob.pe/eventoscomerciales/ver/7/inicio (accessed on September 27th, 2025)

order to support craftsmen, artisanal activity, and the placement of Peruvian crafts internationally, it also encourages initiatives like commercial promotion, certifications, awards, technical support, and training. These efforts include the National Registry of Artisans (Registro Nacional del Artesano - RNA) (see below), an internet portal as a permanent space for digital promotion for artisans.

By visiting both fairs and comparing them, while listening to the voices of artisans who participate in one or the other, the perception that emerges is that at *Ruraq Maki*, the objects on display lean more strongly toward a conception of traditional craftsmanship, whereas at *De nuestras manos* small items with the character of souvenirs are more common, and greater space is often given to forms of production that emphasize innovation. However, besides depending on the artisan resources to respond to the call for applications, participation largely revolves around the same groups of artisans, who, if not accepted in one fair, tend to join the other.

6.2.1 Andean textile between safeguard and protection

Clearly, Andean textiles are detached from the idea of artistic production as it opposes to craftmanship[108] and this conception is revealed in how major museums manage, communicate or display these pieces as much in how the Government safeguard and protect these TCE. Accordingly, Peruvian jurisdiction faced some difficulties and paradoxical situations in facing debates over cultural rights[109].

The General Law of the Cultural Heritage of the Nation, Law No. 28296 (2004), set the national policies for the ownership, legal status, promotion, defence, and safeguarding of the elements that constitute Peru's cultural heritage. All human creations, whether tangible or intangible, that are either explicitly recognized as such by law or presumed to be so due to their archaeological, historical, artistic, social, religious, scientific, or intellectual value are included in the broad definition of cultural heritage provided by this law. These items might be intangible, movable or immovable, and include materials of ethnological interest. While tangible

[108] See Shiner (2001) for a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of the opposition between art and craft.
[109] See Barrett & Samoylov (2021) for a detailed summary of the challenges related to identifying the artistic quality required for the copyright protection of applied arts.

heritage might be publicly or privately owned, it is nevertheless subject to the constraints and safeguards provided by the law. Article 2, on the other hand, states that ICH is the nation's property by definition. Regardless of whether the intangible cultural expression has been officially acknowledged by the government, no person or organization may claim ownership of it; any declaration of such is null and invalid. The State and society have the responsibility to safeguard these forms of ICH, while the communities that preserve and transmit them on are acknowledged as their immediate owners.

In Peru, expressions of ICH can be included to the *Patrimonio Cultural de la Nación* through an official procedure set up by the Ministry of Culture[110]. The procedure, which can be started *ex officio* or through petitions, requires the development of a technical dossier supported up by anthropological research, bibliographies, photographic evidence, and most importantly the documented engagement and prior informed consent of the communities involved. Historical continuity, symbolic significance, importance to collective life, relevance at local, regional, or national levels, and conformity to environmental and human rights norms are some of the criteria that influence the assessment. After being evaluated by experts and approved by the Dirección General de Patrimonio Cultural, the dossier is finally decided by the Viceministerio de Patrimonio Cultural e Industrias Culturales, which is the only body with the power to grant such recognition. The goals of UNESCO's 2003 Convention are closely aligned with this framework: heritage is safeguarded through documenting, recording, and expert assessments, but it also necessitates the active involvement and authorization of the communities who embody it. Both local agency and institutional authority are highlighted in this negotiation, revealing how these national systems adapt to international heritage models.

The institutional framework for UNESCO's 2003 Convention, which makes cultural practices elegible by the state through documentation, registration, and the endorsement of professional experts, is mirrored in Peru's heritage recognition mechanism. However, it must be considered that any form of ICH is entangled in

[110] Accessible at http://administrativos.cultura.gob.pe/intranet/dpcn/procedimiento.jsp (accessed on September 28th, 2025)

negotiations of interest and legitimization, shaped by the interplay of actors, political economy, and ideological frameworks that govern cultural expressions' production, circulation, and reception (see Cánepa Koch, 2007). Despite the best efforts to facilitate heritage bearers to directly take part in the "metacultural" process of heritage recognition (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004; Logan 2008; see chapter 2), this bureaucratization frequently makes the process complex and expensive for the same populations it is supposed to assist. For example, only with political support and the prominence provided by individuals like Timoteo was it possible to inscribe the *Conocimientos, técnicas y usos asociados al tejido tradicional de Pitumarca* (2017). The community might not have had the resources to navigate the administrative procedures without these mediators. When I asked Timoteo and Gregorio about their motivations in pursuing state-level recognition, they admitted that it was above all a "defensive" manoeuvre. Their concern was less about visibility or state support, and more about preventing Checacupe, their neighbouring community, from appropriating the techniques and designs they considered their own. In order to ensure Pitumarca's sole, legally recognized claim to certain artistic expressions, the *declaratoria* was therefore designed as a stronghold, sealing regional competition in the official language of heritage. However, as Yanett stated to me, the process was rushed and not researched thoroughly, while the weavers themselves have not benefited in any noticeable way from the formal designation of their traditions as national cultural heritage. Pitumarca is still on the outside of recognized tourist routes, and its weavers continue to face the same economic instability. The motivation to preserve newly valorised skills as national treasure remains motivated less by iedntity pride and more by the practical necessity for earnings inside weaving groups.

Figure 33: Checacupe using textile symbols to promote tourism in the village

The legal framework provided by the General Law of the Cultural Heritage of the Nation highlights that cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, makes up a shared and collective patrimony that is inextricably linked to the character of the country national identity and should be protected as such. However, it also distinguishes a critical ownership distinction: although material heritage can be vested in persons or institutions, albeit subject to State regulatory monitoring, intangible heritage allows no private property. In this manner, ICH is seen of as collective in the broadest sense, inseparable from the social community that produces and transmits it, whereas tangible heritage vacillates between the private and public domains. In practice, where does this leave weavers' rights over their work and knowledge? The Ley del Artesano y del Desarrollo de la Actividad Artesanal (Law No. 29073, 2007), plays a fundamental role in this sense.

This legal framework scope extends to individual artisans, artisan enterprises, and institutions linked to the sector, granting them access to benefits through Artisanal Certification and registration in the Registro Nacional del Artesano. The law's fundamental definition of craftsmanship is an economic and cultural activity that

involves the production of goods entirely or mostly by hand[111], utilizing materials that are acquired locally. According to this taxonomy, crafts is separated into two categories: innovative (defined by market demand) and traditional (representing community traditions and identities). Moreover, craftsmen are legally categorized as individuals engaged in the creation of such works within the lines codified by the Clasificador Nacional de Líneas Artesanales (CLANAR), an inventory managed by MINCETUR. In order to manage a very diverse cultural creation, the law creates a bureaucratic framework of lists and classifications, nevertheless this system inherently leads to exclusion as not all activities fit neatly into official taxonomies and not all craftspeople have equal access to recognition procedures.

Since MINCETUR and regional governments are tasked not only with formalization and collective organization, but also with favouring market access for artisans, it follows that craftsmanship is framed not only as cultural heritage to be safeguarded but also as an economic sector to be optimized for productivity, competitiveness, and integration into global trade, even as its recognition remains circumscribed by bureaucratic mechanisms of validation. In this perspective, the artisan is regarded as both an economic actor whose work is linked to the nation's overall growth and a cultural figure, creator of identity and custodian of tradition. Craftsmanship is presented as a sector -related to tourism- that may support local economies, create jobs, and symbolize national heritage while also acting as a driver for economic progress.

If the General Law of the Cultural Heritage of the Nation attributes cultural rights to traditional cultural expressions' bearers, thus recognizing their role in sustain and transmit it, it also sets an ambiguity by proclaiming ICH as inalienable property of the nation thus nullifying any individual or corporate claims of ownership. On the other hand, the Ley del Artesano moves to delineate how traditional expressions are to be inscribed, certified, and protected within a framework of IP. The already mentioned Certificación Artesanal (art. 29) and the Registro Nacional del Artesano (art. 30) to classify and officially recognize artisans and their role are a fundamental instrument for implementing policies that

[111] Industrial products are explicitly excluded, as the added value must derive from manual labour itself.

integrate artisanal practice with economic development, including IP protection. Indeed, in the Capitulo 3, several provisions for the protection of artisans' intellectual rights are outlined. The State's role in safeguarding artisanal creativity through different forms of IP protection is clearly stated: while the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Tourism is entrusted to issue a Constancia de Autoría Artesanal as legal proof of authorship, originality, and date of creation for artisanal pieces meeting the criteria set by the Decreto Legislativo N° 822, Ley sobre el Derecho de Autor (1996), INDECOPI (National Institute for the Defense of Free Competition and the Protection of Intellectual Property) is designed as the authority responsible for recognizing and protecting artisans' intellectual rights under the framework of copyright law and related regulations, including the oversight of collective marks and conferring designations of origin on artisanal works that comply with established legal requirements[112]. Although registration with INDECOPI enhances evidence and recognition and ensures international validity under the Berne Convention, copyright in Peru belongs to the actual person who creates a work and begins immediately upon creation. In addition to their economic, transferable, and life plus seventy-year patrimonial rights, authors also possess inalienable, non-economic moral rights. In order to ensure that artisanal production is protected as both a cultural and intellectual creation, the sale of a handmade piece only transfers its tangible form, not the rights.

6.2.2 Limits and possibilities of Peruvian IP legal framework

Within the Berne Convention, WIPO requires to recognise copyright in "works of applied art" (art. 2.1) meaning "the artistic contributions of the makers of knick-knacks, jewellery, gold and silverware, furniture, wallpaper, ornaments, clothing, etc… " and leaves to each state the definition of what qualifies as applied art as "national laws are allowed to choose the conditions of protection, and the differences are considerable" (WIPO, 1978: 16-17). In Peruvian law, the limits of copyright legislation in protecting TCE are connected to the divergencies of conception over what qualify for protection as much as explained in chapter 2 and

[112] Peru also refers to the Comunidad Andina international regimes in terms of IP protection, in particular the Régimen Común de Propiedad Industrial (Decisión 486 y sus modificatorias Decisiones 632 y 689) and the Régimen Común sobre Derecho de Autor y Derechos Conexos (Decisión 351).

3. Copyright does not safeguard the object itself but rather the artistic work embedded within it, meaning that most craft products fall under the category of applied art. However, not all of these items are eligible; only those that exhibit originality (defined as the mark of the artisan's character and imaginative vision) are. Thus, an item of jewellery, clothing, a basket, or a vase with unique patterns may be protected, but a utilitarian item alone is not. Multiple artists can produce unique works based on the same idea, each of them is acknowledged as unique, because copyright protects the tangible manifestation of ideas rather than the ideas themselves (see Vienrich Enriquez, 2022). However, the thresholds of authorship, originality, and time constraint make it difficult to incorporate traditional cultural expressions within Peru's copyright framework. These standards become particularly challenging when it comes to Andean textiles, which have their roots in a long-standing symbolic and visual tradition. Given that these textiles, their techniques and symbology, are based on collective knowledge that has been passed down through generations and is constantly being transformed by changing social, cultural, economic, and environmental circumstances, the present legal definition of originality result inapplicable. It is moreover difficult to identify singular nor plural personal authorship, as the majority of the pieces in museum collections lack information regard their creator.

These complexities became evident in 2017, when Peruvian luxury brand Kuna was accused of cultural appropriation by the Shipibo Konibo community of Cantagallo, Lima (see Fashion Network, 2017). Cultural appropriation is often defined as a practice typically marked by unequal power relations consisting in the use of cultural elements from one group by members of another, in which a dominant culture exploits traditions of marginalised people without consent or regard for their original meaning[113]. Indeed, the community publicly denounced the unauthorized use of its art by the famous luxury fashion brand Kuna which presented a collection of alpaca clothing based on *Kené*, a sacred geometric pattern that represent the Shipibo-Konibo's worldview. Kené had already been recognised as a key artistic manifestation that synthesizes the Shipibo-Konibo cosmology,

[113] The concept, aspects and practical consequences of cultural appropriation have been analysed under several lenses. See Ziff & Rao (eds) (1997) for an overview.

knowledge, and aesthetics when it was included in Peru's Cultural Heritage of the Nation on April 16, 2008, under Resolución Directoral RD N° 540/INC-2008. Two noteworthy outcomes resulted from the controversy: first, Kuna withdraw the collection and apologised, while starting a collaboration with the Shipibo community to produce new pieces with *Kené* motifs; and second, a law proposal was presented by Tania Pariona, a Quechua congresswoman, social worker, and well-known advocate for the rights of women, youth, and Indigenous peoples (2018). The goal of this proposed regulation was to create a comprehensive system that would safeguard, acknowledge, and promote Indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge and traditions. It confirmed these rights as inalienable and imprescriptible, while also establishing goals such as encouraging respect, assuring equitable benefit-sharing, demanding prior informed permission, and prohibiting patents based on such knowledge without formal recognition (art. 4). It also regulated access through license agreements to be registered with the Ministry of Culture, though without limiting traditional exchanges among Indigenous communities (art. 6). Despite its importance, the proposal was considered not applicable (MINCUL, 2019) and later archived in 2021, leaving a significant vacuum in the legal protection of these cultural forms[114].

The delicate interaction between the fashion industry and traditional cultural expression have more and more often recently sparked debates over the efficacy of legal frameworks to protect traditional cultural expressions. The rights and interests of the people from whom these patterns come are rarely acknowledged by contemporary designers, who often employ Indigenous motifs not only as aesthetic instruments but also as symbols of sustainability or authenticity. The fractures at this juncture are exemplified by the widely discussed Isabel Marant case in 2015. The Mixe community accused Marant of appropriating its traditional *huipil* design. This accusation led Marant to a court battle, however not with the tribe but with

[114] Currently, the only national law that protect Traditional collective Knowledge a such is Law 27811 (Peruvian Government, 2002), which establishes a protection framework that only applies to collective traditional knowledge about biological resources. In addition to fostering respect, protecting and sharing Indigenous collective knowledge, obtaining prior consent, and strengthening procedures for the fair distribution of benefits, the law calls for measures like INDECOPI-managed registries and prior informed consent procedures.

Antik Batik, another fashion firm that would be later accused of appropriation as well. The conflict between Indigenous interests and Western legal systems was highlighted when the French court finally acknowledged the design as belonging to the Mixe people, rejecting ownership claims to either firm (see Posłuszny, 2021; Calderón García, 2024). Despite this, the community did not receive any compensation. This episode is not isolated as fast-fashion brands like Mango, Intropia, Zara and Adidas[115] have used traditional Mexican patterns or models, while Nike advertised sportswear with motifs inspired by sacred Samoan tattoos, defying cultural norms. Moreover, Tory Burch and Dior's reimagining of Romanian traditional clothing, or even Valentino's pre-fall 2025 collection[116] and Gucci headwear[117], demonstrated that not either haute couture was able to resist the appeal of Indigenous aesthetics. In certain cases, Indigenous communities have managed to take advantage of current regulations such as the Indian Arts and Crafts Act in the case of the Navajo Nation against Urban Outfitters, which sold clothing and accessories with traditional designs under the "Navajo" label without permission (see Posłuszny, 2021: 121-122; Berganini, 2021; Pozzo, 2020; Vézina, 2019). The frequent occurrence of such episodes shows that cultural appropriation in fashion substantially depends on a power imbalance and thus raises issues beyond those of IP, as it damages communities' ties to their heritage, alters social norms while favouring stereotypes, and threatens artisans' livelihoods by filling markets with imitations (Vézina, 2019). When combined, these results reveal a more serious structural conflict between Indigenous TCE and a global fashion industry while legal and business structures are still insufficient to protect them. Considering IP measures inefficacy, it has been emphasized that awareness campaigns, support to Indigenous designers, collaborative projects could be as relevant (see Varagur, 2015; Brown & Vacca, 2022; Vézina, 2019, Rocha Valverde, 2024) as private governance mechanisms and internal ethical standards, such as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) norms, could be crucial if they include environmental obligations as much as social and cultural sustainability in addition to intellectual property tools (Pozzo, 2020).

[115] See Sánchez, 2025.
[116] See Factora, 2024.
[117] See Kaur, 2019.

6.3 Protecting Tri-Dimensional Textiles Through Visual Iconography

The underlying issue in the media storms in which various Indigenous communities asserted their cultural property rights over artistic productions, particularly specific patterns and aesthetic combinations, to prevent their illegal appropriation has consistently been one of asymmetrical power relations. These factors not only silenced the legitimate owners of these TCEs, whose consent was seldom requested, but they also prevented them from receiving moral credit for their works and, more importantly, from generating a profit off of them. This type of appropriative dynamics can be observed in the aesthetics and patterns of Andean textiles as well (see below) and this phenomenon is exacerbated by the gradual erosion of TK in relation to these symbols. Despite a variety of recovery efforts that implicitly acknowledged the cultural and communication power contained in these visual languages, from recording campaigns[118], to educational programs and weaving centres, iconography seems to have been the most threatened component of Andean textile TK. Yanett, who is working on her dissertation on Pitumarca iconography, considers this to be one of the most irreversible losses. Despite ongoing efforts to preserve it, she believes that the symbolic repertoire associated to Andean textiles has progressively diminished its identitarian essence and cannot be fully restored. For instance, David and Fidel have resorted to specialist books as learning resources after realizing that, although iconography had historical value when tied to weaving techniques, it no longer has the same resonance in modern practice. Although it is impossible to separate the identitarian significance of iconography from specific techniques and colours, my interviews with weavers exposed significant gaps: even within the same group, individuals gave different and sometimes contradictory interpretations of the same patterns, often providing meanings they were no longer able to explain or highlighting the renegotiations of meaning from generation to generation. A particularly revealing example is that of the motif known as "*sirena*" (mermaid). During one of the Saturday meetings of the group Munay Tiqlla in Pitumarca, I was having a conversation with the youngest and

[118] The Puno-Cusco Corridor Project, which began in the early 2000s as part of larger measures to alleviate rural poverty, featured careful cataloguing of textile iconography.

oldest weavers altogether and I inquired about some of the symbols woven into the *q'epina* they had provided to keep me from sitting directly on the ground. A lively conversation arose around this specific design they called *sirena* which was particularly interesting for me considering the motif's complete lack of similarity to the traditional representation of a mermaid. According to the younger weavers, *sirena* refers to the harp, which is associated with a local tale about singer and harpist Máximo Apaza, who rose to regional popularity in the 1970s, winning honours in Cusco before becoming nationally famous. According to legend, the reason for his success was that he offered a siren his soul in return for his fame. At this point, the elder women intervened, offering a different interpretation. The term *sirena* did not conjure the mythical creature familiar to Western mythology; rather, it was derived from the word "*serenar*", which refers to the practice of leaving one's instrument in places that are considered sacred, locations that can be recognized only by those who can read coca leaves, and where spirits reside and may confer upon a musician the ability to play well[119]. Through this conversation, the sign became clear as a multi-layered and disputed space where generations of people debate meanings through knowledge loss and reshaped narratives[120].

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[119] I believe that the interpretation given by Castañeda Toledo (2020: 484-487) that associates the symbol *arpa/harpa* with the landscape derive from a confusion with a different design which was similar but, according to other local interlocutors, was associated to the dead. However, it must be noted that Silverman (1999: 817) describe a similar symbol called *organo*, the musical instrument.

[120] Sirena figurative representations, as symbols of temptation within Christianity, have been depicted extensively in Andean architecture, but also in other artistic forms, since the viceroyalty including tapestry (Gjurinovic Canevaro, 1999: 684-686), ceramic and metal ornaments (Stastny, 1981). In most cases, mermaids were represented while playing a guitar.

Figure 34: An unkuña from Accha Alta. In the circle the symbol "sirena"

Considering this situation of impending loss, or renegotiation when spaces of intergeneration knowledge exchange about textiles are still available, and recognising the unanimous agreement over of textiles' cultural centrality within Andean societies, as well as the historical, symbolic, and identitarian significance attributed to their iconography served as the starting point for this project. The presence of a -even if small- number of Andean textiles in MUDEC's collections reinforced the significance of this research. This posed the essential question of what role museums that held Andean textile collections should play in safeguarding this symbolic knowledge, given that most pre-mass tourist textiles, such as those at MUDEC, have been displaced from their original context and are currently stored outside their countries of origin.

As museums have been universally recognised as institution with political authority and social relevance within the sphere of knowledge formation, the greater emphasis on people rather than artifacts that has characterised the development of the post-museum has strengthened these institutions' role in addressing Indigenous rights and colonial legacies. Minority groups are increasingly generally acknowledged as requiring equitable involvement in curatorial and research processes, creating more ethical practices toward source communities, favouring reciprocity and rejecting extractivism. With an emphasis

on topics like cultural property, copyright, repatriation, and the stewardship of sensitive materials, museums of World Cultures have therefore been involved in critical discussions about how to research and showcase Indigenous cultures (see chapter 1). Since many collections were put together in situations of power imbalance, this research assumes that cultural institutions such as museums, libraries, and archives, play a crucial role in the debate about Indigenous TK and intellectual property. In theory, source communities should be the owners of their TCEs, however these were commonly recorded and are currently controlled by non-Indigenous agents who have overseen their documentation, exhibition, and preservation. Museums, as both IP rights holders and users, always struggle to strike a balance between the rights of creators and communities and the fulfilment of their mission (see chapter 3). With these premises, the museum staff felt it was necessary to compel an ethical debate that would place source communities at the centre and affirm their legitimate authority and control over their TCE, given the numerous occasions the museum draws on its collections, their imagery, or the figurative and decorative elements inscribed upon them, whether in exhibitions, catalogues, or social media outreach. Beyond material preservation, the task is to address designs that were formerly passed through lived collective knowledge but are now at risk of being reduced to simple aesthetic tools to appropriate.

Adopting a holistic perspective provides a useful way to study Andean textile collections in all their complexity (see chapter 1). This approach would allow to look at TCE within both their historical and contemporary contexts, considering the local epistemologies that shaped them as well as the global forces that led to their commodification and later transfer into museums. It is crucial to first comprehend how the communities themselves perceive Andean textile TK in order to implement safeguard measures that accurately represent their needs. This type of work with TCE in collections fosters greater communication with source communities and allows for fresh interpretations, resulting in a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of cultural heritage.

6.3.1 Different Perceptions over Cultural Appropriation

In order to better understand how cultural property rights and cultural appropriation are perceived locally, it is useful to go back to the fashion world.

Even though there have been commendable cases of collaboration between fashion designers and Indigenous communities even in Peru, as with Vivienne Westwood's partnership with Cool Earth[121] and the Asháninka of the Amazon or as the famous Peruvian designer Meche Correa who has been developing sustainable collaborations with local weavers[122], the issue of cultural property rights resurfaced in 2024, once again centred on Shipibo-Konibo traditional cultural expressions (Tovar & Pulido, 2024). The fashion industry seems to have been paying a lot of attention to Amazonian cultural manifestations, but its interaction with Andean textiles has taken a different turn. When John Galliano mixed the Andean chullo with Mohawk crests in 2002 (Mower, 2002) or Dior's 2005 Fall Couture collection included Central Andean elements (Mower, 2005), garments was completely decontextualized and created without any apparent consultation of local population. However, in contrast to the Amazonian examples, neither Andean communities nor the Peruvian government, which often uses Andean traditional imagery in its Marca Perú campaigns internationally (see chapter 5), publicly criticized these appropriations. A significative example is the case of Naeem Khan, who visited Cusco after being invited by PROMPERÚ as the main guest at Lima Fashion Week. He then presented a collection at New York Fashion Week that was inspired by the textile traditions of the city and featured its colourful embroidery, *llikllas*, and hats (Andina, 2017; Bobb, 2018). This initiative was part of Peru's larger diplomatic effort to promote culture, demonstrates how the state actively fosters the circulation of Andean heritage across international fashion circuits. At the same time, Andean textile aesthetics have permeated Peruvian national iconography so thoroughly, that even famous Peruvian fashion brands have used this symbolism within their business. *Ponchos* and shawls that distinctly resemble the iconographies and chromatic patterns of Cusco's indigenous weavings are widely marketed by companies like Sol Alpaca[123] and

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[121] See https://www.coolearth.org/news/rainforest-inspires-vivienne-westwood-show/ and https://www.viviennewestwood.com/en/sustainability/activism/cool-earth/ (accessed on September 30th, 2025)
[122] See https://www.mechecorrea.com/ (accessed on September 30th, 2025)
[123] See e.g. https://www.solalpaca.com/collections/women-fall-winter-22-23/products/new-falling-poncho and https://web.archive.org/web/20221202124952/https:/www.solalpaca.com/collections/women-fall-winter-22-23/products/mountains-cape (accessed on September 30th, 2025)

Kuna that produce and sell luxury alpaca garments, both in physical stores and online. At the same time, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, the market is also flooded with cheap copies also coming from China. These examples clearly show not only a different perspective but also a management of Andean TCE that is stark contrast to the disputed arena of Amazonian creativity.

This discrepancy brings to mind two coverging comments I received in two very different contexts: the first one by Nilda Callañaupa at the CTTC in Cusco, who clearly stated that “weavers aren’t authors, but rather heirs”; the second at the MALI, where traditional cultural expressions from the Andean highlands are more frequently cast as "tradition" ("craft" or "heritage") and its authors perceived as more distant, thus its aesthetic results to be more easily appropriable, especially since they have been made into symbols of Peruvian shared cultural image. On the other hand, Amazonian cultural production, currently popular in international art circles, is frequently more readily framed as authored "art". This discrepancy in modern perception of TCE might also reflects the history of Peruvian cultural politics. Amazonian designs have maintained a strong connection to specific group identities, resulting in increasing awareness of potential misappropriation issues and explicit claims to collective ownership. In contrast, Andean motifs are widely used as national symbols and are seamlessly incorporated into state branding and became instrumental for the Marca Perú internationally. The origins of this trend are not only related to the state's early appropriative use of Andean TCEs as part of its global marketing strategies within the tourism industry, but can be traced back to indigenismo's emphasis on Andean Indigenous culture in the reconstruction of Peruvian identity as well. The Centro Qosqo sponsored a beauty contest for Indigenous women in 1957, probably inspired by the recent win of a *limeña* as Miss Universe. As De la Cadena (2004: 177-178) recounts, the competition was held as "the basis for an ethnological study of biotypological character, of the inhabitant of the southern Peruvian sierra; to serve as a folkloric study of typical attire; to be another tourist attraction during Cuzco's evocative week". The event was held during the *Semana del Cusco* which materialised the efforts that *Cuzqueñismo* had carried out since the early 20th century to fuelled regional, national, and Pan-American identity through artistic and folkloric production

(Mendoza, 2006: 186). As reported by Santisteban-Delgado (2022: 8, 111, 137-138), this kind of beauty contest where traditional clothing was central, continued to be organised in the region and occasionally gained relevance nationally. In particular, Isabel Mamani, who won in 1957 during the celebrations of the *Semana del Campesino Aborigen* in Tinta (Canchis, Cusco) was invited in Lima and interviewed for the high-end magazine Caretas, officially introducing the traditional clothing of Cusco within the fashion circles, and most important, imaginary of Limeña elites (ibid.). Closely tied to indigenous beauty contests and the rise of a distinctly *Cusqueñista* regional identity, the "*línea cuzqueña*" emerged in the 1940s-1950s, conceived by teachers and students at the Instituto Industrial Femenino N° 18 which was dedicated to developing a "clothing industry oriented toward tourism and export" (Vidal de Milla, 2000: 143 in Santisteban-Delgado, 2022: 112). According to Vidal de Milla (2000 in Santisteban-Delgado, 2022: 112-113), the "*línea cuzqueña*" was an artistic movement that seek to "capture the aesthetic essence of Peru's ancient cultures and of our people's art in order to update and disseminate it worldwide". By producing contemporary, practical clothing inspired by Andean heritage and incorporating influence from pre-Columbian and colonial art as well as from modern textile traditions and indigenous clothing, it aimed at presenting an "authentic art of Cuzco" to a global audience. This would have led to the evolution of an "ethnic fashion" trend using Andean aesthetics and readapting Andean garments to contemporary taste. A famous example is Olga Zaferson, a famous Peruvian fashion designer who developed ethical fashion projects and also collaborated with anthropologists on the field (see chapter 5). The fact that Andean aesthetic had thus been absorbed into high-end fashion for a few decades, has clearly influenced the perception of its availability for a marked that did not consider local needs. At the same time, Andean textiles and their aesthetics had for long been the target of state-led appropriation, used to project a national image abroad, often at the expense of the very communities whose cultural identities relied on these expressions (see chapter 5). The outcome has been a neoliberal cultural strategy that turns Andean textile designs into a resource for national and commercial exploitation by reshaping "symbolic references and social bonds" through the Marca Perú (Cánepa Koch, 2018). The weavers who themselves create the TCE are often marginalized in

this process, and their cultural and economic agency is limited to the periphery of the national tourism and cultural economy. What is valued as national heritage in the official discourse and exploited in fashion circuits frequently leaves its bearers with less control over its value and its use for subsistence.

Figure 35: A model wearing an Andean chumpi *refashioned by Olga Zaferson, on the right. @ Photo courtesy of Olga Zaferson*

During my fieldwork in the Cusco region, conducted not only in the city itself but also across a range of villages, some relatively accessible and others in a far more remote position, I consistently observed an interesting convergence of opinions among the weavers I spoke with. In the context already described in chapter 5, where the majority of them live in extreme poverty, relying mostly on subsistence farming with weaving as their sole source of monetary income (usually through a network of middlemen who keep a sizable portion of the profits), there was little

concern regarding the dissemination of locally specific textiles iconography outside of their communities. There was often a certain frustration when people from one community copied the designs of another; however, I believe that this feeling was more closely due to with worries about market competition rather than cultural identity concerns. The prospect of a tourist wearing a garment with local symbols, on the other hand, was not met with defensiveness; in fact, it was frequently presented as a source of pride, a concrete expression of admiration for the community's culture and the weavers' skills or entrepreneurship. The weavers I spoke with made it clear that they do not strictly distinguish between designs they weave for their own textiles and those made for the trade as no patterns are considered symbolically sacred or reserved solely for the community. Rather, this perspective reflects a pragmatic dynamic: whatever is woven is led by market tastes and demands, even if this means selective modification or absorption of motifs from other areas or cultural traditions[124].

However, this practical openness needs to be interpreted in light of the structural limitations of the modern tourism industry. In order to maintain unrealistically low prices, bargaining is not only accepted but actively encouraged, even in guidebooks for tourists. To be really sustainable, weaving pricing would have to reflect the substantial effort, time, and expertise required, putting the products beyond of reach for most purchasers in a saturated market dominated by desire for compact, portable, and frequently mass-produced commodities. In this environment, which is further influenced by increased mobility, communication, and interaction among communities once isolated, the weaver must adjust their product to meet external demands in order to thrive. Yet, lacking access to training and equitable forms of market integration, artisans remain vulnerable to exploitation.

During a long, intense and very illuminating conversation we had in her home, above her and Walter Rodriguez's shop, where their collection was also kept, Rosie Barnes recounted to me her 20-years' experience in Cusco collaborating with weavers in the region. She apologised to me various time about her "pessimistic

[124] See Lyon (2024) for an alternative analysis of the power dynamics that influence the perception of cultural appropriation in Cusco.

take" on the future of weavers who try and make a living of their textiles, explaining all the difficulties she has faced trying to create a sustainable and ethical business. In particular, she highlighted the complexities of integrating local and rural ways of living, and the neoliberal world. I first-handedly experienced the gap between the expectations of weavers for their products to sell and the realistic demands of the market when I was in Lares (Calca province), a small village at around 3,200 metres above sea level. A couple of hours' drive from Calca by colectivo, I travelled there a few times in August. Thanks to *the División de Turismo y Artesanía* within the municipality, I was introduced to the local weaving association, Adal, during one of their monthly meetings. There, as well as providing *refresco* for everyone, I made an agreement with the group leaders whereby a few women agreed to talk to me on the condition that I take some pictures of their products and send them to my contacts in Lima to try and arrange a deal for them. I took over a hundred photos of most of the garments they were exhibiting in their local shop, which was close to the natural thermal baths that attracted a few tourists to the village. Later on, I sent the pictures to a couple of contacts I had at high-end craft shops in Lima, but unfortunately they were not interested in these kinds of textiles, considered not appealing for their buyers, nor "original" enough.

6.3.2 Andean epistemologies and Western cultural rights in museums

As pointed out by Kreps (2015: 10), Western museology has historically relied on a single epistemological framework to manage the collecting and exhibiting of non-Western material culture. Stripping objects from their original contexts of meaning and use, they were relocated within the Western knowledge system, and classified to fit Western categories of science, art, history, and heritage. Just like it happened to Andean textiles perceived of "museum value" and incorporated to collections both in Peru and abroad, they were either reinterpreted as ethnographic specimens, embodying knowledge about other civilizations, or as artworks, appreciated for their artistic beauty or technical mastery. In both situations, they were separated from their multisensory qualities to be reduced to visual symbols (ibid.). "In Western museum settings, artifacts are pre-eminently objects for the eye" to the point where if an object offers "nothing to look at" it is effectively

condemned to invisibility (Classen & Howes, 2006: 200). Despite the complexities of their tactile, auditory, or olfactory features, objects with less immediate visual impact are normally kept in the storage, whereas those that captivate the eye are frequently shown in exhibitions. Even those items that make it to the display case are so clearly reframed as exclusively visual elements that their other sensory components totally pass unperceived. Western museum, since their opening to the public, have put items under the dominance of sight, inhibiting their multisensory richness and, as a consequence, reducing them to "visual signs" (ibid.). However, this visual condition is not inherited in non-Western objects; rather, an artifact's visual dimension is usually only one facet of its sensory relevance, and frequently not the most important one.

Unquestionably, Andean textiles have a strong visual component. Throughout my research, I noticed that showing weavers pictures of the textiles kept at MUDEC was the best approach for initiating a conversation with them, who were frequently hesitant and at first not inclined to talk to me. Children in these societies learn by observation from an early age (Franquemont & al., 1992; Callañaupa, 2007: 64-65). Visual learning is a crucial mode of transmission for weavers even in adulthood as many people continue to preserve their grandparents' textiles. While these pieces have a practical side as they serve as economic backup to rely upon in times of need, Alipio once stated that he would never sell his family heirlooms because they represent cultural and emotional legacies. Walter Rodriguez explained that "*they still keep at least one textile from their grandparents, something of great value to them, and above all, so they can copy the design by looking at the old weavings of their elders*". In the face of tourism's increasing impact and the emergence of new textile aesthetic, these ancestor pieces are fundamental for weavers to preserve designs that may otherwise disappear. Moreover, in one occasion, a Pitumarca resident and independent weaver called Antonia, asked me to leave her a picture of one of the textiles I had shown her (PAM 01441), which is also from Pitumarca, as she had forgotten how to weave it and wanted to use the picture as a guide for reproducing its designs. However, weaving is a visual activity as much as it is haptic and kinetic (Franquemont & Franquemont, 2004: 209). When Ruth attempted to teach me how to weave a

small, double-sided ornamental band, she highlighted the need of carefully selecting the thread, not just in terms of material or colour, but also in terms of thickness. For her, touch became an essential guide during weaving because of the sensory input provided by the fibre which, selected in different thicknesses, enabled the fingers to "read" and follow the emerging design. “Not only is it supreme among the organs of touch, the hand can also tell the stories of the world in its gestures and in the written or drawn traces they yield, or in the manipulation of threads as in weaving, lacemaking and embroidery” (Ingold, 2013: 112-115), her hand becomes an extension of her brain through which the material is solicited which, in turn, guide the weaver toward the end. Unfortunately, once Anden textiles enter a museum collection, their tactile dimension is almost totally obliterated. The only people allowed to handle objects, touch, smell, and interact with their material presence, are curators and trained museum employees, frequently only wearing gloves. Gloves and glass cases, as mediating tools, highlight how materiality is not only valued but is also secured and gatekept from the general public. This conservation mindset is typical within the framework of the AHD on which museums are fundamentally based on (see chapter 3). An object's tangible nature is essential to what makes it authentic, yet its presence is reduced to something that can only be gazed at.

Figure 36: During an interview with Antonia, Pitumarca

Elvira Espejo Ayca has played a crucial role in revealing the ontological framework that generates Andean textiles and, in fact, all kinds of Andean arts. In her work *Yanak Uywaña* (2022) Espejo challenges the epistemic divisions enforced by Western education, including that between reason and sensibility, art and science, subject and object, society and nature, by drawing on her background as an academically trained artist as well as a community-born and raised Indigenous woman. Against Western conventional notions, she believes that Andean communities have their unique epistemology, in which intellect and emotion are inextricably linked. Espejo presents the idea of *crianza mutua* (mutual nurturing, *auyway* in Quechua), to explain this. In contrast to Western ideas of domestication or domination over nature, the concept of *Yanak uywaña* enteils the idea that humans are not superior to anything that surrounds them, and refers to the reciprocal care between things, beings, the environment, and material culture, as items are viewed as living creatures rather than as inanimate objects. For example, a textile is viewed as a participant in care relationships, providing protection but also necessitating maintenance and care. According to Espejo, creative production results from a dialogic process of coexistence based on an ethic of reciprocity that intertwines the worlds of humans and non-humans in ongoing

cycles of renewal and nurture (ibid.: 5-9). Crianza Mutua also entails the mutual cultivation of reason and emotion, what Espejo refers to as sentipensar, or "feeling-thinking".[125] Andean philosophy views cognition as an interconnected process in which thinking and feeling are intertwined, in contrast to the Western epistemological approach, which has divided and hierarchized reason and sensibility since the Enlightenment. Beyond the mind, thought permeates the body, the environment, and the instruments of creation, arising from intergenerational and material-human networks of interaction. Therefore, rather from being an individual act of mastery, artistic production is the result of a dynamic shared process of caring and co-creation (ibid.: 9-11). In Andean communities, embodied cognition is defined as the ability to reason through the sensitivity of the body. Practical mastery in crafts such as weaving or ceramics is developed through tactile input, with the hands and fingertips serving as primary instruments of comprehension, attuned to the texture of fibres, and sensory impressions memorized in both body and mind. According to Espejo, a sort of "magnetic field" forms between the raw material and the body that underpins the very act of creation (ibid: 11-14)[126]. This Andean ontological approach emphasizes the difficulties of establishing frameworks that divide tangible and intangible heritage, or material culture and traditional knowledge (see chapter 2). It also highlights the limitations of using Western ideas of authorship, which are essential to enforcing IP rights, in these epistemologies (see chapters 2 and 3). Lastly, it places the visual element, which Western knowledge systems emphasize, into a more physical and relational understanding of Andean textile production.

This ontological view on artistic creations in the Andes goes in opposition with the knowledge framework of Wester museums' perception over the Andean textiles in their collections. Deeply influenced by Western ontologies, museums focus on visual symbols raises the urgent question of how museums can handle Indigenous iconographic representations in their institutional practices. Such concern is entirely legitimate in view of the significant power disparities that exist between

[125] The concept of *sentipensar*, or *corazonar*, had been introduced and analysed in the context of social sciences by de Sousa Santos and others (see de Sousa Santos, 2018: 97-102)
[126] Clearly aware of Ingold descriptions of the process of making as the practitioners "intervening in the fields of force and currents of materials" (2010: 92) and describe this practice as "textility of making".

museums and the source or reference communities whose cultural works they preserve. It is equally evident, however, that the perception of this issue is influenced by a certain view on objects, in this case Andean textiles, one that emphasizes their visual features as the main dimension of cultural value, while their cultural relevance is embedded in a more complex and dynamic web of TK. This is not to suggest that Andean textile iconography's visual component is unimportant or unrelated to identity matters. On the contrary, in several communities at least, these designs are an integral part of the visual landscape of everyday life. I saw how these patterns go far beyond the woven fabric in Checacupe and, to a lesser extent, Pitumarca, appearing in the towns' very architecture, including the paving stones, public building walls, and even trash cans, all of which show patterns that are clearly influenced by traditional textiles. In this way, motifs that originate on the loom are transferred into public space, becoming visible symbols of communal identity and confirming their symbolic power well beyond textiles, also demonstrating their collective relevance.

Figure 37: Textile symbols appearing in Checacupe's streets and Pitumarca's trash bins

Despite the difficulty of discussing complex issues like cultural ownership, intellectual property and cultural appropriation, every weaver I spoke with expressed great pride at the prospect of a traditional textile from their village being displayed in a distant place, one whose name they often had never heard. When Paulina from Choquecancha recognised that one of the textiles from MUDEC

(PAM 01419) had been made by a family member who passed away and I asked her how she would feel knowing the museum could exhibit it, she exclaimed "*Oh, I would cry!*" in pride and agreed that recognising the creator's name would be fair as "*even though she died, her textile stays*". When I prospected the possibility that, by displaying the *manta*, someone could copy its designs, she was upset in the beginning, then recognised "*it is impossible someone from abroad could copy our designs*". This is also due to the fact that museum usually display textiles as bidimensional artefacts, only showing one side, and thus making it impossible to perfectly understand their tri-dimensional technique (see Arnols & Espejo Ayca, 2013). What was most important to my interlocutors was that the textile's origin be clearly disclosed so that the world might appreciate the beauty of their cultural expressions and the sophistication of their weaving technique. Essentially, the main expectations placed on museums were moral rather than material or financial: that the community be given credit, that collective (or even personal, when possible) authorship be recognized and upheld. Essentially, the acknowledgment of the creator consist of what is commonly referred to as the essential moral right of attribution (see chapter 3). When I spoke with David about this same topic, however, the conversation took on a more layered tone: "*These iconographies correspond to Peru, especially to Cuzco, where the Inca culture has most developed. […] I, as an artisan, [owner] at the Qaytu workshop school, from the Community of Parubamba in Paucartambo, as a Peruvian, as a Cuzqueño, what I can tell you is that we are happy that our iconography and our textiles are known in the world, that they can be promoted, that people can see them. That tourists and people come to know us, to see our textiles and acquire them, because there are many people who weave and, through these textiles, educate their children, improve their quality of life, their houses, etc. Right? So that was what we, I as an artisan, what I can tell you, right? For us, the iconographies represent part of our life. We feel and love the things we make. All artisans put their passion and their love; each artisan who weaves a garment does so with care. So, in any case, I, as an artisan, or all artisans would like to be respected because [our work] is part of our feelings, our emotions in our lives. Right? So, [I don't like] that it can be distorted or misinterpreted or, I don't know, misused. No, I would not like to see an iconography from here, for example, printed on a bag*

or a cup and then thrown in the trash, right? Then my iconography would be thrown in the trash. Imagine I go to Europe and find my iconographies on a cup in the trash. Because clearly, these iconographies connect me to my origins, to my roots, to my culture, to my country, to my land. So, of course, I would feel bad, for example, if they were printed on boxes that are thrown away, or on something inappropriate. I would always like it to be respected because it is part of my culture, part of my roots. I would always like it to be exhibited in good places, like the textiles in the Museum, and the same goes for the figures: to be in things and in appropriate places, right? So that they do not damage my emotions, my roots, my culture." David affirmed once again the moral right of attribution, namely for the communities to be identified as the creator of a piece, but he also emphasized not only the desire to promote one's culture overseas but also the museum's potential as a venue to display Indigenous creativity and possibly draw tourists to the area. In addition, he goes beyond and asserts the moral right to integrity, which is especially important when discussing traditional cultural expressions (TCEs) because it shields them from manipulation, denigration, or distortion that might modift their cultural significance. He did, in fact, object to any misuse or presentations that may compromise the honour, dignity, or reputation of the community or the work itself.

6.4 What can MUDEC do to preserve TCEs? A theoretical and fieldwork informed analysis

Based on the idea that a museum operates in the public interest and for the benefit of society, the increasing self-reflexivity in museums since the early 1970s has gradually changed how museum ethics is debated. Once the idea that museum practices weren't neutral but rather informed by the cultural, historical, institutional, and political contexts of people who make them, museums started to be held accountable for their practices. These principles were made clear during the Institute of Museum Ethics' first conference, Defining Museum Ethics (2008), which brought together theorists and museum professionals to talk about social responsibility, accountability, and transparency within museology's ethical framework (Meijer-van Mensch, 2013). This commitment in social justice had emerged from an acknowledgment of enduring colonial patterns and gradually

expanded to encompass the active inclusion of Indigenous communities within the ethical discourse (see Galla, 1997). Institutional frameworks like the International Council of Museums' Code of Ethics for Museums (2004) further highlight the recognition of stakeholder's essentiality to the ethical shifting of (post-) museums, especially source communities. The updated code (2004) expanded the considered Heritage Community as it clearly emphasizes the involvement of multiple perspectives and communities' interests, in contrast to the 1986 version that prioritized cooperation between museums and between museums and governmental organizations (ibid: 45). Article 6 is dedicated to fostering cooperation between museums and source communities (art. 6.1), to managing return and restitution of cultural property to source communities (6.2; 6.3), to promoting informed and mutual consent and condemning exploitation of contemporary communities (art. 6.5) and to respecting the wishes of the community in terms of collection use (6.7). In a similar vein, Article 4.3 calls for respect toward human remains and culturally sensitive materials, urging museums to act with consideration for "the interests and beliefs of members of the community, ethnic or religious groups from whom the objects originated". Essentially, once the museum has come to be reimagined as a "contact zone" (Clifford 1997), becoming a dynamic arena of encounter, negotiation, and exchange among diverse participants, ethics discourses also became inclusive of those perspectives.

Realising they could apply any remaining authority from their institutional legacy as a tool to promote ethical standards, museums have increasingly come to be understood as moral agents, namely institutions capable of mobilizing their inherited authority to uphold ethical responsibility and to act as catalysts for the promotion of human rights, social inclusion, and collective well-being. In the context of museums with diverse non-Western collections, any ethical discussion, like the one the MUDEC seeks to foster, must be based on what Janet Marstine refers to as contingency (2011: 8-10; 2013). Meaning, recognizing the interdependent and conditional nature of museum ethics as dependant on social, political, technical, and economic circumstances. In this sense, ethics is a live practice that is flexible and adaptable in response to the changing environment in

which the museum works, rather than a set of fixed rules. This contingent ethics implies experimental kinds of involvement that promote shared authority as well as discursive interaction with stakeholders. According to this model, museum staff members are stewards rather than gatekeepers, dealing with collective well-being (ibid.). Museums, particularly those housing diverse and composed collections such as the MUDEC, possess the ethical imperative to foster transparent and morally responsible communication with a diverse array of stakeholders, who may possess divergent expectations regarding the management of their TCE. As Aravecchia also highlighted during our interview, the Ufficio Reti has widely faced this complexity, characterised by a mosaic of different perceptions of different communities in relation to their heritage and thus different practices of “indigenous curation” (see chapter 3 and 4). In this context, sharing authority means that the museum may function as a facilitator of discourse about what is most important to communities. Applying these conceptions within the space of this research, the Andean textiles in the MUDEC collection have served as symbolic spaces for interaction or "contact zones" (Peers & Brown 2003, 5). They served as points of proximity that not only foster relationships between source communities and the museum but also provide an opportunity for these communities to express their opinions about not just the presence of such textiles in the collection but, more importantly, how they should be handled and interpreted, thereby informing themselves the ethical standards for collection management the museum should apply.

The ethical suggestion arising from this research must take into account two important factors. This PhD, on the one hand, is an integral part of MUDEC's ongoing self-reflection process regarding the acknowledgement of its own political background, the colonial patterns ingrained in its institutional past, and the inherently Western knowledge systems that serve as the basis for how it operates. On the other hand, the outcomes of the fieldwork in the chosen case study demonstrate a multi-situated ontological complexity whereby Western and Andean epistemologies have long been entangled. The epistemological contradiction inherent in the underlying ontological mismatch between Andean understandings of textiles and the museological frameworks that strive to conserve

and explain them are unavoidably exposed. Beyond the fundamentally Western knowledge systems that shape museum display and curatorial practices, concepts such as authorship, cultural property, and the distinction between tangible and intangible heritage are incompatible with the Andean worldview, which regards textiles as living participants in social and spiritual relations rather than inert cultural objects. Yet, a strictly Andean ontology no longer suffices to describe the contemporary condition of Andean textiles. Even in their native Cusco, textiles have frequently been uprooted from their traditional epistemic contexts. Currently, their existence as repositories of TK coexists and overlaps with complex dynamics entailing the pressures of neoliberal economics, global mobility, and
their institutional conversion in museological forms of art or cultural artifacts, or even their interpretation as bearer of ICH. To effectively contribute to the progress of "cultural equity" (Besterman, 2011; 2014; see chapter 3), this research, which developed in the ethnographic field to then discuss the results in the intersection of museums studies, intangible heritage, and intellectual property, has to interact with rather than erase this complexity. A radically decolonial approach, which calls for the full dismissal of Eurocentric epistemologies and the privileging of Indigenous ways of knowing, risks creating an essentialized picture of Andean contemporary communities, instead of recognizing their dynamic negotiation with and transformation by means of the global and Western systems in which they are now deeply entangled. Such an approach would undermine these communities' agency by confining their current epistemologies into static and isolated cultural systems (see chapter 1).

However, advancing cultural equity through a contingent ethical framework requires more than the acknowledgment of the historical power asymmetries embedded within museum collections. While museums have legal ownership of artifacts, source communities have legitimate moral claims to them, therefore institutions must adhere to a standard of ethical accountability based on persistent, dialogical engagement. This calls for an effort to balance the necessary decentring of the institution's epistemic monopoly while still operating in Western institutions frameworks (see chapter 1), in this case with public fundings and within a specific mission. I thus found myself assuming the position

of mediator in Latours' term (2005: 37-42), between the parties associated with the MUDEC as covered in Chapter 4 and the broader Andean framework related to textiles studied in the previous chapter. As the MUDEC's senior curator, Carolina Orsini, noted during our interview, mediation is unavoidable for the museum; it also became a requirement for the realisation of this study.

6.4.1 Managing knowledge within MUDEC's cataloguing system

As noted in chapter 1, museums' status as knowledge institutions, as well as the political and moral implications related to this function, has been historically crucial to their social mission. It is equally clear that museums have evolved into "storehouses of knowledge as well as storehouses of objects" (Cannon-Brookes 1984: 116) with their authority rooted in the conviction that they conserve for society established collections of information made up of material objects and their documentation. Because of this focus on the knowledge and even though the significance of objects in these processes cannot be denied, materiality becomes less valuable than the cultural meanings that are built on top of it and the narratives that it may be used to construct. In short, the museum object becomes a component of an "object-information package", which is a collection of interrelated parts whose main significance is its use as a tool for institutional practices of political meaning-making, social engagement, and education (Dudley, 2010: 3-5). If things fail to convey narratives by themselves, they only do so when they are embedded in discursive frameworks that make them legible. To be understood (and then communicated) as more than a collection of elements, they must thus be "textualized" that is, accompanied by written explanation through for example labels, guides, and catalogues (Beckenridge 1989: 205). But rather than beginning in exhibitions, this textualization of things begins in databases, where all the information collected is kept and used to further develop those narratives.

There are now about 9,000 items in the MUDEC, of which about 8,000 have been catalogued thus far. When a number of specialists were tasked with cataloguing the ethnographic collections that would become part of the new institution at the museum's opening, the decision was made to use the *Opera d'Arte* form rather than one designed for demo-ethno-anthropological materials. This decision was influenced by the wide range of materials and categories of items encountered in

an ethnographic collection like MUDEC's, as well as the complex nature of the cataloguing system itself and the specificity of many of its entries. According to museum staff who were involved in making this decision, the *Opera d'Arte* form, although requiring certain adjustments and interpretive flexibility, allowed for the inclusion of the entire collection and the definition of all those characteristics deemed essential at the curatorial and conservation levels for the identification of each object.

Considering that MUDEC's textiles are the starting point of this whole research, during my fieldwork, I never left without a folder where I organised various copies of these pieces' pictures. This included an high-definition copy on photographic paper, a few high-resolution prints on normal copy paper (to give away in case anyone was interested), and a few images of details shots that I made while still in Italy. As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, the images were used to stimulate conversation and co-create knowledge (see Harper, 2002; Pink, 2013). However, this process was also crucial for guiding my fieldwork by helping me to identify provenience and iconography.

The Regione Lombardia SIRBeC cataloguing system now incorporates the data I gathered, which came primarily from fieldwork and discussions with a diverse range of people involved in the Andean textile industry, from collectors and scholars to merchants and weavers themselves, but also from bibliographic research conducted in Lima and Italy. This part of my fieldwork falls under Clifford's observation that ethnography can be understood as a "form of culture collecting" (1988:230-231). Diverse information is chosen, detached from their original temporal and situational contexts, and with the fact itself of being transcribed and inserted within a cataloguing system, conferred with value. Within the Western Museum context, collecting (objects or knowledge) implies a form of "rescue" from the passing of time and decay, preserving what is deemed "traditional," that which is defined in opposition to modernity (ibid.). At the same time, the inclusion within an official database of the information provided by the people I met in the field allows them to have a voice regarding their own TCEs. However, it cannot be overlooked that the process of collecting this data and then building a database, and more specifically the process of adding details to the

SIRBeC system, was constantly selective and conscious. Without denying the fact that, even though it is most often perceived as a form of “unmediated” access to the “raw data” of the collection, catalogues, no less than exhibitions, are curated by the museum as an institution of knowledge (Turner, 2020). Cataloguing procedures inevitably generate a tension between the emphasis on consistency, legitimacy, and authority inherent in Western systems of classification and the dynamic, intricate fabric of Andean textile practices, a tension that tends to marginalize complexity, transformation, and hybridity. In the words of Stewart (1984: 29), detailed description of the material world functions as still life that create an “illusion of timelessness” while concealing change, however, the lack of consensus on how to interpret the iconography reflected in some pieces emphasized the absence of one single or broadly accepted or fixed understanding. This further highlights the fallacies of cataloguing ICH (see chapter 3).

During an interview, Rosie Barnes, who has worked on the field for many years and still keeps in touch with a variety of weavers and talented craftspeople, expressed to me her concern that scholarly circles frequently focus on technical aspects at the expense of firsthand TK, which is crucial for comprehending the actual function of the objects themselves. In this regard, while being aware of the limits of my short fieldwork to tackle the complexity of Andean textiles, the majority of the data I was able to enter into the database centred on describing the object's features, their techniques and use, aside from its measurements and condition (see Appendix 2). I made an effort to preserve the TK about techniques and symbols in Quechua (and, when feasible, translate). Most importantly, I integrated information about the people who made the objects or introduced them to market in order to restore an agency that would have otherwise remained invisible (see Harrison, 2013a). A new photographic campaign of the objects was made possible by the cooperation of MUDEC's staff and the advice of my interlocutors. These photos will be added to the Sirbec database as well as MEBIC (see below), where only low-resolution, non-downloadable images are currently available. While the ethics IP complex concerns surrounding visual and audiovisual materials are outside the scope of this study (see e.g. Oruç, 2025), it is important to note that during a conversation, Rosie and Justino suggested that, in

the absence of specific legal instruments, the museum could take on a custodial role over photographic reproductions, preventing unauthorized or commercial appropriation. In this sense, MUDEC regulates the use of high-resolution images in compliance with national and local cultural heritage laws by evaluating formal requests submitted to the curatorial offices (Comune di Milano, 1960; D.L. 2004/42, L. 633/1941). In addition to ensuring limited image dissemination, these restrictions also indirectly safeguard the rights of TCE bearers; adding a note prohibiting the alteration or the use of these materials in a derogatory way to members of the community, ethnic or religious groups from which the objects originated, would further favour a "radical transparency" approach to the museums practice of public engaging, by explicitly stating the museum role as a mediator.

Cataloguing at MUDEC, just like in other museums, is moulded by historical categories and naming conventions. Thus, it functions as both an infrastructural tool for documenting and an arena for institutional politics (see Turner, 2020). While necessary for collection management, cataloguing contains the inertia of previous epistemologies, making interventions on it necessary and the practice of cataloguing a dynamic process that is continually constructed and reinscribed via ongoing acts of re-classification. In recent years, collaborations with external early-career researchers have been issued with the explicit purpose of normalizing the data to enhance coherence and thereby accessibility of the information. These efforts have coincided with the incremental online release of collections records through the MEBIC platform (Musei e Biblioteche in Comune), since SIRBeC, due to its complexity, does not provide a public interface. While the digitalisation and online publication of collections advance the necessary conditions of transparency that ground any ethical approach to conservation within Western museums, persistent frictions remain: MEBIC is available only in Italian, and, for security reasons, it cannot be accessed from several countries abroad, including Peru.

Within this continuous reworking of collection data, there is clear potential for reaching "radical transparency" by making these knowledge processes clear and public by explaining to visitors that the information displayed is never a neutral representation of cultural contexts but rather the result of research into peoples

and practices realised in various moments, by various people, applying research models and terminologies that are historically contingent, and that can result to be occasionally out-of-date or inappropriate for source communities, and at times even offensive[127]. Translating the platform, making it accessible to an international audience, and adding a note specifically asking source communities for contributions, suggestions and any complaint would be one step in achieving the "*museum that listens*" that has been described to be as the main aim for collection management and community programmes while publicly deconstructing power inequalities, implementing any customary restrictions the museum was not aware of and thus, in the end, create the trust that, according to the staff, has often lack (see chapter 4).

6.4.2 An ethics proposal for managing TCEs within MUDEC's practice

Beyond the "modernist" paradigm of the 19th century, which supported rigid, national narratives, the post-museum evolved as participatory space that encourages inclusive dialogue and shared authority. This change places a strong emphasis on cooperation, multivocality, and incorporating intangible cultural heritage into museum operations. As focus shifts from collections to communities, human rights and ethical issues have taken centre stage in museum operations, mirroring larger societal shifts and reinforcing museums' growing position as socially engaged moral and cultural institutions (see chapter 1).

One significant controversy contemporary museums are compelled to face regards Indigenous cultural property, which also necessarily drawn to light the need for different approaches between settler-colonial nations and most European institutions (see Lattanzi, 2021). Despite having significant collections influenced by colonial history, European institutions lack the legal frameworks that guarantee Indigenous rights. Historical links have been obscured by geographical distance, resulting in an unequal definition of moral and legal obligations (Besterman, 2006: 435). However, several museums in Europe have started to take steps that are in line with professional ethics, and more and more scientific study now incorporates Indigenous populations' participation or consultation. Indeed, the

[127] One example of this kind of solution is given by the Pitt Rivers catalogue online. See https://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/collections-online (accessed on October 5th, 2025)

ethical context within which the museum practitioner care for a TCE depends on human interaction (ibid.: 431) and, in this case, cannot disregard Indigenous perspective. As Rocha Valverde's fieldwork on the protection of textile knowledge in Mexico's Huasteca region concludes, effective safeguarding must originate within the community itself, and protection strategies should move from the community upward (2024).

Over the past year and a half at least, the museum has been engaged in drafting a general ethical manifesto, a process in which I participated, albeit marginally. Pushed by the curatorial staff, the elaboration of this manifesto was the result of a collaborative process supported by some external collaborators including Luca Zamparo, an expert in heritage law (helped by some of his lawyers colleagues), and informed by national[128] and international models[129]. The document has now been waiting for approval for a few months at the Municipality of Milan's Cultural Directorate. In addition to preventing me from including the manifesto in this thesis, this protracted delay is an example of the ongoing lack of political support for many of the museum's initiatives, which frequently paralyses projects developed by the working team. The manifesto's premises are based on MUDEC's declared mission: "Mudec preserves and exhibits the ethno-anthropological heritage of the Milan City Council collections, organises international shows and exhibitions interpreted through different artistic languages, and proposes a programme of events and initiatives in dialogue with the territory. The museum is a centre dedicated to the interdisciplinary study of world cultures. Based on ethnographic collections and in collaboration with diasporic and international communities, it acts as a space for reflection on contemporary issues through visual, performing and sound arts, design and costume", on its adherence to the national Code of Cultural Heritage and Landscape (Legislative Decree 42/2004) and its nature as a public institution of the Milan Municipality. By declaring in the manifesto that MUDEC governance, and its personnel recognize the definition of 'museum' elaborated by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and formally adhere to its Code of Ethics, the museum also stand by its pronouncement

[128] See the MUCIV ethical declaration (https://www.museodellecivilta.it/chi-siamo/) (accessed on October 8th, 2025)

[129] E.g. the guidelines published by the German Museum Association (2021)

over community participation. The document also includes a long list of legislative and ethical documents the institution stands by and, by the end of it, the museum also declares to take into account the guidelines of the Intergovernmental Committee of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) concerning intellectual property and the traditional knowledge of Indigenous peoples. Beyond stating its core ethical principles, such as accessibility, sustainability, community participation, and transparency, the manifesto declares that the museum will create internal ethical protocols for collection management. Thus, my proposal would fall inside this framework aiming at repositioning source communities' rights over their TCEs in the centre, as follows.

Although the 2003 UNESCO Convention is not specifically mentioned in the MUDEC manifesto, it is reductive to think of museums as only holding Tangible Cultural Heritage (as well as inventories and reproductions of ICH). As seen in chapter 2, heritage depends on the ongoing relationship between material cultural expressions and the intangible processes that give them symbolic meaning and cultural relevance. As exemplified by the case of Andean textiles, materiality occupies a pivotal position in the creation, transmission, and revitalization of TK. Tangible artifacts serve not just as repositories of memory and identity, but also as active conduits for conveying and perpetuating technical, symbolic, and social knowledge throughout generations. Such an understanding of heritage goes beyond the confines of the AHD, emphasizing the need of engaging the very cultural bearers via their lived relationship with TCEs (see chapter 2 and 3). The displacement of these TCEs, often operated within a context of power imbalance or without the awareness or consent of their knowledge bearers, and their subsequent presence outside the contexts in which they were originally created entails significant risks of unlawful appropriation. Within this framework, issues of cultural property rights come into play.

For Indigenous communities, the unauthorized use of TCEs does not merely constitute a legal violation but a profound distortion of memory and identity. Informed by the needs of my interlocutors, and for the aim at implementing a internal ethical protocol for the MUDEC, I believe that moral rights, if properly extended to all TCEs (thus even if not recognized under IP laws) and applied with

“cultural equity” and “contingency”, may offer an equitable and culturally sensitive paradigm for the stewardship of TCEs that would bridge the gap between legal recognition and the living epistemologies of Indigenous creativity. Inalienable moral rights as established by the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works (WIPO, 1979: art. 6bis), adopted by Italy in 1987, have not economic nature and grant creators the right to be acknowledged as the author of a work, the right to oppose any distortion, mutilation, or use that may harm their honour or reputation, and the right to determine when and how a work is disclosed or withdrawn from the public domain. Since they reflect the right to be acknowledged as the legitimate holders of TK and the right to stop its deterioration or distortion, the moral rights of attribution and integrity are very relevant to these ethical issues. Indeed, the same needs have been voiced to me during my fieldwork. Moreover, the right to disclose or withdraw a TCE proves essential in contexts where customary laws prescribe restrictions on access or require certain forms of secrecy (see chapter 3). However, not only the implementation of moral rights under the Berne Convention varies considerably among signatory nations, but it is also limited only to creations covered by IP law. As previously saw in chapters 2 and 3, IP legislation, rooted in Western epistemologies, inherently exclude the collective and intergenerational nature of TCEs. Italy’s copyright law (L. 633/1941) is no exception.

In the context of the tentative protocol I am proposing to the MUDEC (see Appendix 3), I believe that the expansion of moral rights beyond conventional copyright frameworks would be convenient (see Vézina in chapter 3). Transcending the limits of Western IP paradigms and applying a moral rights-like regime to TCEs to align ethical internal practice with the character of TCEs allows Indigenous communities to maintain control over how their cultural expressions are exhibited, adapted, or interpreted, ensuring that their representation remains respectful, faithful to customary practices. This approach is possible only when the museum redefines itself as a custodian of TCEs held in trust for their original creators and for the collective benefit of the communities to which these expressions still belong by acknowledging source communities as the legitimate right holders of the TCEs it legally owns.

CONCLUSION

The research commences within the "temple of authenticity" (Handler, 1986: 4), where Trilling identifies the genesis of the concept itself as it is currently employed, whereby "persons expert in such matters test whether objects of art are what they appear to be or are claimed to be" (1972: 93): the museum. The Andean textiles that formed the case study for this research were selected and authenticated when they became part of the MUDEC collection. The removal of tangible cultural expressions from their original context inevitably makes them at the same time ethnographic fragments and instruments for representing entire cultures or construct an organised worldview from and for them (Stewart, 1984). Thus, the authenticity attributed to the objects is transferred to the knowledge collected with them, constructed around them and then conveyed by them (see Dudley, 2010) and therefore to the image of the culture that produced them. Without an understanding of the museum's mediating role in managing and presenting its collections, these Andean textiles could easily be perceived as offering a complete and authentic representation of Andean culture. In this sense, museums have been reevaluating how cultural identities are understood and exhibited within collections, as well as they have been recognising the larger political context of these operations. To do so, it is imperative for these institutions to acknowledge the colonial past that has shaped the power dynamics underpinning the establishment of ethnographic collections, while also recognising how the emergence of decolonial criticism has prompted a paradigm shift in museum practices by scrutinising the hegemony of Western forms of knowledge that have historically come to define the museum as a place of knowledge formation. At the same time, this change had demanded for a more careful reconsideration of the processes through which museums have consistently essentialised the cultures that created their collections. To this end, it is crucial to ensure that the communities that have been involved in forming the collections and who have legitimate claims and expectations in their regards are not isolated from them and are fairly involved in their management.

This tension toward the search for authenticity, as Bendix (1997: 8) asserts, depends on the typically modern orientation “toward the recovery of an essence whose loss has been realized only through modernity". Yet, just as much as authenticity is not an intrinsic quality but rather a construct shaped by the historical, social, and philosophical specificities of Western modernity (see Trilling, 1972; Appadurai, 1986; Bendix, 1997), culture and tradition can also be shaped and reconstructed from within and from outside (see Wagner, 1981; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983; Handler & Linnekin, 1984). The idea itself that globalisation is threating the authentic essence of some cultural expressions is ingrained in the opposition between modernity and tradition. However, as Walsh and Mignolo (2018) contend, modernity also functions as a rhetorical instrument employed within the Eurocentric worldview, wherein history is conceptualised as a linear progression. In order to persuade and legitimise the colonial order, modernity has been regarded as the force that must replace tradition, thereby providing a supposedly better future (ibid.). Within this doctoral research, the Andean textiles preserved at MUDEC function basically as a starting point and became a pretext to look into a critically more complex reality that couldn’t be depicted just by the opposition of Andean and Western ontologies, nor it could be simply tackled within the discourses of opposing tradition and modernity that frequently underpin the heritage discourses on safeguarding ICH in risk of disappearing nor IP claims of protecting Indigenous against appropriation. What I experienced during fieldwork was exactly what Clifford (1988: 17) described as the place of contemporary ethnography, “condemned to oscillate between two metanarratives: one of homogenization, the other of emergence; one of loss, the other of invention”. And even though both of these narratives are valid, yet they are also interdependent as cultural distinctions are in a state of constant destruction and recreation, which results in the production of dynamic rather than vanishing identities.

The Cusco region's Andean textiles made for a particularly interesting case study because of their relevance not just as utilitarian artefacts but because of the recognised richness in symbolic stratification. Despite my prior experience of living in Peru and my academic familiarity with Andean culture, the notion that

the pieces exhibited at MUDEC embodied the authentic, despite partial, manifestation of the Andean textile tradition inevitably influenced my approach to this research during its starting stages and was later deconstructed. The intense multi-situated fieldwork carried out for this study enabled direct interaction with numerous realities pertaining to the Peruvian textile world, including the institutional sphere of museums and government bodies, as well as the market, collectors and actors of tourism economies. Most importantly, what made my fieldwork valuable was the opportunity to learn about a wide variety of local realities within the regional context of Cusco. New discussions and information sharing were made possible by using images of MUDEC's textiles as a starting point for discussions with source communities. Through these exchanges, it became evident that the lived reality underneath these artefacts is far more dynamic and nuanced than the "authentic" and static representation of Latin America that their museum display frequently suggests. Andean textiles have been connected by scholarship to larger cosmological and social systems through the combination of technical characteristics and aesthetic elements, which have traditionally conveyed complex meanings according with Andean world praxis. The variety of registers that have consolidated around textiles and their practices throughout history have given them great cultural relevance until today. Recent ethnographic research argued that through textile practice knowledge systems are transmitted across generations and, according to local ontology, textiles are not just inanimate "texts" but living beings that mediate socialization within communities. Even when Andean textiles are taken out of Andean perspectives and placed within Western knowledge circuits, they acquire new symbolic meanings that are incorporated into their identities. Once their worth is reframed inside tourist economies, they transform from living symbolic infrastructures to materialized cultural symbols, elements of consumable ICH and exotic authenticity. At the same time, textile practices intended for local use did not vanish; rather, they adapted to shifting economic logics, new circuits of connection, and evolving tastes, becoming markers of cultural identity precisely by reshaping themselves within these broader interconnections. Not "endangered authenticities-pure products always going crazy" but rather "conjuntural" complex identities that make "space for specific paths through modernity", weavers'

communities are "caught between some cultures and entangled in others", operating "within an interconnected world" where "a certain degree of inauthenticity is inevitable" (Clifford 1988: 5, 11). While the cultural significance of Andean textiles in identity formation within indigenous *campesino* communities of Cusco is well-established, this has also been proven to be fluid and continuously renegotiated. On the other hand, at the national and international level, Andean identity represented through textiles has been instrumentally crystallised with a deliberate decision-making process that defined its boundaries (see Remotti, 2013). In order to promote Peru abroad, the national company PromPerú has long pushed a national image based on Andean heritage, blending an Inca reimagined history with contemporary cultural expressions like music, food, and craftsmanship. Within this promoting campaign, Andean textiles aesthetically associable with Cusco have always had a central role in building a recognisable Peruvian image, as seen in various advertisements promoted by the national Marca Perú and in occasion of international events like Expo 2020 in Dubai, where the scenography of Peru pavilion confirmed how the image of Peru toward abroad is strongly attached to an Andean constructed identity expressed through textiles. This approach, which reimagines cultural diversity into a neoliberal asset, looks absurd if one thinks that Cusco traditional textile aesthetic is used to brand the national image while those groups who are the bearers of this tradition have long (and still are) discriminated for it, reflecting deeper racial, class, and gender disparities that impact Indigenous communities. Moreover, it might seem paradoxical that, at the same time and in some specific registers, these identity parameters have been consciously and strategically adopted by communities as well, to produce a consumable image through a command performance (Clifford, 2013: 46-47); as they opt to wear *ojotas* and *polleras* in place of trainers and jeans when presenting themselves to tourists, they produce a "staged authenticity of ethnic identification" (ibid.). The impression is that Andean identity expressed through one of its most relevant cultural elements -textiles- is only acceptable when separated from poverty and re-signified as a commodity representing an "authentic identity".

This complex quest of authenticity is also what motivated the significant wave of revitalisation initiatives that started during the last decades of the last century and later influenced the image of traditional textiles in the local "equitable" market and tourist industry. Following the Indigenism interest in local cultural expressions, anthropological and ethnographic work focused on collecting data and material culture in anticipation of impending modernisation. Christine Franquemont's work highlighted the idea of a disappearing Andean culture, as she viewed Andean textile traditions as being under threat due to changes in local lifestyles, particularly with regard to people's relationships with nature and their environment, as well as due to external pressures like tourism. This preoccupation with cultural change played a significant role in popularising revitalisation programmes in the Cusco region from the 1970s onwards. However, these processes of rediscovery and revitalisation could not ignore the need for communities to adapt to evolving economies, thus conducting to the incorporation of textile production into new business models. In this sense, these forms of revitalisation led to the development of a trend that would reach its peak in the last couple of decades, highlighting the necessary link between cultural revitalisation and economic needs. The case of the textile centres located in the Cusco-Machu Picchu corridor, which came to change the local social dynamics of the community, highlights how the crystallisation of a cultural identity is in fact an impossible operation. Although they were widely celebrated as important cultural recovery initiatives that encouraged women to return to weaving techniques that were believed to be disappearing, they inevitably became entangled in a series of commercial dynamics. Indeed, weaving centres developed as a way to protect the "authentic" Andean traditional against tourism, then started to be involved in the tourism industry at various levels, and ended up depending on it after the increasing arrival of international tourists. Despite this, weavers generally struggle to survive in a global capitalist market that is overrun by factory-made, synthetic replicas, especially while they are forced to outsell their handmade products to compete with low prices. Indeed, weavers do not rely on weaving as a primary livelihood, but rather survive on what their land and animals provide, using textile sales merely as a supplementary income to cover household expenses or to pay for their children's education.

The attribution of market value to living textiles brought to their redefinition within a different knowledge system, thus re-signified their symbolic meaning, reinterpreted their aesthetic appearance and resulted in the imposition of a confined textile image. Even within unbalanced power dynamics, Indigenous agency in these processes of commodification cannot be overlooked as weaving communities demonstrated their ability to reproduce and perform a "(re)invented tradition" while still maintaining their textile "customs" alive and evolving in a continuous process of change. Indeed, while the idea of traditional Andean textiles made from alpaca wool and dyed with natural plants is marketed to tourists as a romanticised, pre-modern ideal depiction of authentic indigenous cultural life, local textile production for domestic and cultural purposes has continued to adapt to new needs and tastes that are far beyond the scope of the market. Andean weavers have continued to change their practices in the light of shifting social and economic environments through processes of loss and reinvention. Nowadays, traditional clothing continues to be produced for local use, especially during festivals and collective celebrations. While some items are commissioned from expert local weavers, most are now cheaper industrially manufactured or woven on pedal looms and sold in marketplaces. During festivals, people proudly wear these colourful garments, including *ponchos, mantas, chullos, and polleras*. The vibrant colours of these pieces, created using synthetic fibres and metallic threads, have become a distinctive feature of their contemporary appeal. Andean textiles continue to be a powerful cultural marker in the area as they are still deeply ingrained in the lives of many: children play with woven fabrics, are wrapped and carried in their mothers' *q'epinas* from birth, and utilise textiles throughout their lives, even if they do not learn to weave.

Figure 38: A children's set up for play using mantas and unkuñas, Lares

Figure 39: An actual shared lunch at Munay Ticlla, Pitumarca

In the past, each village or area used its textiles to convey a specific connection to its environment, which was reflected in the techniques, colours, and iconography. Today, the aesthetic expression of the connection between community and ecology has been weakened by greater interconnection, the use of synthetic materials, and the effect of tourism and the market in general. While older generations may still recognise the specificities of their local cultural production, newer generations are

losing this knowledge due to scholar education, migration, and the pressures of market competition. Textiles have indeed changed from being indicators of micro-local distinctiveness to emblems of larger identities, initially on a regional level and eventually national.

As much as authenticity and identity are interdependently constructed, they are also both fundamentally connected to the origin of the purely Western conception of heritage, its recognition, interpretation, and institutional practices. The ways in which Andean textiles have been recognised as heritage within the Peruvian context reflect a historically rooted perception that originates from the Indigenist movement. Never perceived as works of art in their own right, they haven't been included in museum collections as such. Instead, they were interpreted as valuable historic items in the context of folk art, or as living elements of ICH. At the same time, the connection between the cultural value of textiles as national heritage and their economic potential has been made explicit through the intertwining of conservation and market logic. This is evident in the collaborations forged between certain museums and fashion houses, as well as in the creation of the two most important craft fairs in Lima. *De Nuestras Manos* is organised by the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Tourism and aims to promote the expansion of traditional handicrafts from the standpoint of both domestic and global economic development. On the other hand, *Ruraq Maki* is organised by the Ministry of Culture with the purpose of increasing knowledge about traditional craftmanship, promote cross-cultural and entrepreneurial exchanges. These fairs are theoretically organised with two different purposes, but in practice they always involve the same artisans. This impossibility to separate the cultural and commercial spheres in craftmanship, in particular with regard to Andean textiles, is reflected in the concerns about the misuse of TK and TCEs that inevitably arise in the context of the contemporary globalised market. However, Peruvian copyright law struggles to accommodate traditional cultural expressions such as Andean textiles, the collective and intergenerational nature of which, as well as their continual transformation, defy legal notions of authorship and originality. With their roots in shared symbolic traditions and the absence of identifiable creators, these textiles are resistant to frameworks designed for individual artistic

intellectual ownership. In this context, it becomes crucial to include Indigenous perspectives in the scenario: since weaving is the only source of monetary income for many artisans who lives in poverty, many voiced concerns about their patterns being shared outside of their local communities less from cultural preservation and more from economic rivalry between communities. Conversely, they frequently took pride in tourists' wearing local-inspired attire, viewing it as a sign of appreciation of their culture and weaving skills. In general, they took a practical approach to weaving for sale, driven more by consumer needs than by ideas of cultural integrity.

This complexity becomes evident when we circle back to the museum, the starting point and eventual destination of this research. As institutions of colonial origin that both hold and use IP, museums should be aware of their moral agency as much as the significant power disparities that exist between museums and source communities and thus raise legitimate concerns on how to handle Indigenous TCEs in their institutional practices. However, Western museum frameworks, which are based on concepts of authorship, ownership, and the separation between tangible and intangible heritage contrast with Andean perspectives on textiles, which are considered as living entities entwined with social and cultural connections. Thus, it became clear that in this case tensions surrounding indigenous IP arise from the complex interrelation of Western and Andean ontologies. The creative process behind Andean textiles is best understood through Elvira Espejo's concept of *crianza mutua*: an intergenerational process of reciprocal care that binds humans, materials, and environments through intertwining thought and feeling, body and mind (*sentipensar*). The Western museum's framework, which is still firmly anchored in visual and object-centred logics, stands in stark contrast to this Andean ontological view of creative processes. Indeed, museums frequently interpret Andean textiles exclusively via aesthetic and symbolic features, ignoring the reality that their genuine cultural importance is embedded in a larger, dynamic system of traditional knowledge, environment and social interactions. At the same time, textiles current condition cannot be explained by an exclusively Andean ontology. Separated from the exclusivity of indigenous knowledge systems, textiles in Cusco and elsewhere now function in four overlapping domains: as repositories of traditional

knowledge, as commodities influenced by global tourism and capitalism, as national symbols and as institutionalised heritage within museums. When all these components are to be channelled into museum practices it is vital for institutions not only to recognise power imbalances but also to practically implement cultural equity, meaning recognising that source communities rightfully hold moral claims over the collection's museums legally own. Consequently, museums carry a multifaceted responsibility toward diverse stakeholders, especially if they are entrusted in preserving the material culture of others. This calls for sustainable and accountable collaboration with diverse stakeholder that should also be supported by an approach of radical transparency, meaning openly communicating how knowledge is produced within the museum work and making clear to audiences that museum interpretations are not neutral depictions of cultures, but constructions shaped by researchers, methodologies, and historical contexts over time.

In consideration of the pivotal role of communities' agency, I am compelled to draw upon the insights gathered during my multi-sited fieldwork in order to contribute to the museum's ongoing discourse over ethical collection management. From my interviews, it became evident that weavers experience a sense of pride in the idea that their textiles are being exhibited in such a distant museum: this geographical and experiential distance was possibly a sentiment which likely served to mitigate any concerns they may have had regarding the potential economic implications of cultural appropriation in this context. Despite my interlocutors not perceiving a cultural loss from this situation, they nevertheless expressed a preoccupation with the proper acknowledgement of their work. In general, the prevailing expectations of the community with regard to museums were of a moral nature rather than monetary, specifically seeking recognition of collective and, where possible, individual attribution. The museum was regarded as a platform to showcase Indigenous creativity and promote their culture internationally while, potentially, attracting visitors to their villages. Weavers further articulated their request for the museum to safeguard their traditional cultural expressions from misrepresentation and distortion, or any form of

exploitation that could potentially compromise the community's dignity or the cultural significance of their work.

All this field information had to be mediated back into the museum context in order for me to compile the protocol proposal I was requested to. In this sense, I had to consider that the document should be applicable within a complex and bureaucratic context such as that of the MUDEC as a public institution and, at the same time, should be able to meet the needs of the community. Consequently, I believe that, on the one hand, it is beneficial to use the tools available in the Western epistemological context that define the terms within which Italian law operates; on the other hand, it is due for the museum to decentralise its knowledge frameworks and accept a broadening of these boundaries so that it can respond to the needs of the community. From this angle, expanding the application of moral rights beyond the traditional copyright limitations might be beneficial. Museums have the authority to manage and control the presentation, adaptation, and interpretation of Indigenous cultural heritage by moving away from Western strict IP regimes and towards a broader application of moral rights that better reflect the nature of TCE. Such an approach is instrumental in ensuring that representation remains respectful, aligned with community values, and consistent with customary practices. At the same time, I consider that ethical reflections must be understood as contingent, especially in museums that care for culturally diverse, non-Western collections. In other words, museum ethics cannot be reduced to rigid rules as it depends on shifting social, political, technological, and economic variables and must evolve accordingly to the contexts. If ethics is a dynamic, ongoing practice, then this tentative protocol I suggest should invite experimentation, favour shared decision-making, and push for open dialogue.

Looking Ahead

In this sense, this work is far from complete. Indeed, I concur with Chelius Stark's (2011: 33-37) assertion that codes of ethics fulfil aspirational, regulatory, and educational functions, catering to diverse issues and audiences both within and outside the institution. These principles are not merely self-imposed guidelines intended to encourage responsible behaviour; they also function as public

declarations of professional accountability. Nevertheless, it is important to note that ethical competence cannot be acquired solely through formal instruction; it must also be developed through active engagement with real dilemmas. Collaborative ethical models, which involve all stakeholders in shared discussions, move beyond hierarchical decision-making and allow everyone to gain practical experience in ethical reflection and decision-making.

However, this type of work necessitates a considerable shared effort, which must be measured against a series of complexities, both externally and internally to the institution. Firstly, it is necessary that museum professionals address the diverse needs and expectations of the various communities represented by its collections, encompassing both the source and the diasporic communities that serve as points of reference within the territory. Moreover, as a civic museum, MUDEC is required to uphold a dynamic relationship of proximity with the citizens of Milan. As the museum's curator, Carolina Orsini, asserts, the museum must communicate its work in a transparent yet targeted manner to an audience that frequently lacks specific training in this field. Essentially, the museum must balance the need to attract a wide audience with the duty to promote dialogue with minorities.

Simultaneously, the museum as a multifaceted institution founded on the interconnection between the public, staff, and collections must also be considered in relation to structural limitations, official mandates, public responsibilities, economic constraints, and the professionals who are employed there. As Ames asserts (1992: 4), "as individual members of museological professions and trades, march to their own occupational interests, values, and commitments which are not always those of their places of employment. Museum professionals, like other workers, may frequently have nobler ambitions than their circumstances allow". Such divergences within MUDEC's context appeared particularly evident during the two most recent staff meetings to which I was invited (more as a prospective museum employee than as a present researcher on the dynamics that favour or limit the development of ethical relationships with communities). In the course of these meetings, the primary focus of which was the development of the curatorial project for the new permanent exhibition, it became evident that there were significant internal disagreements regarding the role that source communities

should play in relation to the museum's future practices in the implementation of the new display. In light of the presence of opposing views even within the museum staff and given the lack of political support that the museum is recently experiencing, it is clear that both the ethical manifesto and this protocol become crucial. As previously stated, those I propose are not immutable regulations; rather, they are to be regarded as guidelines that may require re-evaluation in accordance with specific and changing circumstances. Nevertheless, it is important to note that they would serve as a reliable point of reference in delineating the museum's stance on its ethical and moral responsibility toward its source communities. Concurrently, this research project could function as pilot research for the MUDEC, which may result in the formulation of new projects that address the many issues surrounding indigenous IP that have not been comprehensively covered in this thesis due to limitations in terms of scope and space. For instance, the museum houses an extensive collection of slide photographs donated by the travelling doctor Aldo Lo Curto. These images were captured in Brazil during his medical fieldwork and depict individuals belonging to various indigenous communities from the Amazon region. As previously discussed, the reproduced images of these communities became property of the photographer and, once they enter a museum collection their IP rights have subsequently been transferred to the institution. This clearly cause a conflict in terms of source communities' sovereignty over their own images.

As previously stated, this research is inherently constrained to the museum, it started and ended within the halls of the MUDEC. Despite the fact that this project will not result in the establishment of a long-term relationship with the source communities due to the underlying question that motivates it and the nature of the fieldwork carried out, it is nevertheless intended to provide support to MUDEC in its progressive and thoughtful transformation into a 'museum of possible worlds' (Lattanzi, 2012) based on dialogue and negotiation. In this new paradigm, the source communities are not merely viewed as informants on the ontological status of their own TCE (da Costa Oliveira & Scholz, 2025) but rather function as dynamic agents of change. The collections would serve not only as a starting point, as per MUDEC's mission, but also and above all as a site for interaction and

mediation. It is important to note that the collections as knowledge reservoirs should not be intended to be a final destination for these encounters; rather, they are expected to catalyse the creation of new paradigms of knowledge.

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Appendix One

PAM 01419

PAM 01420

PAM 01421

PAM 01422

PAM 01423

PAM 01424

PAM 01425

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PAM 01442

PAM 01444

PAM 01445

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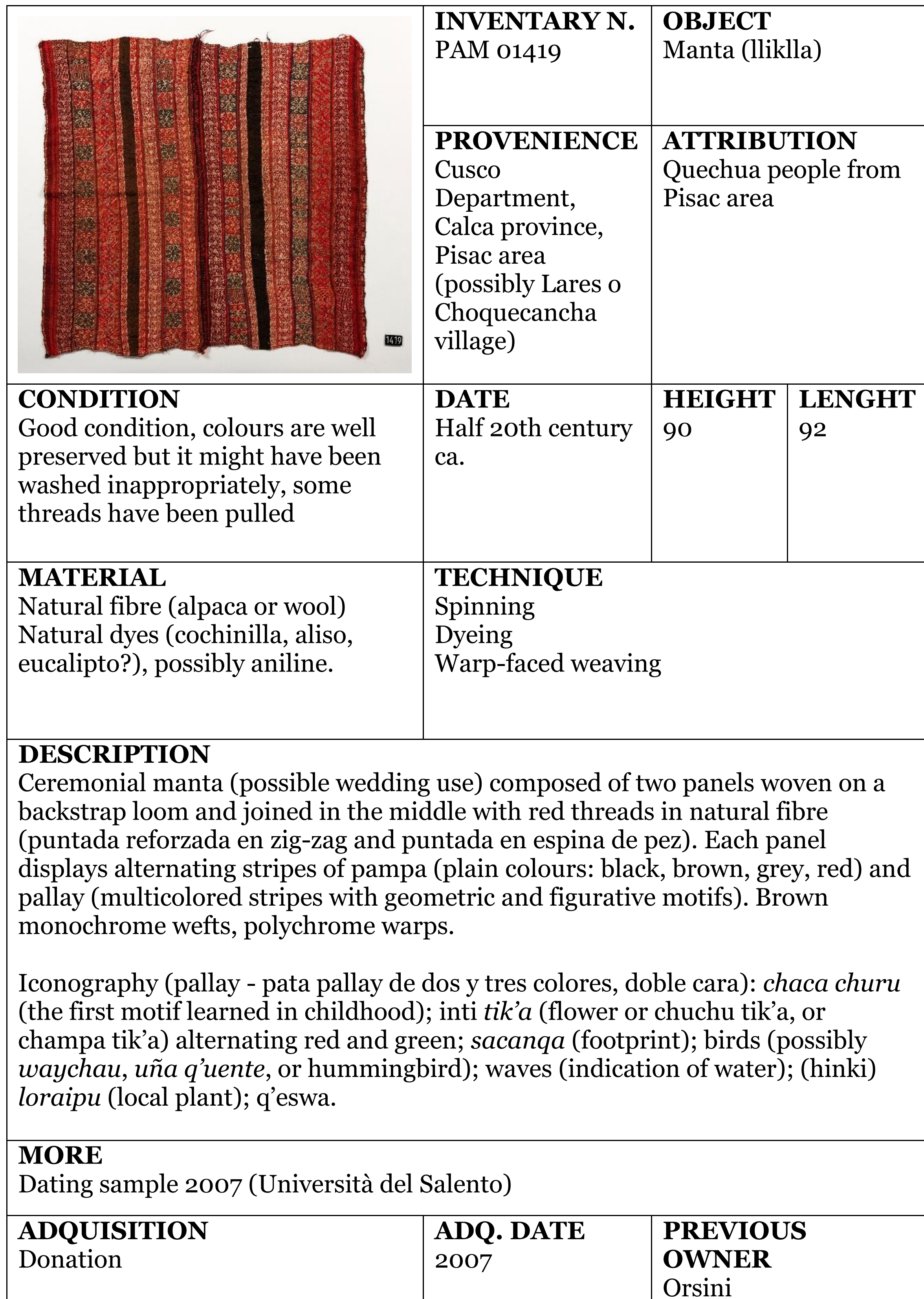
PAM 01450

Apppendix Two

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2"></td><td>INVENTARY N.
PAM 01419</td><td colspan="2">OBJECT
Manta (lliklla)</td></tr>
<tr><td>PROVENIENCE
Cusco Department, Calca province, Pisac area (possibly Lares o Choquecancha village)</td><td colspan="2">ATTRIBUTION
Quechua people from Pisac area</td></tr>
<tr><td>CONDITION
Good condition, colours are well preserved but it might have been washed inappropriately, some threads have been pulled</td><td>DATE
Half 20th century ca.</td><td>HEIGHT
90</td><td>LENGHT
92</td></tr>
<tr><td>MATERIAL
Natural fibre (alpaca or wool)
Natural dyes (cochinilla, aliso, eucalipto?), possibly aniline.</td><td colspan="3">TECHNIQUE
Spinning
Dyeing
Warp-faced weaving</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">DESCRIPTION
Ceremonial manta (possible wedding use) composed of two panels woven on a backstrap loom and joined in the middle with red threads in natural fibre (puntada reforzada en zig-zag and puntada en espina de pez). Each panel displays alternating stripes of pampa (plain colours: black, brown, grey, red) and pallay (multicolored stripes with geometric and figurative motifs). Brown monochrome wefts, polychrome warps.

Iconography (pallay - pata pallay de dos y tres colores, doble cara): chaca churu (the first motif learned in childhood); inti tik'a (flower or chuchu tik'a, or champa tik'a) alternating red and green; sacanqa (footprint); birds (possibly waychau, uña q'uente, or hummingbird); waves (indication of water); (hinki) loraipu (local plant); q'eswa.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">MORE
Dating sample 2007 (Università del Salento)</td></tr>
<tr><td>ADQUISITION
Donation</td><td>ADQ. DATE
2007</td><td colspan="2">PREVIOUS OWNER
Orsini</td></tr>
</table>

SOURCES

Stylistic analysis, information collected when acquired, fieldwork 2024 (Lares and Choquecancha), bibliography.

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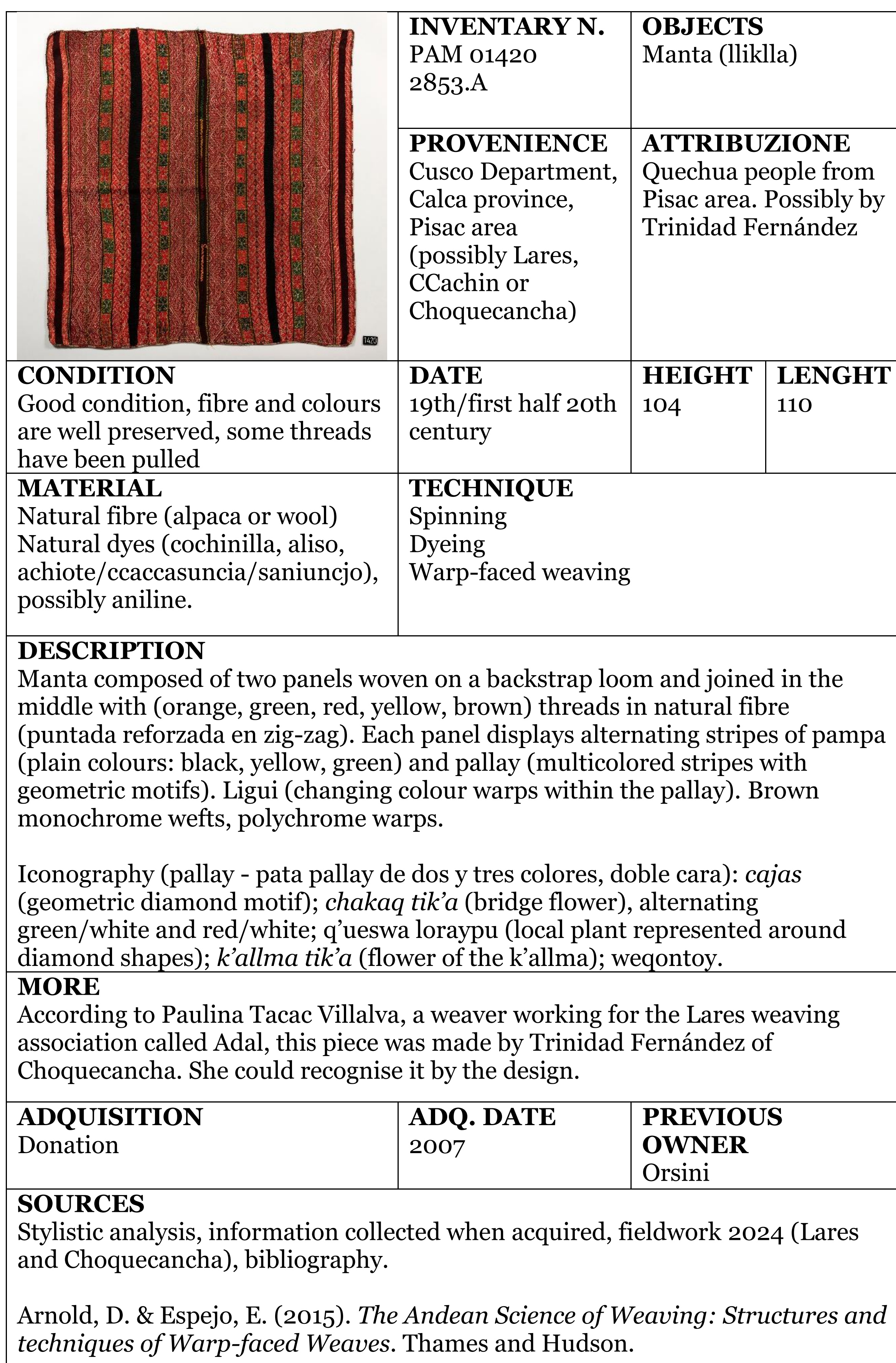
<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2"></td><td>INVENTARY N.
PAM 01420
2853.A</td><td colspan="2">OBJECTS
Manta (lliklla)</td></tr>
<tr><td>PROVENIENCE
Cusco Department, Calca province, Pisac area (possibly Lares, CCachin or Choquecancha)</td><td colspan="2">ATTRIBUZIONE
Quechua people from Pisac area. Possibly by Trinidad Fernández</td></tr>
<tr><td>CONDITION
Good condition, fibre and colours are well preserved, some threads have been pulled</td><td>DATE
19th/first half 20th century</td><td>HEIGHT
104</td><td>LENGHT
110</td></tr>
<tr><td>MATERIAL
Natural fibre (alpaca or wool)
Natural dyes (cochinilla, aliso, achiote/ccaccasuncia/saniuncjo), possibly aniline.</td><td colspan="3">TECHNIQUE
Spinning
Dyeing
Warp-faced weaving</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">DESCRIPTION
Manta composed of two panels woven on a backstrap loom and joined in the middle with (orange, green, red, yellow, brown) threads in natural fibre (puntada reforzada en zig-zag). Each panel displays alternating stripes of pampa (plain colours: black, yellow, green) and pallay (multicolored stripes with geometric motifs). Ligui (changing colour warps within the pallay). Brown monochrome wefts, polychrome warps.

Iconography (pallay - pata pallay de dos y tres colores, doble cara): cajas (geometric diamond motif); chakaq tik'a (bridge flower), alternating green/white and red/white; q'ueswa loraypu (local plant represented around diamond shapes); k'allma tik'a (flower of the k'allma); weqontoy.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">MORE
According to Paulina Tacac Villalva, a weaver working for the Lares weaving association called Adal, this piece was made by Trinidad Fernández of Choquecancha. She could recognise it by the design.</td></tr>
<tr><td>ADQUISITION
Donation</td><td>ADQ. DATE
2007</td><td colspan="2">PREVIOUS OWNER
Orsini</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">SOURCES
Stylistic analysis, information collected when acquired, fieldwork 2024 (Lares and Choquecancha), bibliography.

Arnold, D. & Espejo, E. (2015). The Andean Science of Weaving: Structures and techniques of Warp-faced Weaves. Thames and Hudson.</td></tr>
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Comunidades Campesinas Ccachin, Ccollana, Choquecancha, Quishuarani, Rosaspata. (2005). *Rescate e interpretación de la iconografía textil de las comunidades de Ccachin, Ccollana, Choquecancha, Quishuarani, Rosaspata*: Proyecto Corredor Puno-Cusco

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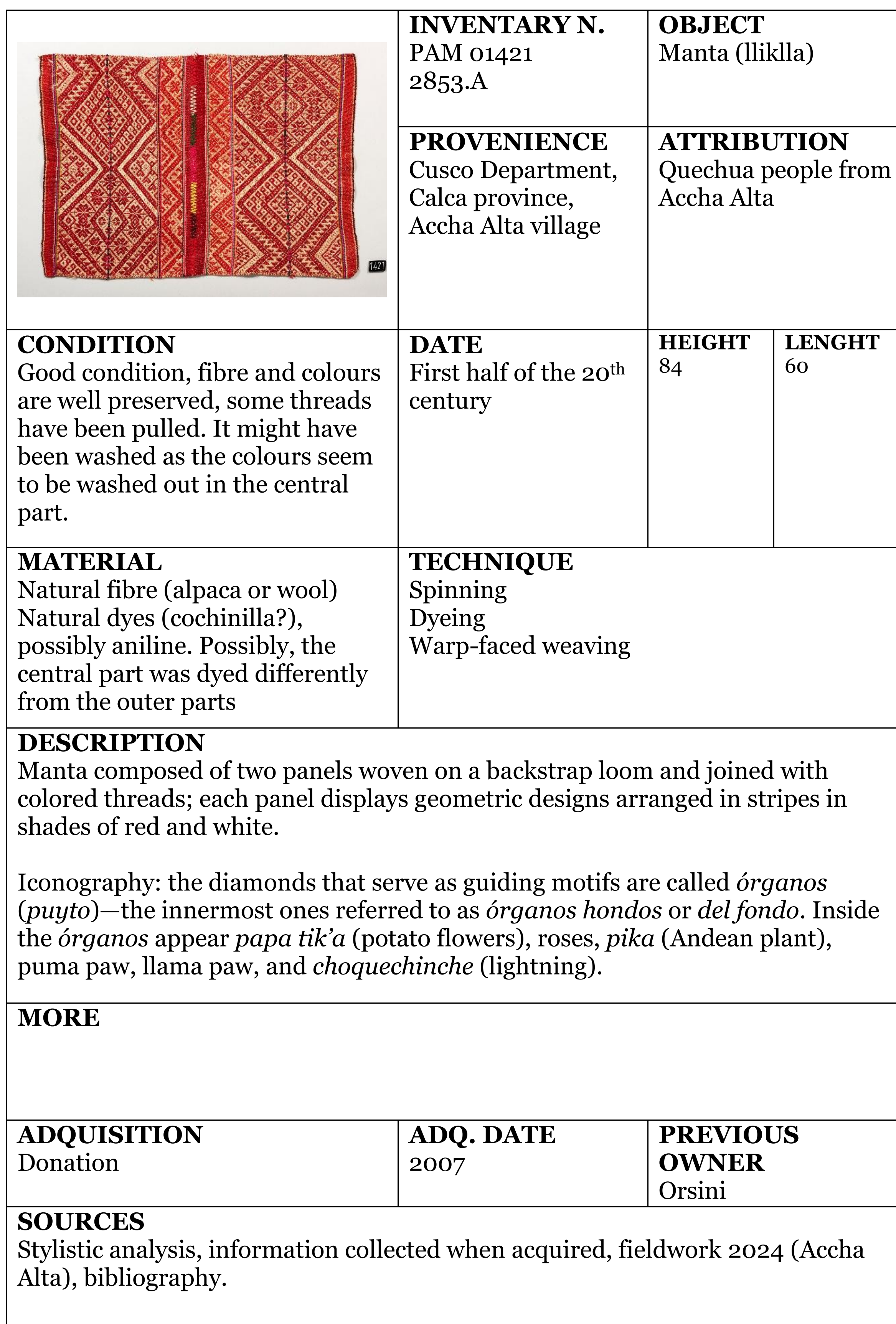

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<tr><td rowspan="2"></td><td>INVENTARY N.
PAM 01421
2853.A</td><td colspan="2">OBJECT
Manta (lliklla)</td></tr>
<tr><td>PROVENIENCE
Cusco Department, Calca province, Accha Alta village</td><td colspan="2">ATTRIBUTION
Quechua people from Accha Alta</td></tr>
<tr><td>CONDITION
Good condition, fibre and colours are well preserved, some threads have been pulled. It might have been washed as the colours seem to be washed out in the central part.</td><td>DATE
First half of the 20th century</td><td>HEIGHT
84</td><td>LENGHT
60</td></tr>
<tr><td>MATERIAL
Natural fibre (alpaca or wool) Natural dyes (cochinilla?), possibly aniline. Possibly, the central part was dyed differently from the outer parts</td><td colspan="3">TECHNIQUE
Spinning
Dyeing
Warp-faced weaving</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">DESCRIPTION
Manta composed of two panels woven on a backstrap loom and joined with colored threads; each panel displays geometric designs arranged in stripes in shades of red and white.

Iconography: the diamonds that serve as guiding motifs are called órganos (puyto)—the innermost ones referred to as órganos hondos or del fondo. Inside the órganos appear papa tik'a (potato flowers), roses, pika (Andean plant), puma paw, llama paw, and choquechinche (lightning).</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">MORE</td></tr>
<tr><td>ADQUISITION
Donation</td><td>ADQ. DATE
2007</td><td colspan="2">PREVIOUS OWNER
Orsini</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">SOURCES
Stylistic analysis, information collected when acquired, fieldwork 2024 (Accha Alta), bibliography.</td></tr>
</table>

Arnold, D. & Espejo, E. (2015). *The Andean Science of Weaving: Structures and techniques of Warp-faced Weaves*. Thames and Hudson.

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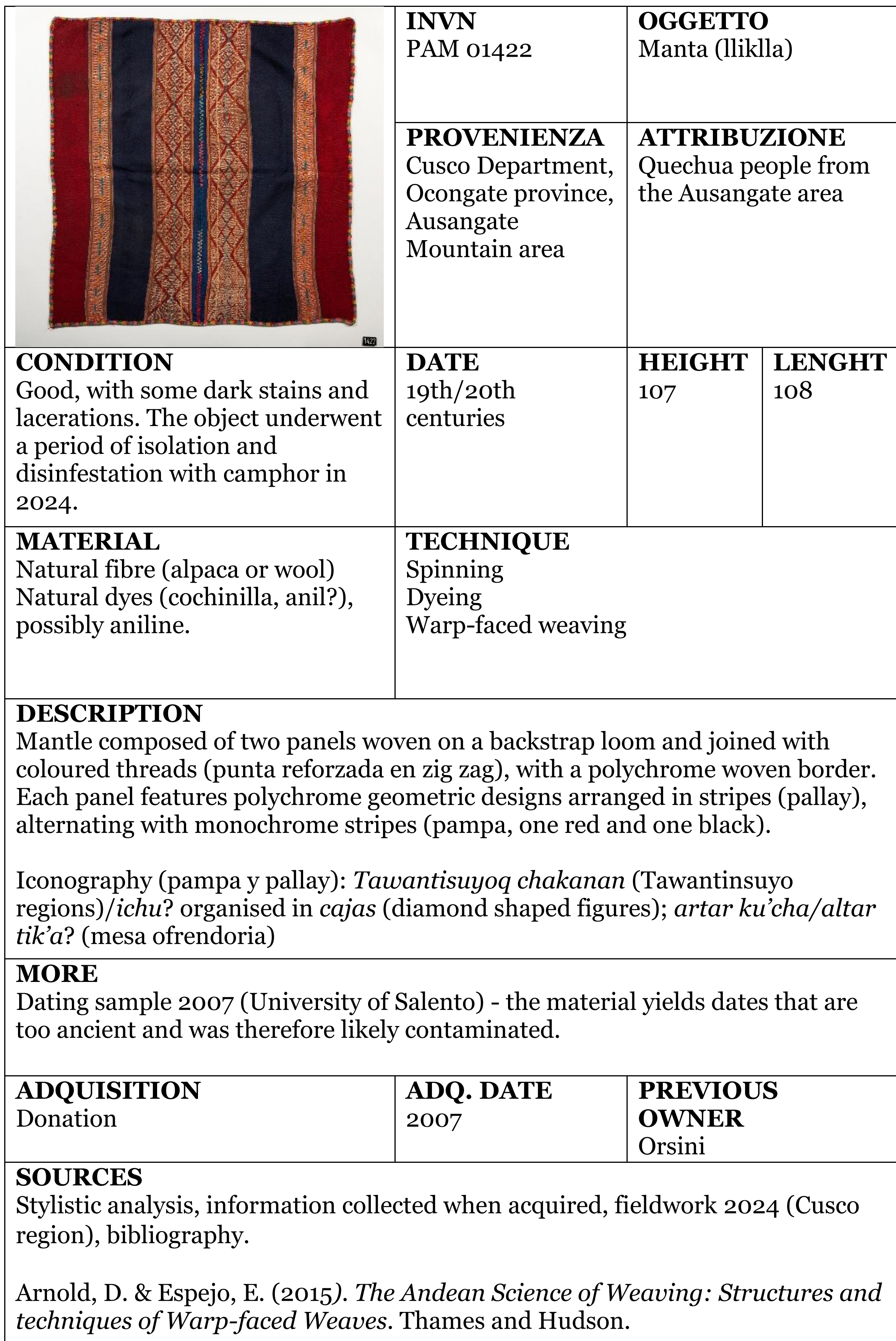
<tr><td rowspan="2"></td><td>INVN
PAM 01422</td><td colspan="2">OGGETTO
Manta (lliklla)</td></tr>
<tr><td>PROVENIENZA
Cusco Department, Ocongate province, Ausangate Mountain area</td><td colspan="2">ATTRIBUZIONE
Quechua people from the Ausangate area</td></tr>
<tr><td>CONDITION
Good, with some dark stains and lacerations. The object underwent a period of isolation and disinfestation with camphor in 2024.</td><td>DATE
19th/20th centuries</td><td>HEIGHT
107</td><td>LENGHT
108</td></tr>
<tr><td>MATERIAL
Natural fibre (alpaca or wool)
Natural dyes (cochinilla, anil?), possibly aniline.</td><td colspan="3">TECHNIQUE
Spinning
Dyeing
Warp-faced weaving</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">DESCRIPTION
Mantle composed of two panels woven on a backstrap loom and joined with coloured threads (punta reforzada en zig zag), with a polychrome woven border. Each panel features polychrome geometric designs arranged in stripes (pallay), alternating with monochrome stripes (pampa, one red and one black).

Iconography (pampa y pallay): Tawantisuyoq chakanan (Tawantinsuyo regions)/ichu? organised in cajas (diamond shaped figures); artar ku'cha/altar tik'a? (mesa ofrendoria)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">MORE
Dating sample 2007 (University of Salento) - the material yields dates that are too ancient and was therefore likely contaminated.</td></tr>
<tr><td>ADQUISITION
Donation</td><td>ADQ. DATE
2007</td><td colspan="2">PREVIOUS OWNER
Orsini</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">SOURCES
Stylistic analysis, information collected when acquired, fieldwork 2024 (Cusco region), bibliography.

Arnold, D. & Espejo, E. (2015). The Andean Science of Weaving: Structures and techniques of Warp-faced Weaves. Thames and Hudson.</td></tr>
</table>

Comunidad de Patabamba (n.d.) *Rescate iconografico de la comunidad de Patabamba*. Proyecto Corredor Puno-Cusco.

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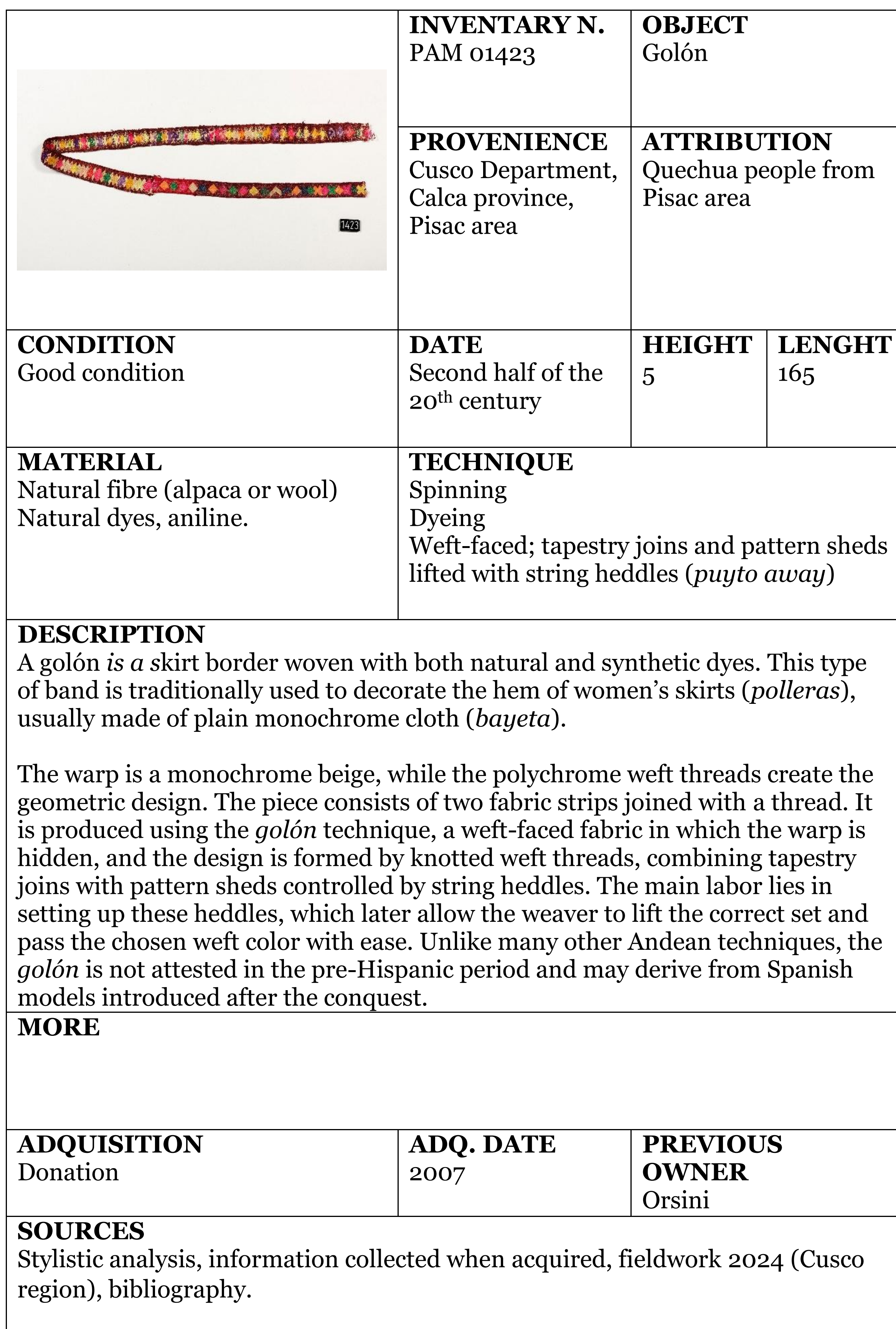
Hoces de la Guardia, S. & P. Brugnoli. (2006). *Manual de Técnicas textiles Andinas: terminaciones*. Consejo nacional de la cultura y las artes, Museo chileno de arte precolombino.

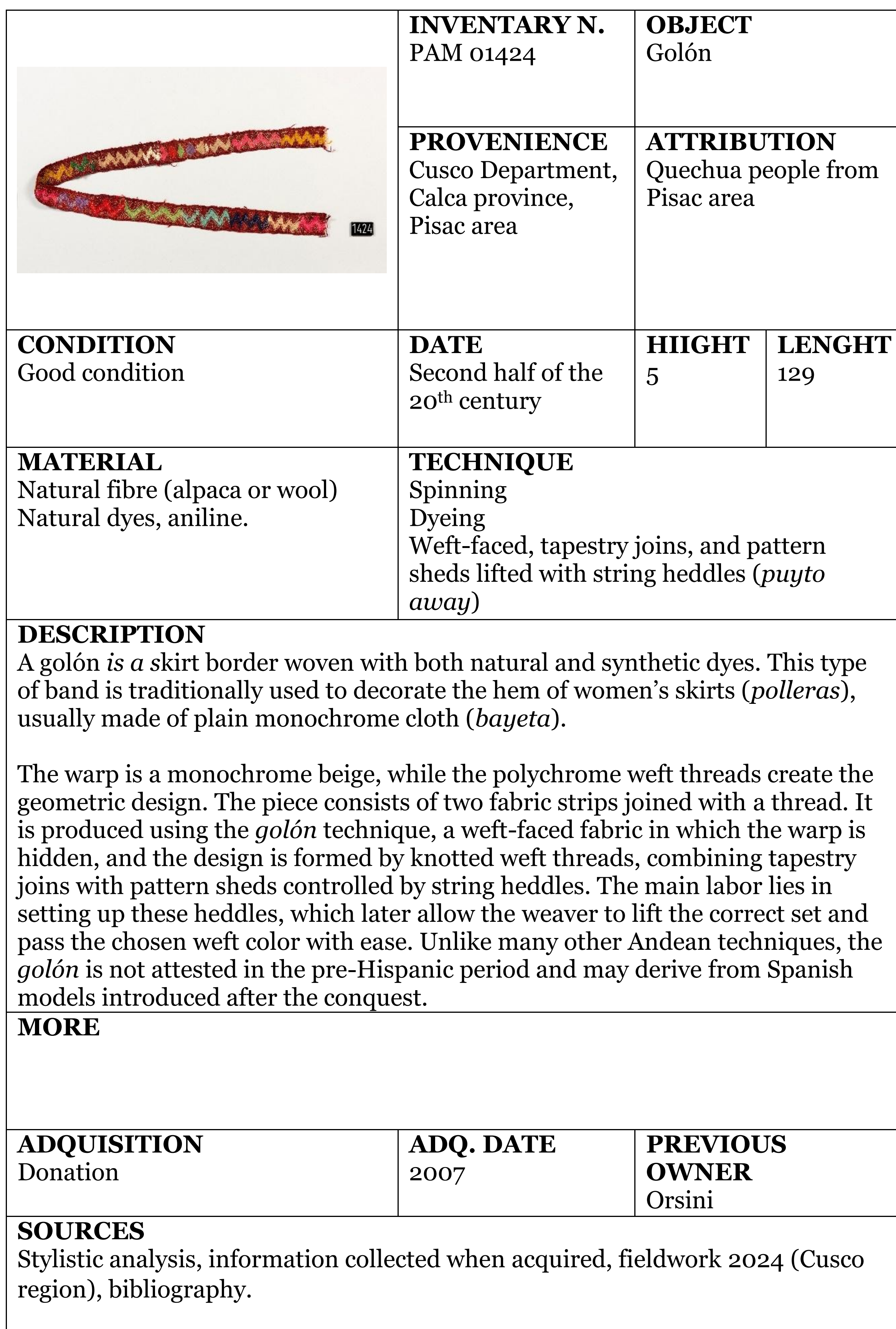
<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2"></td><td>INVENTARY N.
PAM 01423</td><td colspan="2">OBJECT
Golón</td></tr>
<tr><td>PROVENIENCE
Cusco Department, Calca province, Pisac area</td><td colspan="2">ATTRIBUTION
Quechua people from Pisac area</td></tr>
<tr><td>CONDITION
Good condition</td><td>DATE
Second half of the 20th century</td><td>HEIGHT
5</td><td>LENGHT
165</td></tr>
<tr><td>MATERIAL
Natural fibre (alpaca or wool)
Natural dyes, aniline.</td><td colspan="3">TECHNIQUE
Spinning
Dyeing
Weft-faced; tapestry joins and pattern sheds lifted with string heddles (puyto away)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">DESCRIPTION
A golón is a skirt border woven with both natural and synthetic dyes. This type of band is traditionally used to decorate the hem of women’s skirts (polleras), usually made of plain monochrome cloth (bayeta).

The warp is a monochrome beige, while the polychrome weft threads create the geometric design. The piece consists of two fabric strips joined with a thread. It is produced using the golón technique, a weft-faced fabric in which the warp is hidden, and the design is formed by knotted weft threads, combining tapestry joins with pattern sheds controlled by string heddles. The main labor lies in setting up these heddles, which later allow the weaver to lift the correct set and pass the chosen weft color with ease. Unlike many other Andean techniques, the golón is not attested in the pre-Hispanic period and may derive from Spanish models introduced after the conquest.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">MORE</td></tr>
<tr><td>ADQUISITION
Donation</td><td>ADQ. DATE
2007</td><td colspan="2">PREVIOUS OWNER
Orsini</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">SOURCES
Stylistic analysis, information collected when acquired, fieldwork 2024 (Cusco region), bibliography.</td></tr>
</table>

Callañaupa, N. & CTTC weavers. *(2017). Secrets of spinning, weaving, and knitting in the Peruvian highlands*. Throoms Books.

Rowe, A. P. (1977). *Warp-patterned Weaves of the Andes*. Textile Museum.

Solar, M.E. & Gonzales, S. (2017). *La memoria del tejido: Arte textil e identidad cultural de las provincias de Canchis (Cusco) y Melgar (Puno)*. Soluciones Prácticas.



	INVENTARY N. PAM 01424	**OBJECT** Golón	
	PROVENIENCE Cusco Department, Calca province, Pisac area	**ATTRIBUTION** Quechua people from Pisac area	
CONDITION Good condition	**DATE** Second half of the 20th century	**HIIGHT** 5	**LENGHT** 129
MATERIAL Natural fibre (alpaca or wool) Natural dyes, aniline.	**TECHNIQUE** Spinning Dyeing Weft-faced, tapestry joins, and pattern sheds lifted with string heddles (*puyto away*)		
DESCRIPTION A golón *is a s*kirt border woven with both natural and synthetic dyes. This type of band is traditionally used to decorate the hem of women's skirts (*polleras*), usually made of plain monochrome cloth (*bayeta*). The warp is a monochrome beige, while the polychrome weft threads create the geometric design. The piece consists of two fabric strips joined with a thread. It is produced using the *golón* technique, a weft-faced fabric in which the warp is hidden, and the design is formed by knotted weft threads, combining tapestry joins with pattern sheds controlled by string heddles. The main labor lies in setting up these heddles, which later allow the weaver to lift the correct set and pass the chosen weft color with ease. Unlike many other Andean techniques, the *golón* is not attested in the pre-Hispanic period and may derive from Spanish models introduced after the conquest.			
MORE			
ADQUISITION Donation	**ADQ. DATE** 2007	**PREVIOUS OWNER** Orsini	
SOURCES Stylistic analysis, information collected when acquired, fieldwork 2024 (Cusco region), bibliography.			

Callañaupa, N. & CTTC weavers. (2017). *Secrets of spinning, weaving, and knitting in the Peruvian highlands*. Throoms Books.

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<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2"></td><td>INVENTARY N.
PAM 01425</td><td colspan="2">OBJECT
Sling (waraka)</td></tr>
<tr><td>PROVENIENCE
Cusco Department,
Calca province,
Pisac area</td><td colspan="2">ATTRIBUTION
Quechua people from Pisac area</td></tr>
<tr><td>CONDITION
Good condition</td><td>DATE
20th century</td><td>HIGH</td><td>LENGHT
159 cm</td></tr>
<tr><td>MATERIAL
Natural fibre (coarse llama or alpaca fibers: bragas) in natural colours</td><td colspan="3">TECHNIQUE
Spinning
Dyeing
Braiding, needlework, tapestry (Amapola?)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">DESCRIPTION
Associated with camelid herding (michima waraka), employed to guide the animals, keep flocks together while grazing, and to frighten off birds preying on crops; it also functioned as a hunting weapon for small mammals and birds. When not in use, the sling is carried around the neck, serving as a distinctive symbol of pastoral identity. The rotational motion of the waraka—used both practically and ritually—becomes a key performative gesture during festivities, carnival dances (q'aqcha waraka), and other communal rituals, where it evokes the activity of herding.

Men are typically responsible for producing and using these slings. The fiber is roughly organized around a stick and rolled into small balls for later braiding. Herding slings usually retain up to four natural shades of fiber, while festive variants incorporate brightly dyed yarns.

The braiding technique, observed across highland herding communities and valleys with alpaca and llama flocks, involves working with four, eight, or sixteen paired strands, producing intricate geometric motifs.

Iconography: Geometric pattern (llama eyes). Most common decorative patterns include kantunta (linked to alpaca herding), the partridge eye, and puyto, among others.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">MORE</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><td>ADQUISITION
Donation</td><td>ADQ. DATE
2007</td><td>PREVIOUS OWNER
Orsini</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">SOURCE
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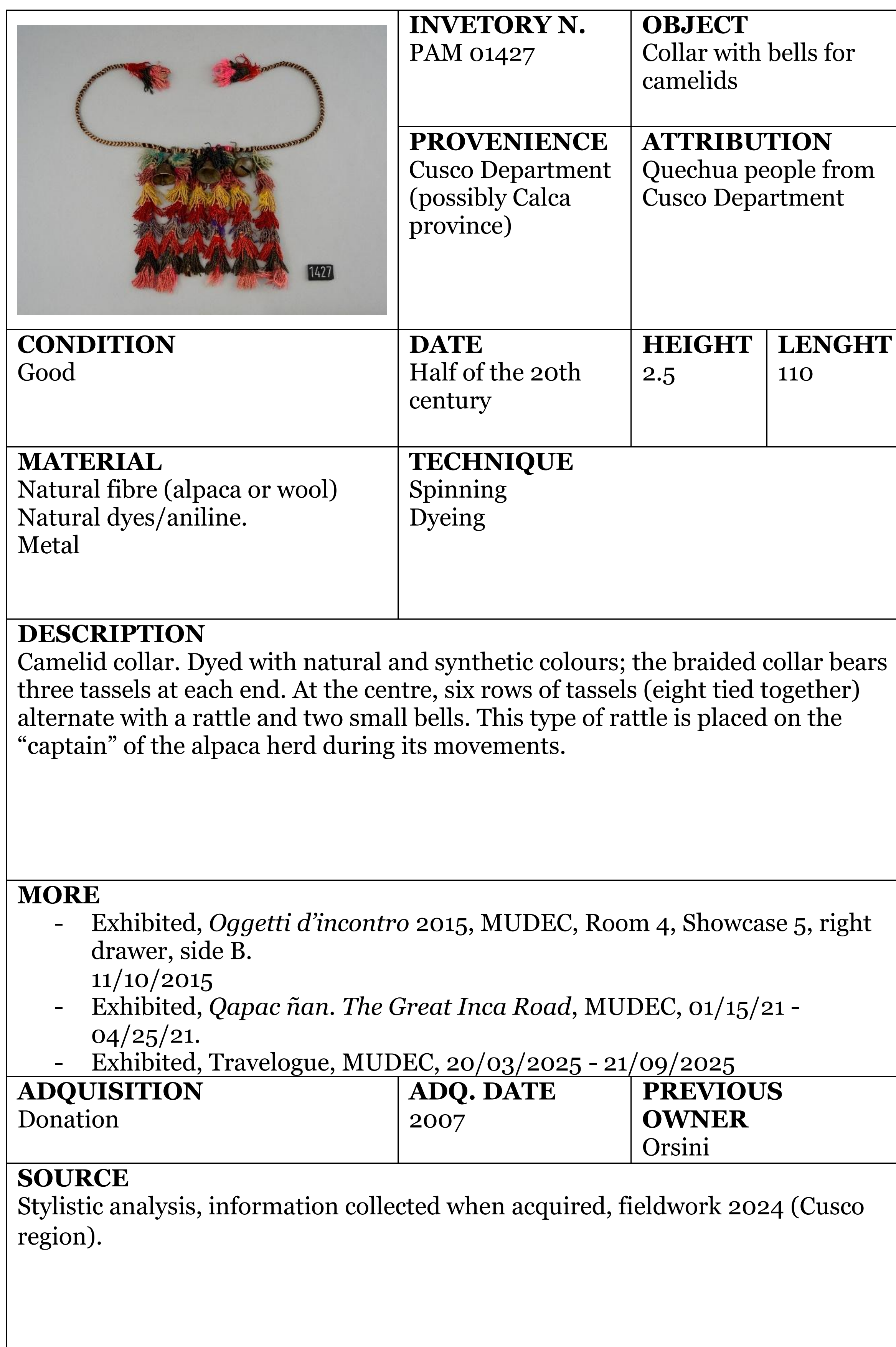
Solar, M.E. & Gonzales, S. (2017). <u>La memoria del tejido: Arte textil e identidad cultural de las provincias de Canchis (Cusco) y Melgar (Puno)</u>. Soluciones Prácticas.</td></tr>
</table>

	INVENTORY N. PAM 01426	**OBJECT** Sling (waraka)	
	PROVENIENCE Cusco Department, Calca province, Pisac area	**ATTRIBUTION** Quechua people from Pisac area	
CONDITION Good condition	**DATE** 20th century	**HIGH**	**LENGHT** 165 cm
MATERIAL Natural fibre (coarse llama or alpaca fibers: *bragas*) in natural colours	**TECHNIQUE** Spinning Dyeing Braiding, needlework, tapestry (Amapola?)		
DESCRIPTION Associated with camelid herding (*michima waraka*), employed to guide the animals, keep flocks together while grazing, and to frighten off birds preying on crops; it also functioned as a hunting weapon for small mammals and birds. When not in use, the sling is carried around the neck, serving as a distinctive symbol of pastoral identity. The rotational motion of the *waraka*—used both practically and ritually—becomes a key performative gesture during festivities, carnival dances (*q'aqcha waraka*), and other communal rituals, where it evokes the activity of herding. Men are typically responsible for producing and using these slings. The fiber is roughly organized around a stick and rolled into small balls for later braiding. Herding slings usually retain up to four natural shades of fiber, while festive variants incorporate brightly dyed yarns. The braiding technique, observed across highland herding communities and valleys with alpaca and llama flocks, involves working with four, eight, or sixteen paired strands, producing intricate geometric motifs. Iconography: Geometric pattern (llama eyes). Most common decorative patterns include *kantunta* (linked to alpaca herding), the partridge eye, and *puyto*, among others.			
MORE			

<table>
<tr><td>ADQUISITION
Donation</td><td>ADQ. DATE
2007</td><td>PREVIOUS OWNER
Orsini</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">FONTI
Stylistic analysis, information collected when acquired, fieldwork 2024 (Cusco region), bibliography.

Solar, M.E. & Gonzales, S. (2017). <u>La memoria del tejido: Arte textil e identidad cultural de las provincias de Canchis (Cusco) y Melgar (Puno)</u>. Soluciones Prácticas.</td></tr>
</table>



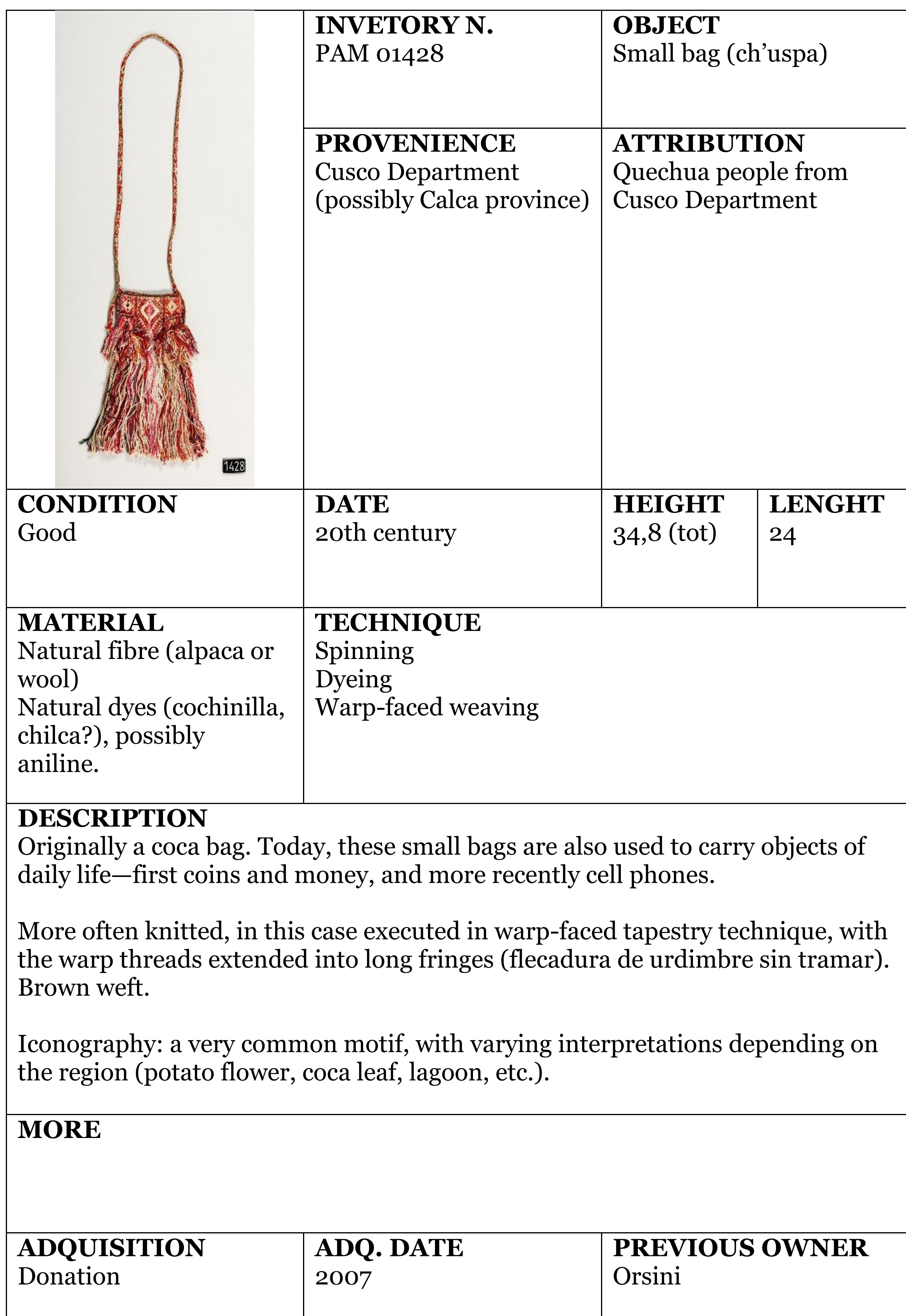
	INVETORY N. PAM 01427	**OBJECT** Collar with bells for camelids	
	PROVENIENCE Cusco Department (possibly Calca province)	**ATTRIBUTION** Quechua people from Cusco Department	
CONDITION Good	**DATE** Half of the 20th century	**HEIGHT** 2.5	**LENGHT** 110
MATERIAL Natural fibre (alpaca or wool) Natural dyes/aniline. Metal	**TECHNIQUE** Spinning Dyeing		

DESCRIPTION
Camelid collar. Dyed with natural and synthetic colours; the braided collar bears three tassels at each end. At the centre, six rows of tassels (eight tied together) alternate with a rattle and two small bells. This type of rattle is placed on the "captain" of the alpaca herd during its movements.

MORE
- Exhibited, *Oggetti d'incontro* 2015, MUDEC, Room 4, Showcase 5, right drawer, side B.
  11/10/2015
- Exhibited, *Qapac ñan. The Great Inca Road*, MUDEC, 01/15/21 - 04/25/21.
- Exhibited, Travelogue, MUDEC, 20/03/2025 - 21/09/2025

ADQUISITION Donation	**ADQ. DATE** 2007	**PREVIOUS OWNER** Orsini

SOURCE
Stylistic analysis, information collected when acquired, fieldwork 2024 (Cusco region).



	INVETORY N. PAM 01428	**OBJECT** Small bag (ch'uspa)	
	PROVENIENCE Cusco Department (possibly Calca province)	**ATTRIBUTION** Quechua people from Cusco Department	
CONDITION Good	**DATE** 20th century	**HEIGHT** 34,8 (tot)	**LENGHT** 24
MATERIAL Natural fibre (alpaca or wool) Natural dyes (cochinilla, chilca?), possibly aniline.	**TECHNIQUE** Spinning Dyeing Warp-faced weaving		
DESCRIPTION Originally a coca bag. Today, these small bags are also used to carry objects of daily life—first coins and money, and more recently cell phones. More often knitted, in this case executed in warp-faced tapestry technique, with the warp threads extended into long fringes (flecadura de urdimbre sin tramar). Brown weft. Iconography: a very common motif, with varying interpretations depending on the region (potato flower, coca leaf, lagoon, etc.).			
MORE			
ADQUISITION Donation	**ADQ. DATE** 2007	**PREVIOUS OWNER** Orsini	

SOURCE

Stylistic analysis, information collected when acquired, fieldwork 2024 (Cusco region), bibliography.

Callañaupa, N. & CTTC weavers. *(2017). Secrets of spinning, weaving, and knitting in the Peruvian highlands*. Throoms Books.

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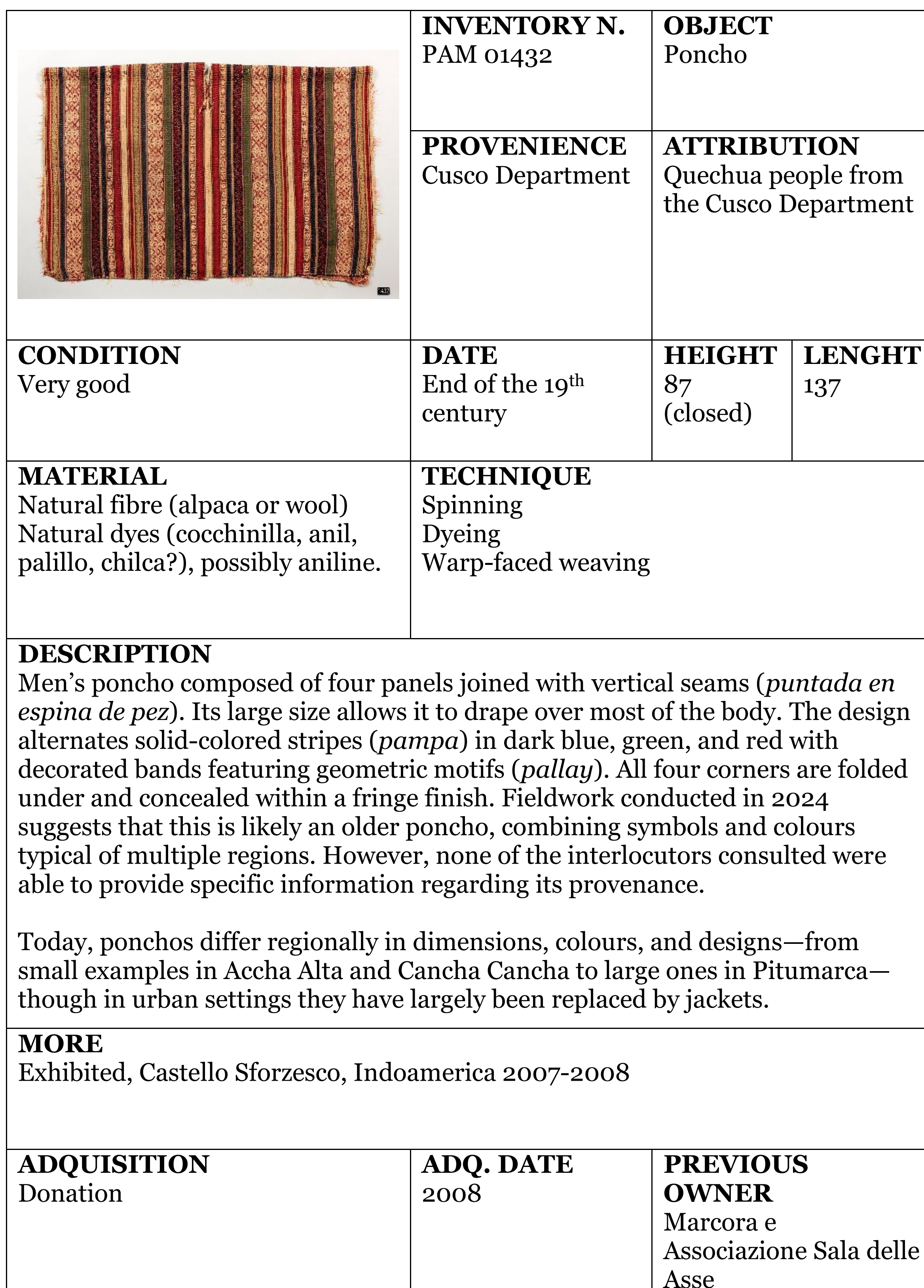
Hoces de la Guardia, S. & P. Brugnoli. (2006). *Manual de Técnicas textiles Andinas: terminaciones*. Consejo nacional de la cultura y las artes, Museo chileno de arte precolombino

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2"></td><td>INVENTORY N.
PAM 01432</td><td colspan="2">OBJECT
Poncho</td></tr>
<tr><td>PROVENIENCE
Cusco Department</td><td colspan="2">ATTRIBUTION
Quechua people from the Cusco Department</td></tr>
<tr><td>CONDITION
Very good</td><td>DATE
End of the 19th century</td><td>HEIGHT
87
(closed)</td><td>LENGHT
137</td></tr>
<tr><td>MATERIAL
Natural fibre (alpaca or wool)
Natural dyes (cocchinilla, anil, palillo, chilca?), possibly aniline.</td><td colspan="3">TECHNIQUE
Spinning
Dyeing
Warp-faced weaving</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">DESCRIPTION
Men’s poncho composed of four panels joined with vertical seams (puntada en espina de pez). Its large size allows it to drape over most of the body. The design alternates solid-colored stripes (pampa) in dark blue, green, and red with decorated bands featuring geometric motifs (pallay). All four corners are folded under and concealed within a fringe finish. Fieldwork conducted in 2024 suggests that this is likely an older poncho, combining symbols and colours typical of multiple regions. However, none of the interlocutors consulted were able to provide specific information regarding its provenance.

Today, ponchos differ regionally in dimensions, colours, and designs—from small examples in Accha Alta and Cancha Cancha to large ones in Pitumarca—though in urban settings they have largely been replaced by jackets.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">MORE
Exhibited, Castello Sforzesco, Indoamerica 2007-2008</td></tr>
<tr><td>ADQUISITION
Donation</td><td>ADQ. DATE
2008</td><td colspan="2">PREVIOUS OWNER
Marcora e Associazione Sala delle Asse</td></tr>
</table>

SOURCES
Stylistic analysis, information collected when acquired, fieldwork 2024 (Cusco region), bibliography.

Arnold, D. & Espejo, E. (2015). *The Andean Science of Weaving: Structures and techniques of Warp-faced Weaves*. Thames and Hudson.

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Corredor Puno-Cusco. (2003). *Sistematizacion: Obtencion de tintes naturales a partir de plantas tintoreas. Trabajo realizado por expertos locales*. Proyecto Desarrollo del Corredor Puno- Cusco - Urubamba.

D'Harcourt, R. (2002). *Textiles of ancient Peru and their techniques*. Dover Publications

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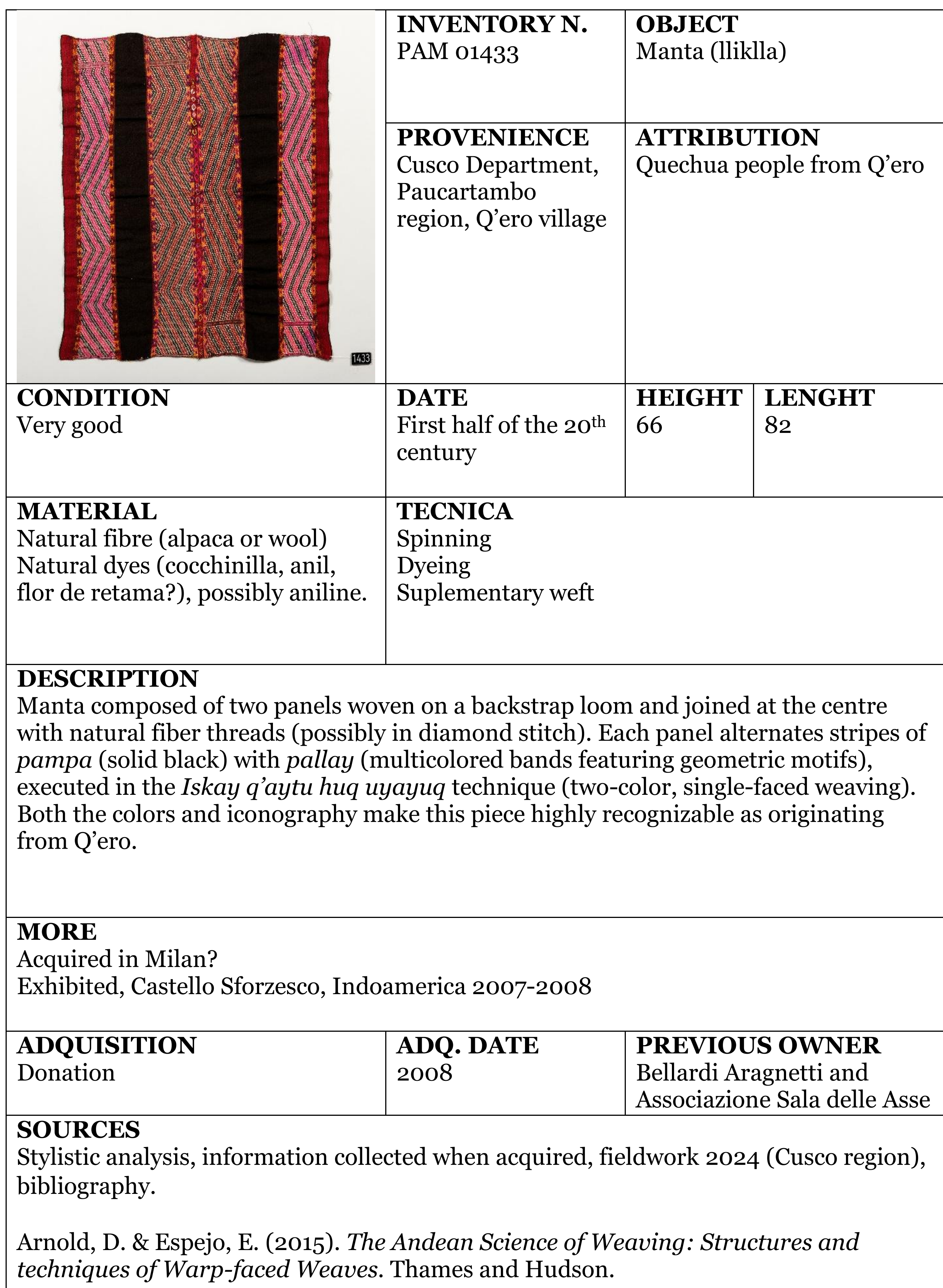

INVENTORY N.
PAM 01433

OBJECT
Manta (lliklla)

PROVENIENCE
Cusco Department, Paucartambo region, Q'ero village

ATTRIBUTION
Quechua people from Q'ero

CONDITION
Very good

DATE
First half of the 20th century

HEIGHT
66

LENGHT
82

MATERIAL
Natural fibre (alpaca or wool)
Natural dyes (cocchinilla, anil, flor de retama?), possibly aniline.

TECNICA
Spinning
Dyeing
Suplementary weft

DESCRIPTION
Manta composed of two panels woven on a backstrap loom and joined at the centre with natural fiber threads (possibly in diamond stitch). Each panel alternates stripes of *pampa* (solid black) with *pallay* (multicolored bands featuring geometric motifs), executed in the *Iskay q'aytu huq uyayuq* technique (two-color, single-faced weaving). Both the colors and iconography make this piece highly recognizable as originating from Q'ero.

MORE
Acquired in Milan?
Exhibited, Castello Sforzesco, Indoamerica 2007-2008

ADQUISITION
Donation

ADQ. DATE
2008

PREVIOUS OWNER
Bellardi Aragnetti and Associazione Sala delle Asse

SOURCES
Stylistic analysis, information collected when acquired, fieldwork 2024 (Cusco region), bibliography.

Arnold, D. & Espejo, E. (2015). *The Andean Science of Weaving: Structures and techniques of Warp-faced Weaves*. Thames and Hudson.

Corredor Puno-Cusco. (2003). *Sistematizacion: Obtencion de tintes naturales a partir de plantas tintoreas. Trabajo realizado por expertos locales*. Proyecto Desarrollo del Corredor Puno- Cusco - Urubamba.

MINCUL - Perù. (2019). *TEJIENDO LA VIDA: Los textiles en Q'ero*. Dirección Desconcentrada de Cultura Cusco

D'Harcourt, R. (2002). *Textiles of ancient Peru and their techniques*. Dover Publications.

Hoces de la Guardia, S. & P. Brugnoli. (2006). *Manual de Técnicas textiles Andinas: terminaciones*. Consejo nacional de la cultura y las artes, Museo chileno de arte precolombino

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2"> </td><td>INVENTORY N.
PAM 01435</td><td colspan="2">OBJECT
Hat (montera)</td></tr>
<tr><td>PROVENIENCE
Cusco Department, Canchis region, Raqcchi area</td><td colspan="2">ATTRIBUTION
Quechua people from Raqcchi area</td></tr>
<tr><td>CONDITION
Very good</td><td>DATE
End of the 20th century</td><td>HEIGHT</td><td>LENGHT
41</td></tr>
<tr><td>MATERIAL
Felt (wool)
Natural fibre (alpaca or wool)
Natural dyes, possibly aniline.</td><td colspan="3">TECHNIQUE
Embroidery</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">DESCRIPTION
The montera is a traditional woman’s hat of Spanish origin, typical of the Cusco region. Its size, shape, and decorative motifs vary across communities and often indicate the wearer’s place of origin; this example comes from Raqchi. The floral decoration recalls that found on women’s mantles. In general, everyday monteras are simple, whereas those reserved for festive occasions are richly decorated, often combining straw brims with elaborately adorned crowns. They are secured on the head with finely woven belts, bands, or ribbons—known regionally as watanas, golones, or jakimas—which may feature complex patterns and bead edging.

While monteras are primarily worn by women, in certain communities men holding official positions wear them during their term of office, and some groups of dancers also use them.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">MORE
Acquired at the Raqcchi market.
Exhibited, MUDEC Milano Città Mondo - Perù 2019</td></tr>
<tr><td>ADQUISITION
Donation</td><td>ADQ. DATE
2007</td><td colspan="2">PREVIOUS OWNER
Orsini</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">SOURCES
Stylistic analysis, information collected when acquired, fieldwork 2024 (Cusco region), bibliography.</td></tr>
</table>

Callañaupa, N. (2007). *Weaving in the Peruvian highlands: Dreaming patterns, weaving memories*. Center for Traditional Textiles of Cusco.

Callañaupa, N. & CTTC weavers. (2017). *Secrets of spinning, weaving, and knitting in the Peruvian highlands*. Throoms Books.

Comunidad Campesina Racchi. (2004). *Rescate e interpretación de la iconografía textil de la comunidad de Racchi: Distrito de San Pedro de Kacha, provincia de Canchis*. Proyecto Corredor Puno-Cusco

Corredor Puno-Cusco. (2003). *Sistematizacion: Obtencion de tintes naturales a partir de plantas tintoreas. Trabajo realizado por expertos locales*. Proyecto Desarrollo del Corredor Puno- Cusco - Urubamba.

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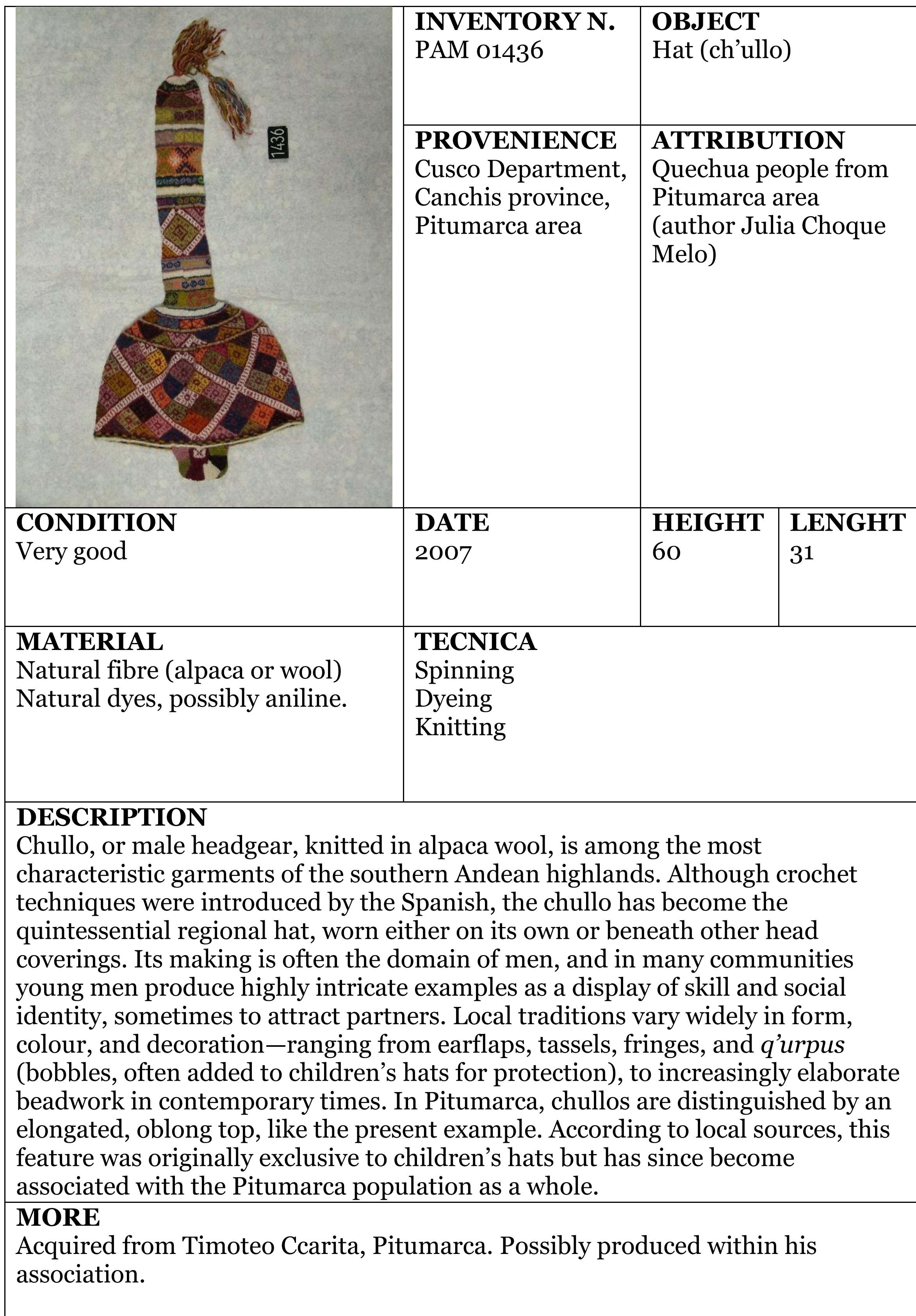
<tr><td rowspan="2">
</td><td>INVENTORY N.
PAM 01436</td><td colspan="2">OBJECT
Hat (ch’ullo)</td></tr>
<tr><td>PROVENIENCE
Cusco Department, Canchis province, Pitumarca area</td><td colspan="2">ATTRIBUTION
Quechua people from Pitumarca area (author Julia Choque Melo)</td></tr>
<tr><td>CONDITION
Very good</td><td>DATE
2007</td><td>HEIGHT
60</td><td>LENGHT
31</td></tr>
<tr><td>MATERIAL
Natural fibre (alpaca or wool)
Natural dyes, possibly aniline.</td><td colspan="3">TECNICA
Spinning
Dyeing
Knitting</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">DESCRIPTION
Chullo, or male headgear, knitted in alpaca wool, is among the most characteristic garments of the southern Andean highlands. Although crochet techniques were introduced by the Spanish, the chullo has become the quintessential regional hat, worn either on its own or beneath other head coverings. Its making is often the domain of men, and in many communities young men produce highly intricate examples as a display of skill and social identity, sometimes to attract partners. Local traditions vary widely in form, colour, and decoration—ranging from earflaps, tassels, fringes, and q’urpus (bobbles, often added to children’s hats for protection), to increasingly elaborate beadwork in contemporary times. In Pitumarca, chullos are distinguished by an elongated, oblong top, like the present example. According to local sources, this feature was originally exclusive to children’s hats but has since become associated with the Pitumarca population as a whole.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">MORE
Acquired from Timoteo Ccarita, Pitumarca. Possibly produced within his association.</td></tr>
</table>

ADQUISITION Donation	**ADQ. DATE** 2007	**PREVIOUS OWNER** Orsini

SOURCES
Stylistic analysis, information collected when acquired, fieldwork 2024 (Pitumarca), bibliography.

Callañaupa, N. & CTTC weavers. (2017*). Secrets of spinning, weaving, and knitting in the Peruvian highlands*. Throoms Books.

Callañaupa, N. (2007). Weaving in the Peruvian highlands: Dreaming patterns, weaving memories. Center for Traditional Textiles of Cusco.

Castañeda Toledo, G. A. (2020). El paisaje cultural andino en la iconografía textil del distrito de Pitumarca, Cusco. In MINCUL (ed.) *Guardianes de tradiciones* (pp. 471-514). MINCUL - Ministerio de Cultura.

Corredor Puno-Cusco. (2003). S*istematización: Obtención de tintes naturales a partir de plantas tintoreas. Trabajo realizado por expertos locales*. Proyecto Desarrollo del Corredor Puno- Cusco - Urubamba.

Lupo Imata, E. (2017). *Expediente técnico 4128-2017. Declaratoria de Patrimonio Cultural de la Nación a los conocimientos, técnicas y usos asociados al tejidos del distrito de Pitumarca*

	INVENTORY N. PAM 01437	**OBJECT** Unkuña	
	PROVENIENCE Cusco Department, Canchis province, Pitumarca area (possibly Cchilca village)	**ATTRIBUTION** Quechua people from Pitumarca area (author Manuela Vera Choque)	
CONDITION Good, some threads have been pulled. Colours appear discoloured possibly for being exposed to the sun	**DATE** Half of the 20th century	**HEIGHT** 40	**LENGHT** 39
MATERIAL Natural fibre (alpaca or wool) Natural dyes (chilca, cocchinilla, motte-motte?), possibly aniline	**TECHNIQUE** Spinning Dyeing Warp-faced weaving		

DESCRIZIONE

The *unkuña* is a small square carrying cloth whose size and use vary by region. Some finely patterned examples, often linked to unmarried women, serve personal purposes, while in places like Ocongate and Ausangate they are used to carry coca leaves or belongings in daily life and festivals, whereas larger, simpler versions from Pisac and Willoc function as lunch bags. Special ritual unkuñas are woven to wrap coca leaves or sacred objects, such as *enkayillus* (miniature animal figures), believed to protect the household. In Pitumarca, unkuñas are noted for their high quality.

Iconography (*pata y pallay*): alternating stripes of *pampa* (plain colours of natural fibre without dyeing) and *pallay* (multicolored stripes with geometric motifs). Diamond motifs are commonly interpreted as representations of the sun. Other symbols might be interpreted as *harpa, q'ucha* (lake), *papa tik'a* (potato flower), *alter-kuncha* (mesa ofrendoria)

Technique (urdimbre complementaria): P*alma y ramos* which consist in the combination of pata pallay (doble cara) and ligui. *Ley pallay* (una cara) in the centre. The later stripes are decorated with alternating the even and odd warps to create horizontal lines called *peinecillo* (Quechua *ñaqcha*).

MORE

Acquired in Pitumarca from Timoteo Ccarita, possibly from his personal collection.

<table>
<tr><td>ADQUISITION
Donation</td><td>ADQ. DATE
2008</td><td>PREVIOUS OWNER
Bellardi Aragnetti and Associazione Sala delle Asse</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">SOURCES
Stylistic analysis, information collected when acquired, fieldwork 2024 (Cusco region), bibliography.

Arnold, D. & Espejo, E. (2015). The Andean Science of Weaving: Structures and techniques of Warp-faced Weaves. Thames and Hudson.

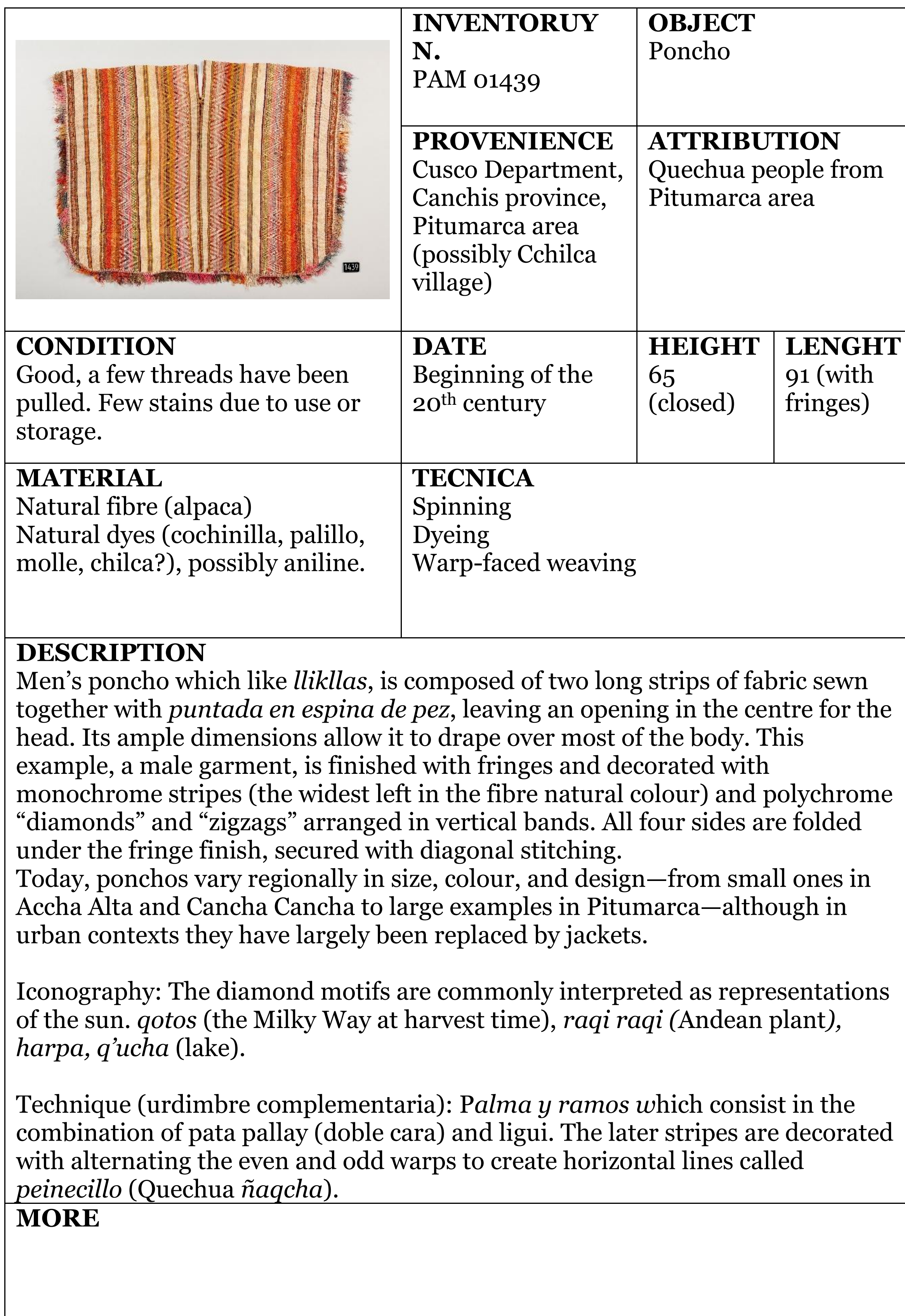
Castañeda Toledo, G. A. (2020). El paisaje cultural andino en la iconografía textil del distrito de Pitumarca, Cusco. In MINCUL (ed.) Guardianes de tradiciones (pp. 471-514). MINCUL - Ministerio de Cultura.

Corredor Puno-Cusco. (2003). Sistematización: Obtención de tintes naturales a partir de plantas tintoreas. Trabajo realizado por expertos locales. Proyecto Desarrollo del Corredor Puno- Cusco - Urubamba.

D’Harcourt, R. (2002). Textiles of ancient Peru and their techniques. Dover Publications.

Hoces de la Guardia, S. & P. Brugnoli. (2006). Manual de Técnicas textiles Andinas: terminaciones. Consejo nacional de la cultura y las artes, Museo chileno de arte precolombino

Lupo Imata, E. (2017). Expediente técnico 4128-2017. Declaratoria de Patrimonio Cultural de la Nación a los conocimientos, técnicas y usos asociados al tejidos del distrito de Pitumarca</td></tr>
</table>



<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2"></td><td>INVENTORUY N.
PAM 01439</td><td colspan="2">OBJECT
Poncho</td></tr>
<tr><td>PROVENIENCE
Cusco Department, Canchis province, Pitumarca area (possibly Cchilca village)</td><td colspan="2">ATTRIBUTION
Quechua people from Pitumarca area</td></tr>
<tr><td>CONDITION
Good, a few threads have been pulled. Few stains due to use or storage.</td><td>DATE
Beginning of the 20th century</td><td>HEIGHT
65 (closed)</td><td>LENGHT
91 (with fringes)</td></tr>
<tr><td>MATERIAL
Natural fibre (alpaca)
Natural dyes (cochinilla, palillo, molle, chilca?), possibly aniline.</td><td colspan="3">TECNICA
Spinning
Dyeing
Warp-faced weaving</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">DESCRIPTION
Men’s poncho which like llikllas, is composed of two long strips of fabric sewn together with puntada en espina de pez, leaving an opening in the centre for the head. Its ample dimensions allow it to drape over most of the body. This example, a male garment, is finished with fringes and decorated with monochrome stripes (the widest left in the fibre natural colour) and polychrome “diamonds” and “zigzags” arranged in vertical bands. All four sides are folded under the fringe finish, secured with diagonal stitching.
Today, ponchos vary regionally in size, colour, and design—from small ones in Accha Alta and Cancha Cancha to large examples in Pitumarca—although in urban contexts they have largely been replaced by jackets.

Iconography: The diamond motifs are commonly interpreted as representations of the sun. qotos (the Milky Way at harvest time), raqi raqi (Andean plant), harpa, q’ucha (lake).

Technique (urdimbre complementaria): Palma y ramos which consist in the combination of pata pallay (doble cara) and ligui. The later stripes are decorated with alternating the even and odd warps to create horizontal lines called peinecillo (Quechua ñaqcha).</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">MORE</td></tr>
</table>

ADQUISITION Donation	**ADQ. DATE** 2008	**PREVIOUS OWNER** Marcora e Associazione Sala delle Asse
SOURCES Stylistic analysis, information collected when acquired, fieldwork 2024 (Pitumarca), bibliography.		

Arnold, D. & Espejo, E. (2015). *The Andean Science of Weaving: Structures and techniques of Warp-faced Weaves*. Thames and Hudson.

Castañeda Toledo, G. A. (2020). El paisaje cultural andino en la iconografía textil del distrito de Pitumarca, Cusco. In MINCUL (ed.) *Guardianes de tradiciones* (pp. 471-514). MINCUL - Ministerio de Cultura.

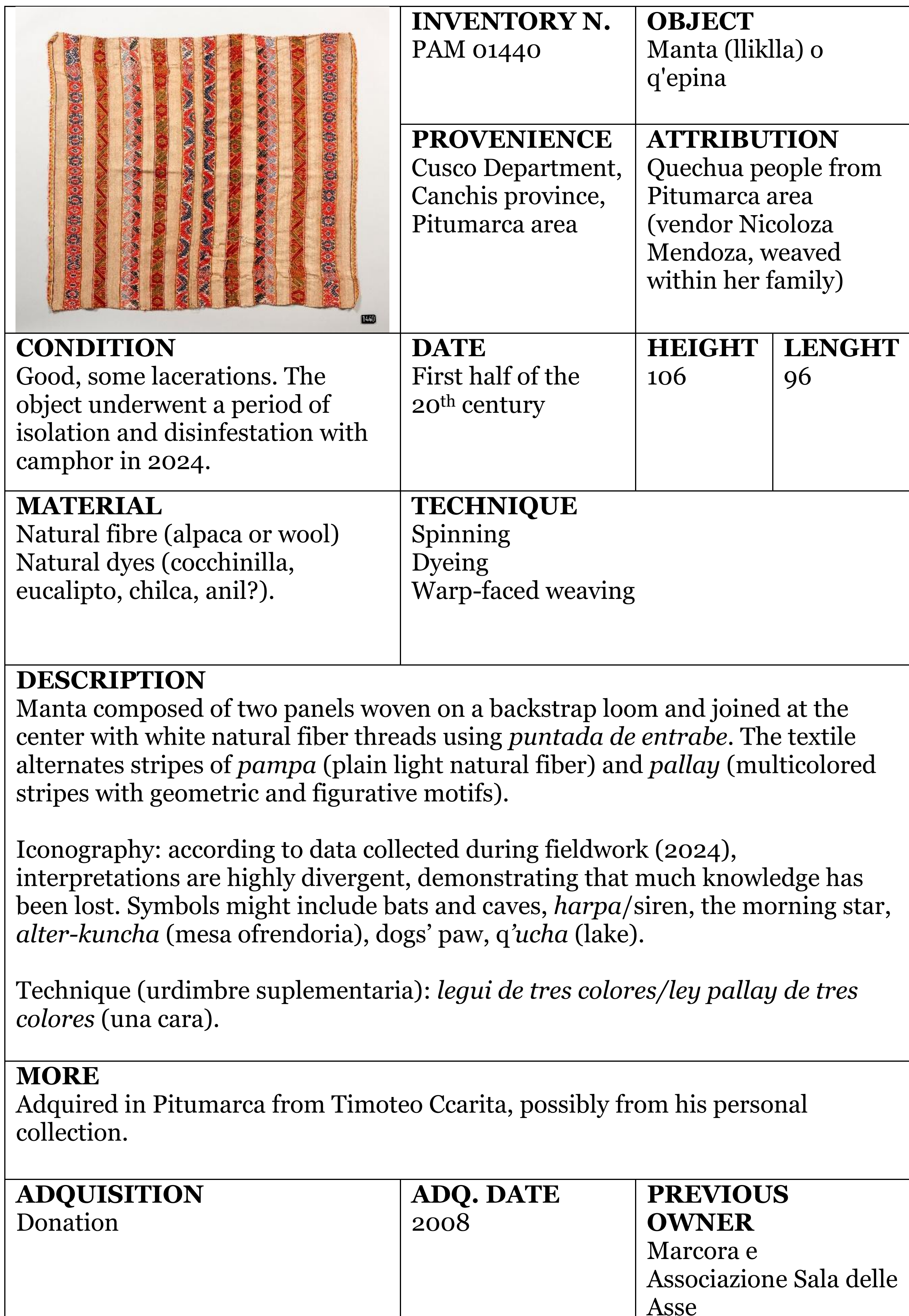
Corredor Puno-Cusco. (2003). S*istematización: Obtención de tintes naturales a partir de plantas tintoreas. Trabajo realizado por expertos locales*. Proyecto Desarrollo del Corredor Puno- Cusco - Urubamba.

D'Harcourt, R. (2002). *Textiles of ancient Peru and their techniques*. Dover Publications

Hoces de la Guardia, S. & P. Brugnoli. (2006). *Manual de Técnicas textiles Andinas: terminaciones*. Consejo nacional de la cultura y las artes, Museo chileno de arte precolombino.

Lupo Imata, E. (2017). *Expediente técnico 4128-2017. Declaratoria de Patrimonio Cultural de la Nación a los conocimientos, técnicas y usos asociados al tejidos del distrito de Pitumarca*

Solar, M.E. & Gonzales, S. (2017). *La memoria del tejido: Arte textil e identidad cultural de las provincias de Canchis (Cusco) y Melgar (Puno)*. Soluciones Prácticas.



<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2"></td><td>INVENTORY N.
PAM 01440</td><td colspan="2">OBJECT
Manta (lliklla) o q'epina</td></tr>
<tr><td>PROVENIENCE
Cusco Department, Canchis province, Pitumarca area</td><td colspan="2">ATTRIBUTION
Quechua people from Pitumarca area (vendor Nicoloza Mendoza, weaved within her family)</td></tr>
<tr><td>CONDITION
Good, some lacerations. The object underwent a period of isolation and disinfestation with camphor in 2024.</td><td>DATE
First half of the 20th century</td><td>HEIGHT
106</td><td>LENGHT
96</td></tr>
<tr><td>MATERIAL
Natural fibre (alpaca or wool)
Natural dyes (cocchinilla, eucalipto, chilca, anil?).</td><td colspan="3">TECHNIQUE
Spinning
Dyeing
Warp-faced weaving</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">DESCRIPTION
Manta composed of two panels woven on a backstrap loom and joined at the center with white natural fiber threads using puntada de entrabe. The textile alternates stripes of pampa (plain light natural fiber) and pallay (multicolored stripes with geometric and figurative motifs).

Iconography: according to data collected during fieldwork (2024), interpretations are highly divergent, demonstrating that much knowledge has been lost. Symbols might include bats and caves, harpa/siren, the morning star, alter-kuncha (mesa ofrendoria), dogs' paw, q'ucha (lake).

Technique (urdimbre suplementaria): legui de tres colores/ley pallay de tres colores (una cara).</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">MORE
Adquired in Pitumarca from Timoteo Ccarita, possibly from his personal collection.</td></tr>
<tr><td>ADQUISITION
Donation</td><td>ADQ. DATE
2008</td><td colspan="2">PREVIOUS OWNER
Marcora e Associazione Sala delle Asse</td></tr>
</table>

SOURCES
Stylistic analysis, information collected when acquired, fieldwork 2024 (Pitumarca), bibliography.

Arnold, D. & Espejo, E. (2015). *The Andean Science of Weaving: Structures and techniques of Warp-faced Weaves*. Thames and Hudson.

Castañeda Toledo, G. A. (2020). El paisaje cultural andino en la iconografía textil del distrito de Pitumarca, Cusco. In MINCUL (ed.) *Guardianes de tradiciones* (pp. 471-514). MINCUL - Ministerio de Cultura.

Corredor Puno-Cusco. (2003). S*istematización: Obtención de tintes naturales a partir de plantas tintoreas. Trabajo realizado por expertos locales*. Proyecto Desarrollo del Corredor Puno- Cusco - Urubamba.

D'Harcourt, R. (2002). *Textiles of ancient Peru and their techniques*. Dover Publications

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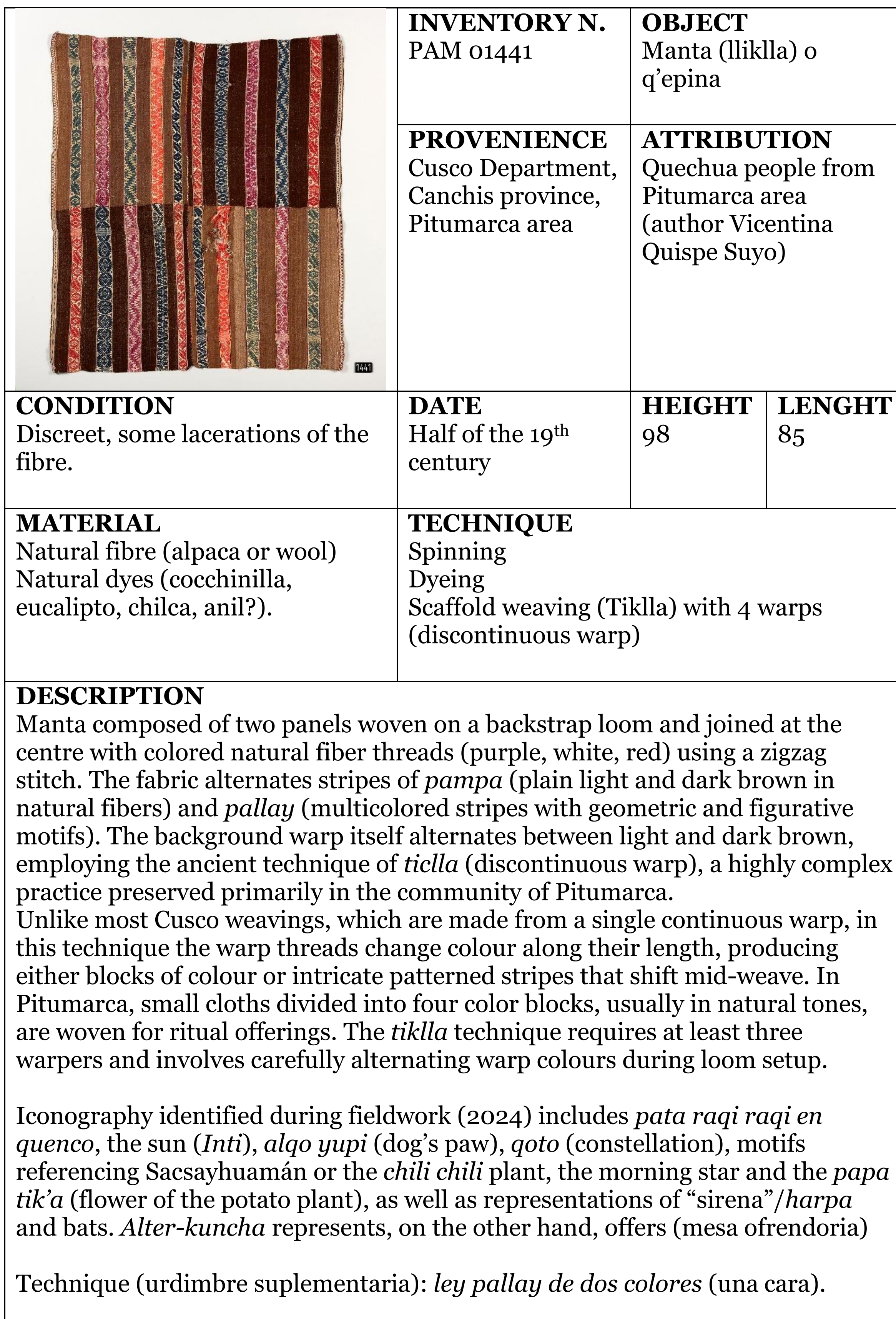
Lupo Imata, E. (2017). *Expediente técnico 4128-2017. Declaratoria de Patrimonio Cultural de la Nación a los conocimientos, técnicas y usos asociados al tejido del distrito de Pitumarca*

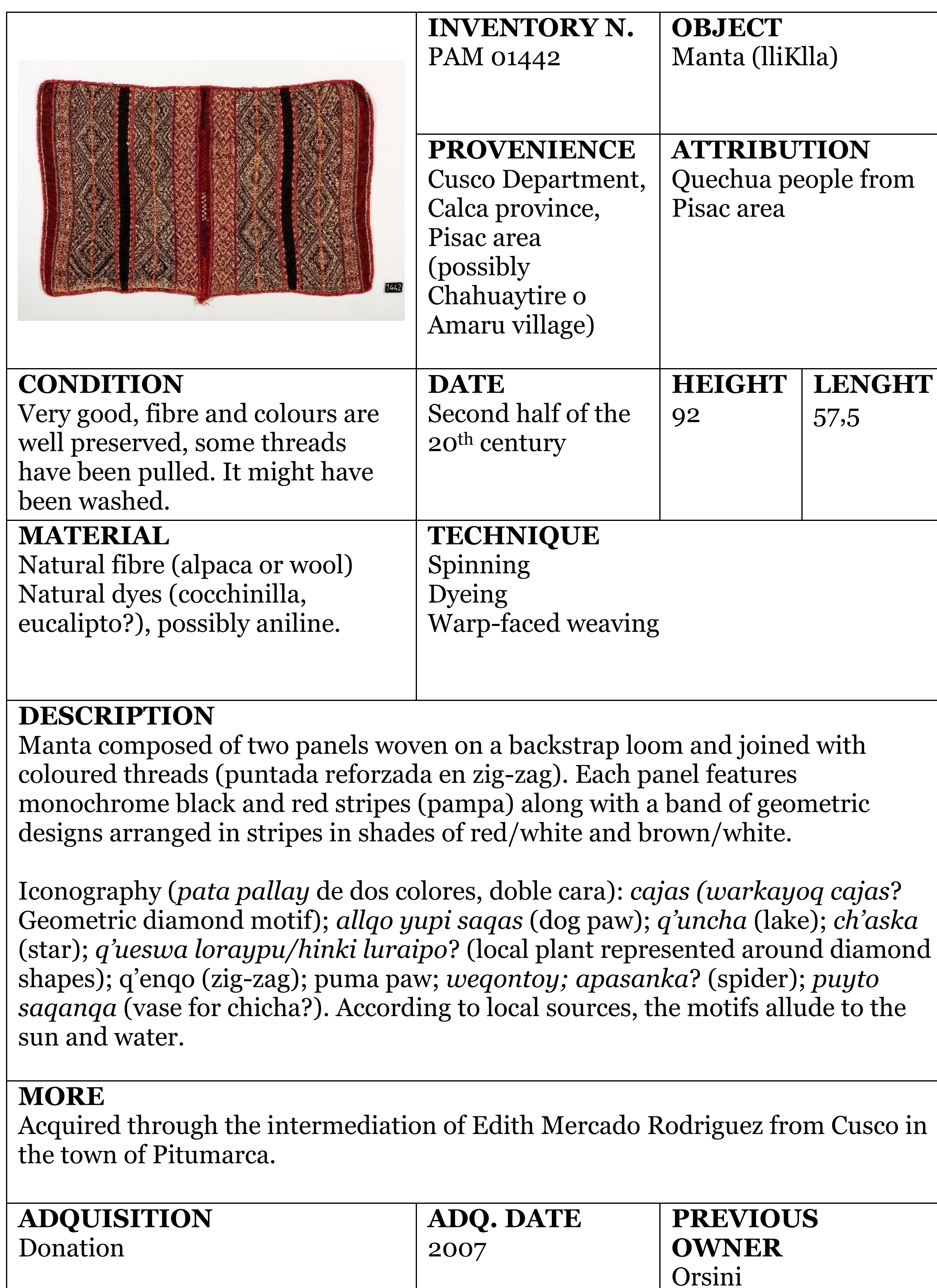


<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2"></td><td>INVENTORY N.
PAM 01441</td><td colspan="2">OBJECT
Manta (lliklla) o q’epina</td></tr>
<tr><td>PROVENIENCE
Cusco Department, Canchis province, Pitumarca area</td><td colspan="2">ATTRIBUTION
Quechua people from Pitumarca area (author Vicentina Quispe Suyo)</td></tr>
<tr><td>CONDITION
Discreet, some lacerations of the fibre.</td><td>DATE
Half of the 19th century</td><td>HEIGHT
98</td><td>LENGHT
85</td></tr>
<tr><td>MATERIAL
Natural fibre (alpaca or wool)
Natural dyes (cocchinilla, eucalipto, chilca, anil?).</td><td colspan="3">TECHNIQUE
Spinning
Dyeing
Scaffold weaving (Tiklla) with 4 warps (discontinuous warp)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">DESCRIPTION
Manta composed of two panels woven on a backstrap loom and joined at the centre with colored natural fiber threads (purple, white, red) using a zigzag stitch. The fabric alternates stripes of pampa (plain light and dark brown in natural fibers) and pallay (multicolored stripes with geometric and figurative motifs). The background warp itself alternates between light and dark brown, employing the ancient technique of ticlla (discontinuous warp), a highly complex practice preserved primarily in the community of Pitumarca.
Unlike most Cusco weavings, which are made from a single continuous warp, in this technique the warp threads change colour along their length, producing either blocks of colour or intricate patterned stripes that shift mid-weave. In Pitumarca, small cloths divided into four color blocks, usually in natural tones, are woven for ritual offerings. The tiklla technique requires at least three warpers and involves carefully alternating warp colours during loom setup.

Iconography identified during fieldwork (2024) includes pata raqi raqi en quenco, the sun (Inti), alqo yupi (dog’s paw), qoto (constellation), motifs referencing Sacsayhuamán or the chili chili plant, the morning star and the papa tik’a (flower of the potato plant), as well as representations of “sirena”/harpa and bats. Alter-kuncha represents, on the other hand, offers (mesa ofrendoria)

Technique (urdimbre suplementaria): ley pallay de dos colores (una cara).</td></tr>
</table>

MORE Adquired in Pitumarca from Timoteo Ccarita, possibly from his personal collection.		
ADQUISITION Donation	**ADQ. DATE** 2008	**PREVIOUS OWNER** Marcora e Associazione Sala delle Asse
SOURCES Stylistic analysis, information collected when acquired, fieldwork 2024 (Pitumarca), bibliography. Arnold, D. & Espejo, E. (2015). *The Andean Science of Weaving: Structures and techniques of Warp-faced Weaves*. Thames and Hudson. Callañaupa, N. & CTTC weavers. (2017). *Secrets of spinning, weaving, and knitting in the Peruvian highlands*. Throoms Books. Callañaupa, N. (2007). *Weaving in the Peruvian highlands: Dreaming patterns, weaving memories*. Center for Traditional Textiles of Cusco. Castañeda Toledo, G. A. (2020). El paisaje cultural andino en la iconografía textil del distrito de Pitumarca, Cusco. In MINCUL (ed.) *Guardianes de tradiciones* (pp. 471-514). MINCUL - Ministerio de Cultura. Corredor Puno-Cusco. (2003). S*istematización: Obtención de tintes naturales a partir de plantas tintoreas. Trabajo realizado por expertos locales*. Proyecto Desarrollo del Corredor Puno- Cusco - Urubamba. D'Harcourt, R. (2002). *Textiles of ancient Peru and their techniques*. Dover Publications Hoces de la Guardia, S. & P. Brugnoli. (2006). *Manual de Técnicas textiles Andinas: terminaciones*. Consejo nacional de la cultura y las artes, Museo chileno de arte precolombino Lupo Imata, E. (2017). *Expediente técnico 4128-2017. Declaratoria de Patrimonio Cultural de la Nación a los conocimientos, técnicas y usos asociados al tejido del distrito de Pitumarca*		



<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2"></td><td>INVENTORY N.
PAM 01442</td><td colspan="2">OBJECT
Manta (lliKlla)</td></tr>
<tr><td>PROVENIENCE
Cusco Department, Calca province, Pisac area (possibly Chahuaytire o Amaru village)</td><td colspan="2">ATTRIBUTION
Quechua people from Pisac area</td></tr>
<tr><td>CONDITION
Very good, fibre and colours are well preserved, some threads have been pulled. It might have been washed.</td><td>DATE
Second half of the 20th century</td><td>HEIGHT
92</td><td>LENGHT
57,5</td></tr>
<tr><td>MATERIAL
Natural fibre (alpaca or wool)
Natural dyes (cocchinilla, eucalipto?), possibly aniline.</td><td colspan="3">TECHNIQUE
Spinning
Dyeing
Warp-faced weaving</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">DESCRIPTION
Manta composed of two panels woven on a backstrap loom and joined with coloured threads (puntada reforzada en zig-zag). Each panel features monochrome black and red stripes (pampa) along with a band of geometric designs arranged in stripes in shades of red/white and brown/white.

Iconography (pata pallay de dos colores, doble cara): cajas (warkayoq cajas? Geometric diamond motif); allqo yupi saqas (dog paw); q’uncha (lake); ch’aska (star); q’ueswa loraypu/hinki luraipo? (local plant represented around diamond shapes); q’enqo (zig-zag); puma paw; weqontoy; apasanka? (spider); puyto saqanqa (vase for chicha?). According to local sources, the motifs allude to the sun and water.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">MORE
Acquired through the intermediation of Edith Mercado Rodriguez from Cusco in the town of Pitumarca.</td></tr>
<tr><td>ADQUISITION
Donation</td><td>ADQ. DATE
2007</td><td colspan="2">PREVIOUS OWNER
Orsini</td></tr>
</table>

SOURCES
Stylistic analysis, information collected when acquired, fieldwork 2024 (Cusco region), bibliography.

Arnold, D. & Espejo, E. (2015). *The Andean Science of Weaving: Structures and techniques of Warp-faced Weaves*. Thames and Hudson.

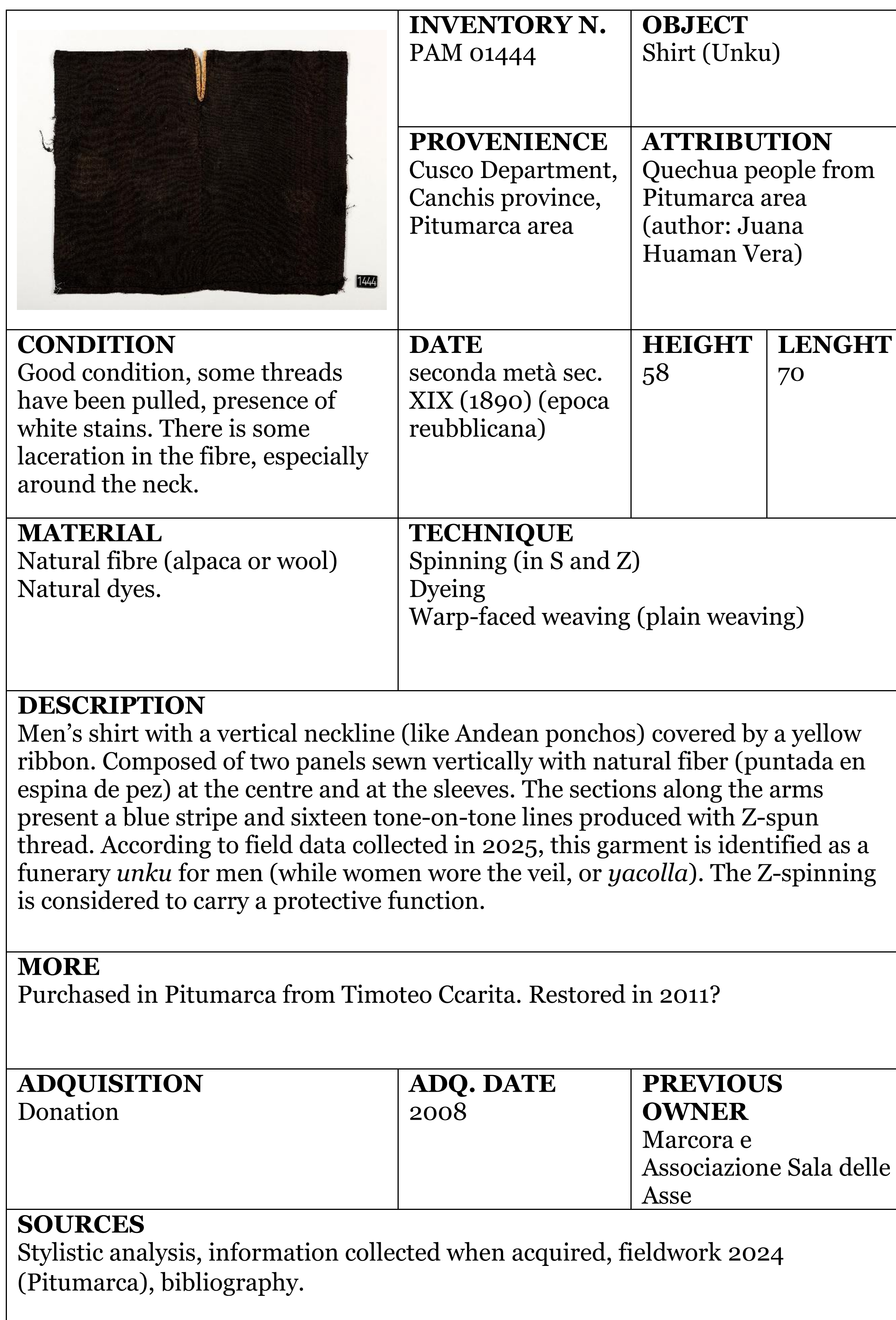
Comunidades *Campesinas Ccachin, Ccollana, Choquecancha, Quishuarani, Rosaspata. (2005). Rescate e interpretación de la iconografía textil de las comunidades de Ccachin, Ccollana, Choquecancha, Quishuarani, Rosaspata: Distrito de Lares, Provincia de Calca*. Proyecto Corredor Puno-Cusco

Corredor Puno-Cusco. (2003). S*istematización: Obtención de tintes naturales a partir de plantas tintoreas. Trabajo realizado por expertos locales*. Proyecto Desarrollo del Corredor Puno- Cusco - Urubamba.

D'Harcourt, R. (2002). *Textiles of ancient Peru and their techniques*. Dover Publications.

Hoces de la Guardia, S. & P. Brugnoli. (2006). *Manual de Técnicas textiles Andinas: terminaciones*. Consejo nacional de la cultura y las artes, Museo chileno de arte precolombino

Seibold, K. E. (1992). Textiles and Cosmology in Choquecancha, Cuzco, Peru. In Dover, R. V. H., Seibold K. E. & McDowell, J. H. (Eds). *Andean cosmologies, through time: persistence and emergence* (pp. 166-201). Indiana University Press.



	INVENTORY N. PAM 01444	**OBJECT** Shirt (Unku)	
	PROVENIENCE Cusco Department, Canchis province, Pitumarca area	**ATTRIBUTION** Quechua people from Pitumarca area (author: Juana Huaman Vera)	
CONDITION Good condition, some threads have been pulled, presence of white stains. There is some laceration in the fibre, especially around the neck.	**DATE** seconda metà sec. XIX (1890) (epoca reubblicana)	**HEIGHT** 58	**LENGHT** 70
MATERIAL Natural fibre (alpaca or wool) Natural dyes.	**TECHNIQUE** Spinning (in S and Z) Dyeing Warp-faced weaving (plain weaving)		
DESCRIPTION Men's shirt with a vertical neckline (like Andean ponchos) covered by a yellow ribbon. Composed of two panels sewn vertically with natural fiber (puntada en espina de pez) at the centre and at the sleeves. The sections along the arms present a blue stripe and sixteen tone-on-tone lines produced with Z-spun thread. According to field data collected in 2025, this garment is identified as a funerary *unku* for men (while women wore the veil, or *yacolla*). The Z-spinning is considered to carry a protective function.			
MORE Purchased in Pitumarca from Timoteo Ccarita. Restored in 2011?			
ADQUISITION Donation	**ADQ. DATE** 2008	**PREVIOUS OWNER** Marcora e Associazione Sala delle Asse	
SOURCES Stylistic analysis, information collected when acquired, fieldwork 2024 (Pitumarca), bibliography.			

Arnold, D. & Espejo, E. (2015). *The Andean Science of Weaving: Structures and techniques of Warp-faced Weaves*. Thames and Hudson.

D'Harcourt, R. (2002). *Textiles of ancient Peru and their techniques*. Dover Publications

Hoces de la Guardia, S. & P. Brugnoli. (2006). *Manual de Técnicas textiles Andinas: terminaciones*. Consejo nacional de la cultura y las artes, Museo chileno de arte precolombino

Castañeda Toledo, G. A. (2020). El paisaje cultural andino en la iconografía textil del distrito de Pitumarca, Cusco. In MINCUL (ed.) *Guardianes de tradiciones* (pp. 471-514). MINCUL - Ministerio de Cultura.

Lupo Imata, E. (2017). *Expediente técnico 4128-2017. Declaratoria de Patrimonio Cultural de la Nación a los conocimientos, técnicas y usos asociados al tejidos del distrito de Pitumarca*

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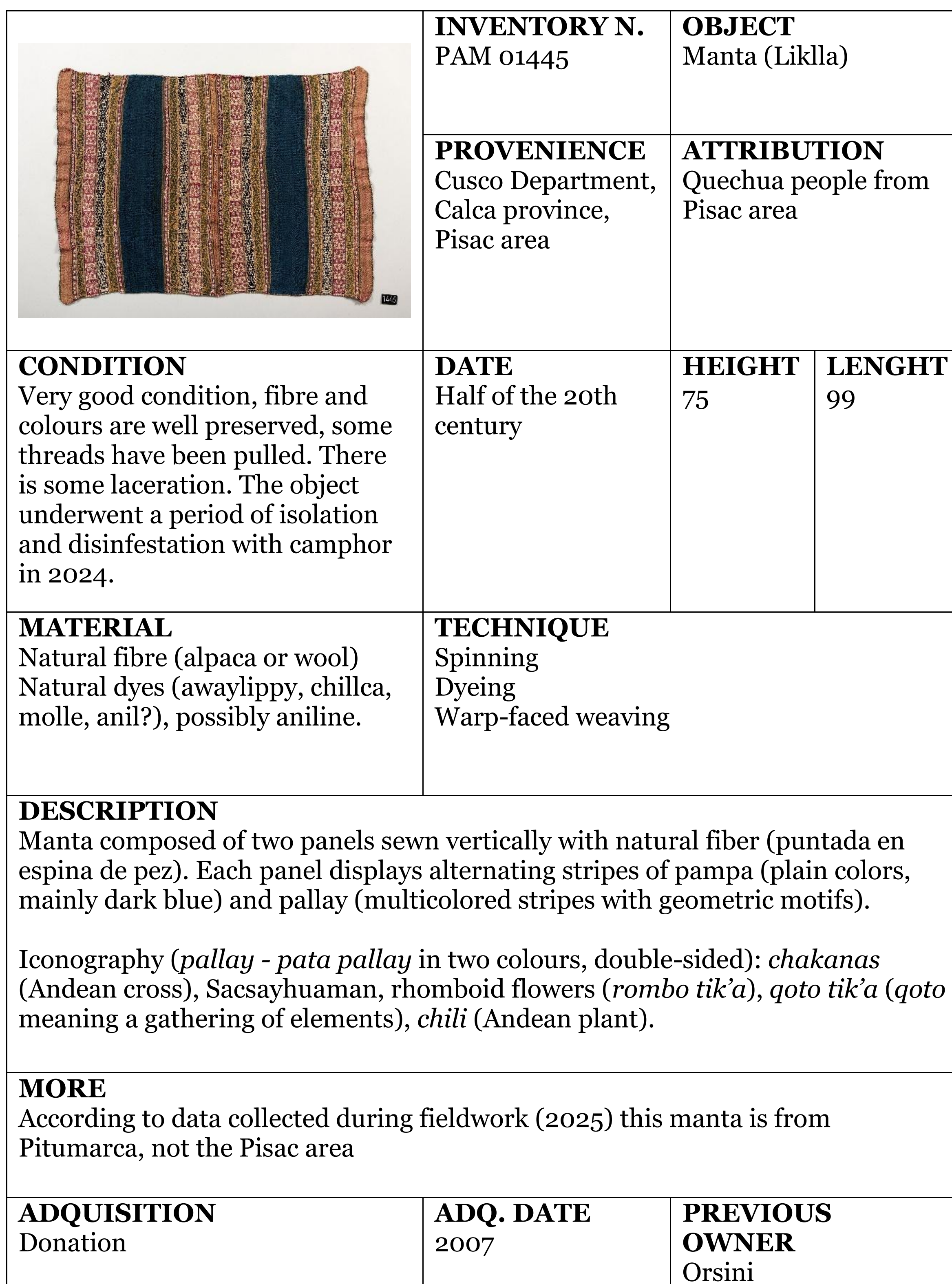
<tr><td rowspan="2"></td><td>INVENTORY N.
PAM 01445</td><td colspan="2">OBJECT
Manta (Liklla)</td></tr>
<tr><td>PROVENIENCE
Cusco Department, Calca province, Pisac area</td><td colspan="2">ATTRIBUTION
Quechua people from Pisac area</td></tr>
<tr><td>CONDITION
Very good condition, fibre and colours are well preserved, some threads have been pulled. There is some laceration. The object underwent a period of isolation and disinfestation with camphor in 2024.</td><td>DATE
Half of the 20th century</td><td>HEIGHT
75</td><td>LENGHT
99</td></tr>
<tr><td>MATERIAL
Natural fibre (alpaca or wool)
Natural dyes (awaylippy, chillca, molle, anil?), possibly aniline.</td><td colspan="3">TECHNIQUE
Spinning
Dyeing
Warp-faced weaving</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">DESCRIPTION
Manta composed of two panels sewn vertically with natural fiber (puntada en espina de pez). Each panel displays alternating stripes of pampa (plain colors, mainly dark blue) and pallay (multicolored stripes with geometric motifs).

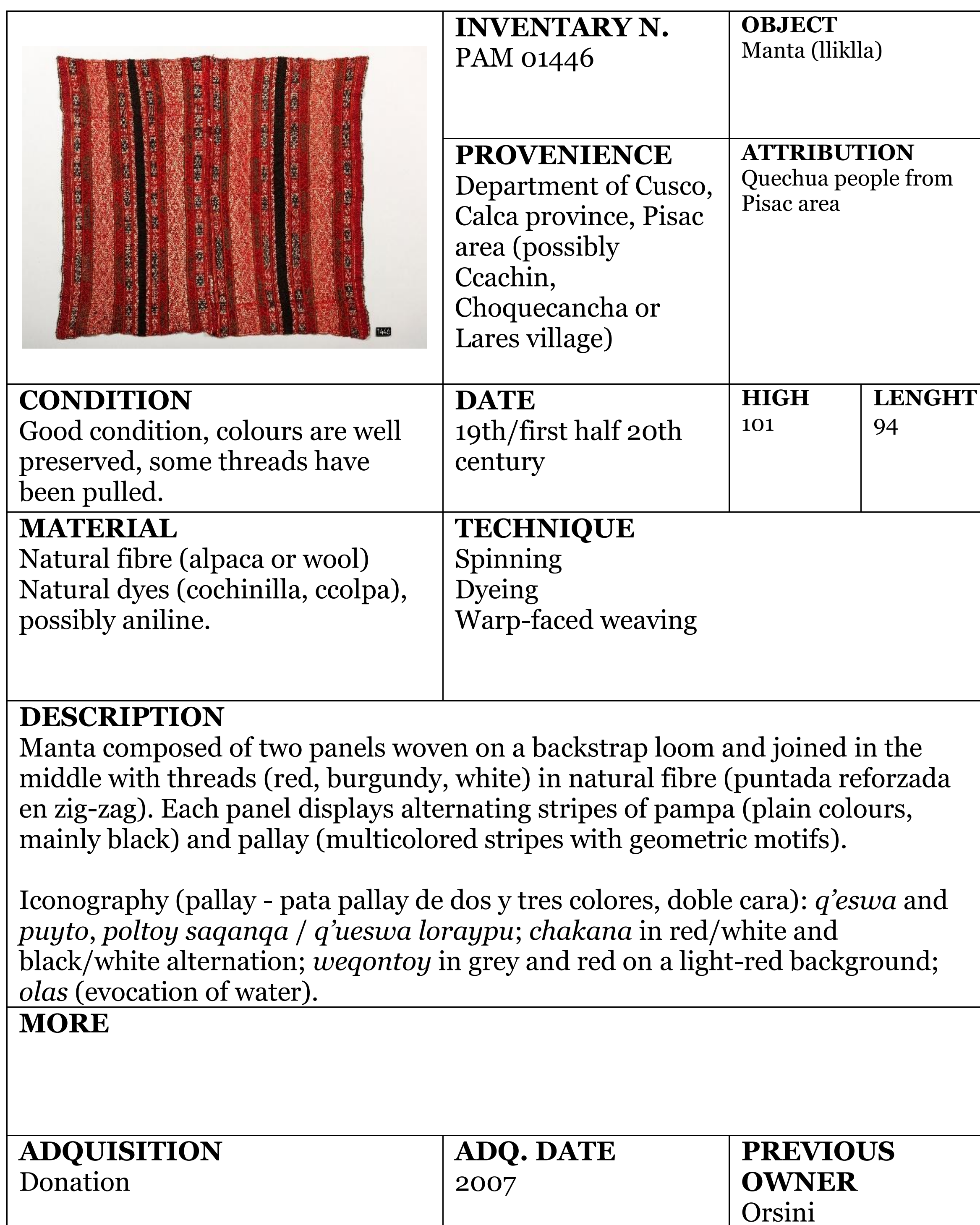
Iconography (pallay - pata pallay in two colours, double-sided): chakanas (Andean cross), Sacsayhuaman, rhomboid flowers (rombo tik'a), qoto tik'a (qoto meaning a gathering of elements), chili (Andean plant).</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">MORE
According to data collected during fieldwork (2025) this manta is from Pitumarca, not the Pisac area</td></tr>
<tr><td>ADQUISITION
Donation</td><td>ADQ. DATE
2007</td><td colspan="2">PREVIOUS OWNER
Orsini</td></tr>
</table>

SOURCES
Stylistic analysis, information collected when acquired, fieldwork 2024 (Cusco region, Pitumarca), bibliography.

Arnold, D. & Espejo, E. (2015). *The Andean Science of Weaving: Structures and techniques of Warp-faced Weaves*. Thames and Hudson.

D'Harcourt, R. (2002). Textiles of ancient Peru and their techniques. Dover Publications

Hoces de la Guardia, S. & P. Brugnoli. (2006). *Manual de Técnicas textiles Andinas: terminaciones*. Consejo nacional de la cultura y las artes, Museo chileno de arte precolombino

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2"></td><td>INVENTARY N.
PAM 01446</td><td colspan="2">OBJECT
Manta (lliklla)</td></tr>
<tr><td>PROVENIENCE
Department of Cusco, Calca province, Pisac area (possibly Ccachin, Choquecancha or Lares village)</td><td colspan="2">ATTRIBUTION
Quechua people from Pisac area</td></tr>
<tr><td>CONDITION
Good condition, colours are well preserved, some threads have been pulled.</td><td>DATE
19th/first half 20th century</td><td>HIGH
101</td><td>LENGHT
94</td></tr>
<tr><td>MATERIAL
Natural fibre (alpaca or wool)
Natural dyes (cochinilla, ccolpa), possibly aniline.</td><td colspan="3">TECHNIQUE
Spinning
Dyeing
Warp-faced weaving</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">DESCRIPTION
Manta composed of two panels woven on a backstrap loom and joined in the middle with threads (red, burgundy, white) in natural fibre (puntada reforzada en zig-zag). Each panel displays alternating stripes of pampa (plain colours, mainly black) and pallay (multicolored stripes with geometric motifs).

Iconography (pallay - pata pallay de dos y tres colores, doble cara): q’eswa and puyto, poltoy saqanqa / q’ueswa loraypu; chakana in red/white and black/white alternation; weqontoy in grey and red on a light-red background; olas (evocation of water).</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">MORE</td></tr>
<tr><td>ADQUISITION
Donation</td><td>ADQ. DATE
2007</td><td colspan="2">PREVIOUS OWNER
Orsini</td></tr>
</table>

SOURCE
Stylistic analysis, information collected when acquired, fieldwork 2024 (Lares and Choquecancha), bibliography.

Arnold, D. & Espejo, E. (2015). The Andean Science of Weaving: Structures and techniques of Warp-faced Weaves. Thames and Hudson.

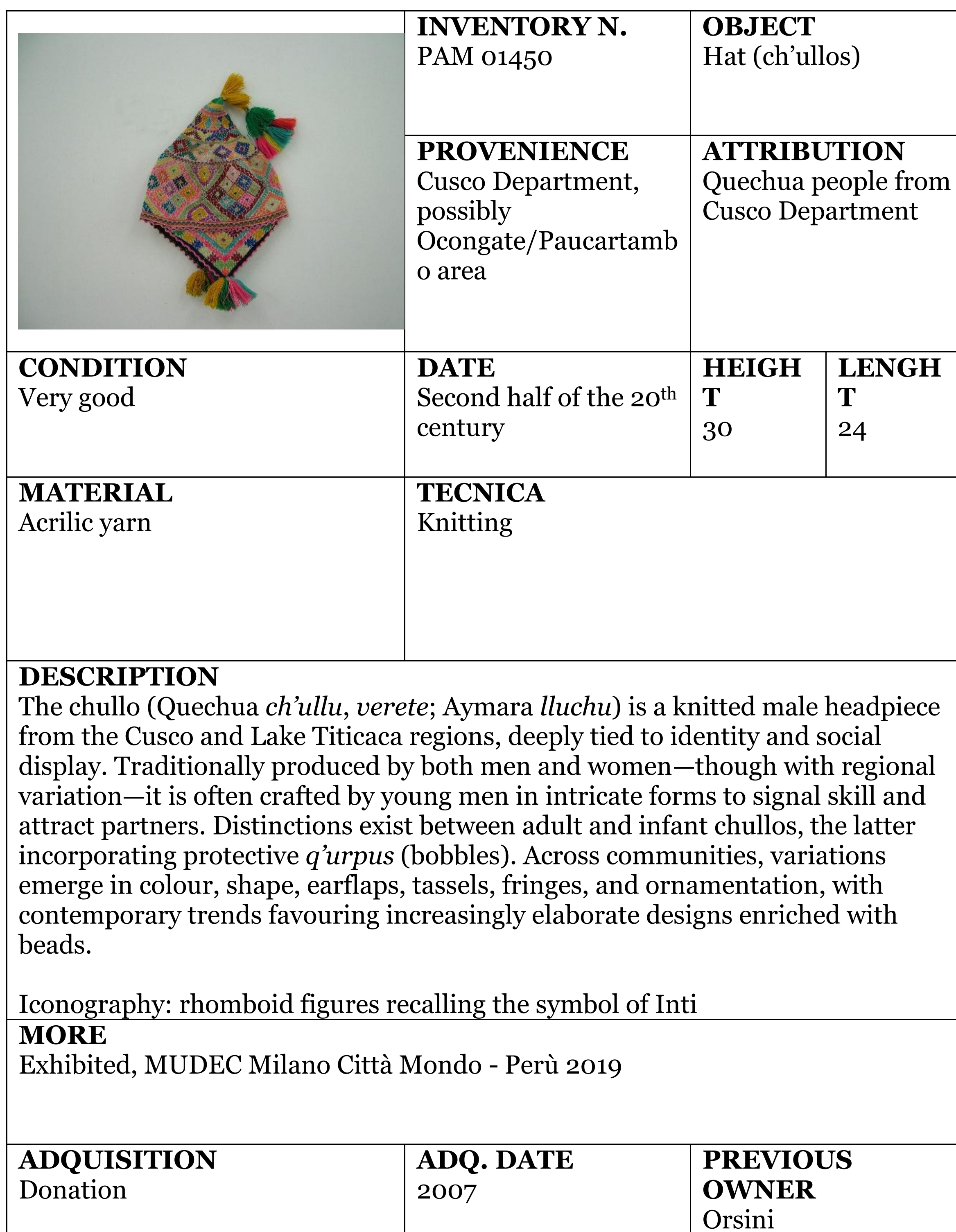
Comunidades Campesinas Ccachin, Ccollana, Choquecancha, Quishuarani, Rosaspata. (2005). Rescate e interpretación de la iconografía textil de las comunidades de Ccachin, Ccollana, Choquecancha, Quishuarani, Rosaspata: Distrito de Lares, Provincia de Calca. Sicuani, Cusco: Proyecto Corredor Puno-Cusco

Corredor Puno-Cusco. (2003). Sistematizacion: Obtencion de tintes naturales a partir de plantas tintoreas. Trabajo realizado por expertos locales. Proyecto Desarrollo del Corredor Puno- Cusco - Urubamba.

D'Harcourt, R. (2002). Textiles of ancient Peru and their techniques. Dover Publications.

Hoces de la Guardia, S. & P. Brugnoli. (2006). *Manual de Técnicas textiles Andinas: terminaciones*. Consejo nacional de la cultura y las artes, Museo chileno de arte precolombino

Seibold, K. E. (1992). Textiles and Cosmology in Choquecancha, Cuzco, Peru. In Dover, R. V. H., Seibold K. E. & McDowell, J. H. (Eds). Andean cosmologies, through time: persistence and emergence (pp. 166-201). Indiana University Press.



<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2"></td><td>INVENTORY N.
PAM 01450</td><td colspan="2">OBJECT
Hat (ch’ullos)</td></tr>
<tr><td>PROVENIENCE
Cusco Department, possibly Ocongate/Paucartambo area</td><td colspan="2">ATTRIBUTION
Quechua people from Cusco Department</td></tr>
<tr><td>CONDITION
Very good</td><td>DATE
Second half of the 20th century</td><td>HEIGHT
30</td><td>LENGHT
24</td></tr>
<tr><td>MATERIAL
Acrilic yarn</td><td colspan="3">TECNICA
Knitting</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">DESCRIPTION
The chullo (Quechua ch’ullu, verete; Aymara lluchu) is a knitted male headpiece from the Cusco and Lake Titicaca regions, deeply tied to identity and social display. Traditionally produced by both men and women—though with regional variation—it is often crafted by young men in intricate forms to signal skill and attract partners. Distinctions exist between adult and infant chullos, the latter incorporating protective q’urpus (bobbles). Across communities, variations emerge in colour, shape, earflaps, tassels, fringes, and ornamentation, with contemporary trends favouring increasingly elaborate designs enriched with beads.

Iconography: rhomboid figures recalling the symbol of Inti</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">MORE
Exhibited, MUDEC Milano Città Mondo - Perù 2019</td></tr>
<tr><td>ADQUISITION
Donation</td><td>ADQ. DATE
2007</td><td colspan="2">PREVIOUS OWNER
Orsini</td></tr>
</table>

SOURCES
Stylistic analysis, information collected when acquired, fieldwork 2024 (Cusco region), bibliography.

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Appendix Three

Protocol proposal for the management of Indigenous Traditional Cultural Expressions (TCEs)

This protocol constitutes an internal governance act for the management of Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (TK) associated with the collection of Museum of World Culture of Milan (hereafter MUDEC).

It is to be considered an annex and a complementary document to the Ethical Manifesto officially adopted by MUDEC on [date].

As such, it refers to the normative and ethical framework that underpins the latter, specifically:

- The national Codice dei beni culturali e del paesaggio (D.L. 42/2004), in particular Article 7.bis aims at safeguarding *The expressions of collective cultural identity contemplated by the UNESCO Conventions for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, adopted in Paris respectively on 3 November 2003 and 20 October 2005, are subject to the provisions of this Code when they are represented by material evidence and when the prerequisites and conditions for the applicability of Article 10 are met.*
- ICOM (2004) Code of Ethics, in particular Article 1 that goes under the following principle*: Museums are responsible for the tangible and intangible natural and cultural heritage. Governing bodies and those concerned with the strategic direction and oversight of museums have a primary responsibility to protect and promote this heritage as well as the human, physical and financial resources made available for that purpose*; and Article 6 that goes under the following principle: *Museum collections reflect the cultural and natural heritage of the communities from which they have been derived. As such, they have a character beyond that of ordinary property, which may include strong affinities with national, regional, local, ethnic, religious or political identity. It is important therefore that museum policy is responsive to this situation*
- ICOM (1972) Declaration of Santiago de Chile on the role of museums in the contemporary world.

- Council of Europe. (2005) Faro Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, in particular Article 1.b *The Parties to this Convention agree to recognise individual and collective responsibility towards cultural heritage*.
- UNESCO. (2005). Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, in particular Article 1: *The objectives of this Convention are: (a) to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions; (b) to create the conditions for cultures to flourish and to freely interact in a mutually beneficial manner;(c) to encourage dialogue among cultures with a view to ensuring wider and balanced cultural exchanges in the world in favour of intercultural respect and a culture of peace;(d) to foster interculturality in order to develop cultural interaction in the spirit of building bridges among peoples;(e) to promote respect for the diversity of cultural expressions and raise awareness of its value at the local, national and international levels*.
- United Nations. (2007). Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, in particular Article 31: *(1) Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts. They also have the 22right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions. (2) In conjunction with indigenous peoples, States shall take effective measures to recognize and protect the exercise of these rights*.
- *UNESCO*. (2015). Recommendation concerning the Protection and Promotion of Museums and Collections, their Diversity and their Role in Society.
- Council of Europe. (2017). Council of Europe Convention on Offences relating to Cultural Property.
- Any national or EU regulation not expressly mentioned in this list but applicable in Italy to the specific case.

In addition, MUDEC should operate in accordance with

- United Nations (1948) Universal Declaration on Human Rights, in particular Article 27.2: *everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author*.
- United Nations (2001) Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, in particular Article 4: *Human rights as guarantees of cultural diversity - The defence of cultural diversity is an ethical imperative, inseparable from respect for human dignity. It implies a commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular the rights of persons belonging to minorities and those of indigenous peoples. No one may invoke cultural diversity to infringe upon human rights guaranteed by international law, nor to limit their scope*.
- UNESCO. (2003). Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, in particular Part III dedicated to *Safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage at the national level* and Article 15: Participation of communities, groups and individuals - *Within the framework of its safeguarding activities of the intangible cultural heritage, each State Party shall endeavour to ensure the widest possible participation of communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals that create, maintain and transmit such heritage, and to involve them actively in its management*.
  And the UNESCO (2016). Operational Directives for the Implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, in particular Article 9: *Research institutes, centres of expertise, museums, archives, libraries, documentation centres and similar entities play an important role in collecting, documenting, archiving and conserving data on intangible cultural heritage, as well as in providing information and raising awareness about its importance. In order to enhance their awareness-raising functions about intangible cultural heritage, these entities are encouraged to: (a) involve practitioners and bearers of intangible cultural heritage when organizing exhibitions, lectures, seminars, debates and training on their heritage; (b) introduce and develop participatory approaches to presenting intangible cultural heritage as living heritage in constant evolution; (c) focus on the continuous recreation and transmission of knowledge and skills necessary for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, rather than on the*

objects that are associated with it; (d) employ, when appropriate, information and communication technologies to communicate the meaning and value of intangible cultural heritage; (e) involve practitioners and bearers in their management, putting in place participatory systems for local development.

- The principles of Cultural diversity and heritage diversity expressed by the Nara Document on Authenticity (1994), in particular Article 7: *All cultures and societies are rooted in the particular forms and means of tangible and intangible expression which constitute their heritage, and these should be respected;* Article 11. *All judgements about values attributed to cultural properties as well as the credibility of related information sources may differ from culture to culture, and even within the same culture. It is thus not possible to base judgements of values and authenticity within fixed criteria. On the contrary, the respect due to all cultures requires that heritage properties must be considered and judged within the cultural contexts to which they belong.*
- The dispositions of the WIPO Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (IGC)
- Any existing customary law to the source communities that are involved in the contingent cases

Considering that

- Italy adopted in 1987 the provisions of the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works (1979) which claims in Article 61.bis: (1) *Independently of the author's economic rights, and even after the transfer of the said rights, the author shall have the right to claim authorship of the work* [right of attribution] *and to object to any distortion, mutilation or other modification of, or other derogatory action in relation to, the said work, which would be prejudicial to his honor or reputation* [right of integrity].
- The national Legge sul diritto d'autore (L. 633/1941), do not protect Traditional Cultural Expressions as in Article 1: *Are protected under this law the works of authorship of a creative nature that belong to literature, music, the figurative arts, architecture, theatre, and cinematography, whatever the mode or form of their expression. Computer programs are likewise protected as literary works under the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works,*

ratified and made effective by Law of 20 June 1978, No. 399, as well as databases which, by reason of the selection or arrangement of their material, constitute an intellectual creation of the author. But recognise the moral rights of attribution and integrity of the author in Article 20, according to the Berne Convention dispositions; recognise in Article 12 *the author exclusive right to publish their work* [right to disclose] and in Article 142 *the author right, where serious moral reasons arise, to withdraw the work from circulation (subject to the obligation to compensate those who have acquired the rights to reproduce, distribute, perform, represent, or market the said work)* [right to withdraw].

Definitions

- According to UNESCO (1978), Movable Cultural Property means

all movable objects which are the expression and testimony of human creation or of the evolution of nature and which are of archaeological, historical, artistic, scientific or technical value and interest, including items in the following categories:

[...] (iv) material of anthropological and ethnological interest; [...]

- According to UNESCO (2003), Intangible Cultural Heritage means

the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills - as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith - that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity and is manifested inter alia in the following domains:

[...] (e) traditional craftsmanship.

- According to the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), Traditional Cultural Expressions[130]:

  - *may be considered as the forms in which traditional culture is expressed;*

[130] See https://www.wipo.int/en/web/traditional-knowledge/traditional-cultural-expressions/index

- *form part of the identity and heritage of a traditional or indigenous community;*
- *are passed down from generation to generation.*

TCEs are integral to the cultural and social identities of indigenous and local communities, embody know-how and skills, and transmit core values and beliefs. Their protection is related to the promotion of creativity, enhanced cultural diversity and the preservation of cultural heritage.

Traditional Cultural Expressions may include music, dance, art, designs, names, signs and symbols, performances, ceremonies, architectural forms, handicrafts and narratives, or many other artistic or cultural expressions.

- In the context of this protocol, the expression Traditional Cultural Expressions (TCEs hereafter) will be used to refer to any integrated form of tangible and intangible heritage.

Premising that

the MUDEC, its governance and staff recognize their role as custodians of TCEs held in trust for their original creators, commits to upholding and promoting cultural rights of communities, ethnic and religious groups from which its collections originate by acknowledging them as the legitimate right holders of the collections the museum legally possesses.

The museum commits to fostering more direct and meaningful relationships with those communities and groups by:

- Building and strengthening partnerships to promote new forms of equitable collaboration based on mutual respect and shared authority;
- Actively engaging with the knowledge and expertise of tradition-bearers, integrating their perspectives to both enrich the museum's work and to generate benefits for the source communities;

This protocol disposes that

1. Museological practices should not be confined to the preservation of its tangible collections but should also extend to the safeguarding of the intangible heritage intrinsically linked to it, as these two dimensions of TCEs are inseparable.
2. The museum should recognise the role of TCEs as vital repositories of memory and identity for the members of the communities, ethnic or religious groups from which the objects originate.
3. The museum should aim at establishing sustained and constructive dialogue aimed at developing strategies that incorporate community concerns and priorities into collection management and interpretive practices;
4. The museum commits to applying moral rights to its collections, regardless of whether they are legally protected under copyright law. In particular, the communities, ethnic groups, or religious groups from which the objects originate may exercise their moral rights to:
    - Right of attribution: the right to be recognized as the creator of a work;
    - Right of integrity: the right to oppose any distortion, alteration, or use that may harm their honour or reputation;
    - Right of disclosure and withdrawal: the right to determine when and how a work is made public or withdrawn from public view.
5. While keeping in mind any customary practice that impose limits or secrecy, the museum should make sure and promote open access to its collections and communicate with transparency all its activities and decision processes.
6. The museum should guarantee spaces and opportunities for communities, ethnic or religious groups from which the objects originate to implement their moral rights.
7. The museum should welcome any claims or demands from communities and be prepared to face disputes.
8. This protocol should not be considered a finished document; rather, it should promote a constant, fair conversation on ethical issues, depending the contingency of the specific cases and consistently in tune with the most recent international debates on museography and museum ethics.

The museum makes this protocol publicly available in its website.

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