

T'oqapu Patterns on Inqa Textiles and Other Media: Do They Constitute a Writing System?

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Description of *t'oaqapu* (= *t'oaqapu*): Small, multi-colored, square units set in a band- or grid-like structure, having mostly a recurring character and running lengthwise (horizontally and/or vertically) on the most common artifact: an Inca-made or Inca-inspired fine tapestry tunic, or on other support materials (such as wood, metal, ceramic, and masonry).



A closer look at tunics and other artifacts upholds the previous observation, and reveals a few additional details as reported over the decades (see Markham, 1969 [1910]: 122; Bankes, 1977: 172; Rowe, 1999 [1979]; Feltham, 1989: 57; Zuidema, 1991: 151; Delgado Pang, 1992: 291; Silverman, 1994: 13–14; Stone-Miller, 2002 [1995]: 212; Phipps, 1996: 153; Dransart, 1997: 159; Arellano, 1999: 257; Roussakis and Salazar, 1999: 276; Manrique P., 1999: 65; Frame, 2001: 132–135, 2007; Pillsbury, 2002; Cummins, 2002: Fig. 4.3, 2011; Quispe-Agnoli, 2002, 2006; Heckman, 2003: 49; Steele and Allen, 2004: 36–37; Stagnaro, 2005; Clados, 2007, 2020; Gentile Lafaille, 2008: 2; Williams, 2008: 48–50; Femenías, 2017; Beaulé, 2018: 19–20).



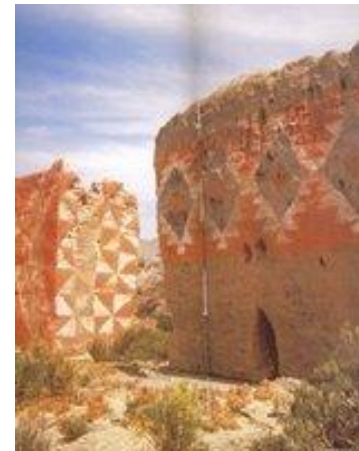
The terms *Inqario* and *Tawantinsuyu* refer interchangeably to the land or realm of the Inca in their apogee, pointing to the Late Horizon period of the Andean culture, 1476–1532 CE, in keeping with the chronological scheme set forth by John H. Rowe (1965).

Orthographically speaking, the letter /q/ has been chosen over /k/ or /c/ regarding the Quechua terms *Inqa*, *t'oqapu*, and *unqu* (tunic). Making use of such spellings does not affect their semantic content, being in the end the same units.

The analysis of the linguist **R. M. Cerrón-Palomino** (2005, 2008) regarding the etymology and designation <*t' oqapu*> / <*t' oqapu*>. To be examined at the leisure of interested readers (a few major points highlighted in red).



In the literature “*t' oqapu*” is also referred to as “*tocapu*”, and “*Inqa*” is alternatively commonly spelled “*Inca*” or “*Inka*”; see further discussion below. The etymology and the successive semantic shifts of the word <*tocapu*> are treated by R. M. Cerrón-Palomino (initially in 2005, and also in 2008: 99–109). His analysis on the *t' oqapu* subject-matter is a requisite, as it enhances the dialogue among scholars. The author (2008: 99) comments that *t' oqapu* “[...] *inicialmente aludía no solo a un tipo de vestimenta ‘galana’ sino que tenía un valor adjetival genérico a ‘sublime’ o ‘excelso’*, [(...) **in the beginning suggested not only a type of ‘superb’ garment, but had rather the generic adjectival value of ‘sublime’ or ‘excellent’**] based on the lexicographic work of early Jesuit fathers Diego González Holguín and Ludovico Bertonio. The listed clerics consigned the entry <*tocapu*> in their classical Quechua and Aymara dictionaries of 1608 and 1612, describing it as “*garments made of precious labor, or woven fabrics*” and “*any cloth of fine texture*”. Other descriptors include “*‘cosa muy galana’ o ‘cualquier gala,’ y no necesariamente un vestido*” [(a) **‘very superb object’ or ‘any gala’, and not necessarily a garment**]. Cerrón-Palomino’s (2008: 109) last remarks are a reminder that the word was originally Aymara, it was Quechuacized later, and Hispanized furthermore whilst going through a double process, in a circle-like fashion “[...] *yendo primeramente de lo concreto a lo abstracto* (*‘almacenar’* > *‘eximio almacenador’* > *‘magnánimo’*), *y viceversa, constriñendo su significado de lo abstracto a lo concreto* (*‘magnánimo’* > *‘vestido galano’* > *decoración del tejido*). [(...) going first from the concrete to the abstract (*‘hoard’* > *‘superb hoarder’* > *‘generous’*), and vice versa, constraining its meaning from the abstract to the concrete (*‘generous’* > *‘superb garment’* > *fabric decoration*)].



TOP: Fragment from the royal *unqu* held at Dumbarton Oaks, Washington DC (cf. Pasztory, 1998: 152–153, Fig. 111; Kelly, 2001: 44, 48, Figure 4; Pillsbury, 2002: 73, Fig. 7; Stone, 2007: 394); **LEFT bottom:** Section of a *qero* (= *kero*, drinking vessel) featuring *t'oqapu*-like motifs, B style (Museo de América, Madrid, inventory No. CEO7557; photo: M. Ziolkowski); see Ziolkowski (2009: 312, Figura 2); **RIGHT bottom:** section of a lingering wall of the *Temple of the Sun* at *Ollantaytambo* where “[...] only vestiges of the three stepped diamond shapes remain” (Hogue, 2006: 115, fig. 17).



The most common artifact on which *t'oqapu* appear are the Inqa *unku*, the typical tunic-like garment worn by males of high rank and/or superior social status.

Marta Ruiz's (2002: 207) description: “*El unku (ccahua en aymara; camiseta o túnica en español) es una prenda formada por una sola pieza y de esa manera es sacada del telar, la pieza concluida se dobla sobre sí misma cosiéndose en los costados, dejando así la abertura para los brazos. La abertura del cuello es ya considerada en el tejido. Pueden encontrarse con mangas, aunque no es lo más frecuente (Gisbert et al., 1992).*”

[Unku (*ccahua* in Aymara; shirt or tunic in Spanish) is a one-piece garment, and is extracted from the loom in this manner; the finished piece is folded over itself being sewn in the flanks, leaving an opening for the arms. The neck opening is already made in the fabric itself. You could also find pieces with sleeves, although they are not the most frequent ones].

A man's tunic of the Inca; "key motif" style, Perú, Late Horizon, 1480–1534 CE, is held at *The Textile Museum*, Washington DC (2010), with inventory No. 91.147, and acquired by George Hewitt Myers in 1932.



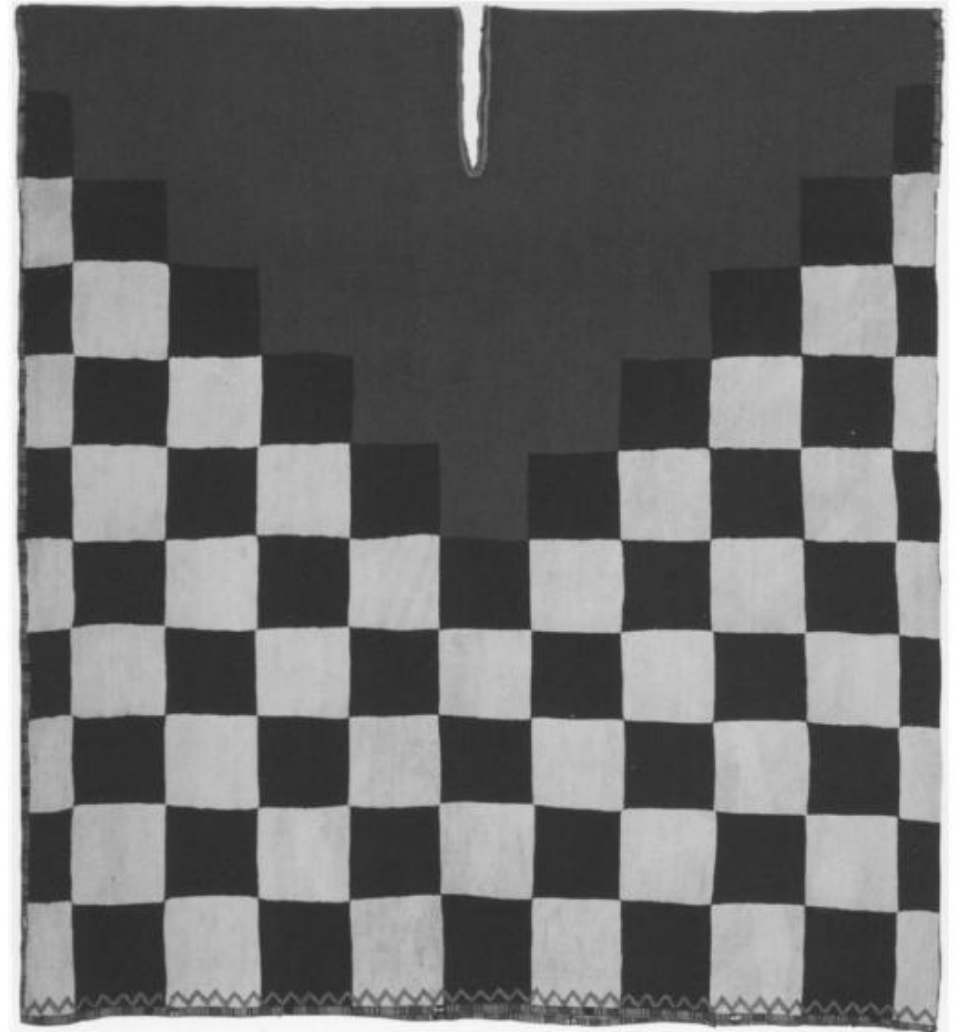
An all-*t'ogapu* Inca tunic, Late Horizon; 1450–1540 CE; *dimensions*: 90.2 cm × 77.15 cm (35 1/2 in. × 30 3/8 in.); *material*: camelid fiber, cotton; inventory No. PC.B.518; cf. Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Pre-Columbian Collection, Washington DC (2021).



Man's tunic (*unqu*) showing a band of successive *diamond-like motifs*; late 15th – early 16th century, Perú; *material*: cotton and camelid hair; *dimensions*: height 35 inches (= 88.9 cm), Rogers Fund, 1982 (inventory No. 1982.365), displayed at *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York (2000–2010).



An Inca *unqu* (tunic), Perú, 1400–1532, *black-and-white checkerboard* style; camelid fiber weft, 88.3 × 80 cm. Dallas Museum of Art, The Eugene and Margaret McDermott Art Fund, Inc., in honor of Carol Robbins (see Pillsbury, 1992: 72, Fig. 5).



The Field Museum (2010) in Chicago, Illinois, has a similar designed tunic with the *black-and-white checkerboard* style, sporting in addition a number of butterfly motifs.



A “*Provincial Tunic*”; Inca Provincial, Late Horizon; 1450–1540 CE; *dimensions*: 87.95 cm × 72.39 cm (34 5/8 in. × 28 1/2 in.); *material*: wool (= camelid fiber), cotton; inventory No. PC.B.505; cf. Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Pre-Columbian Collection (2021).



T'oqapu Patterns in Other Textile Formats and Other Media

Examining diverse artifacts, many far removed from the classic tunic-format, reveals that *t'oqapu* or *t'oqapu*-like iconography was transmuted and appeared in different manners and on diverse material supports across the Inqario.

(1) Among the vehicles for their transmission were *woven bags* and *pouches*, widely diffused among Andeans and non-Andeans over time as plausible carriers of *coca* leaves [= *chuspa*(s)], and intended also for other uses (Taullard, 1949: Láminas [Plates] 176–182; Vanstan, 1967: 3–15; Stone-Miller, 1994: 96, Plate 18; 1994: 143–144, Plate 47; Roussakis and Salazar, 1999: 264, 274–275, 291; Agüero Piwonka, 2000: 12–13).



(2) **Miniature *unqu*(s)** [tunics] - The purpose of such reduced items was *ritualistic*: adornment of figurines intended as offerings (in burial or burning contexts), or for dressing statuettes and other natural sacred objects.

See two miniaturized *unqu* (= tunics): the one **on the left** shows the “*black-and-white checkerboard*” pattern; **the other one** relates to the “*Inqa key*” pattern. These textiles, dressing small anthropomorphic statuettes, were recovered from sacrificial offerings taking place on Llullaillaco volcano (located at the modern border of Argentina and Chile); see B. Carbonell (2020 [2019]: 165, Figura 8a; Archivo MAAM [Museo Arqueológico de Alta Montaña], Salta, Argentina).



(3) The status of *t'oqapu*-like motifs as important conveyers of the Inca / Andean cultural lore may be also evidenced by the outer **textile wrapping of a mummy bale** – held rigid by a basket framework; see Fleming (1986: 42, Figure 5); Reinhard (2016: 12).

The caption in Fleming (1986: 42, Figure 5; cf. also Niu [Penn Museum Blog] (2011) reads, “*Mummy bale of a child, held rigid by a basket framework set up just beneath its beige, black and red-checked outer shroud and a plain inner cotton shroud. The small pouches of the necklet contain dried-out leaves and stems from the kinds of plants that are now thought to have figured strongly in early Peruvian folk medicine (coca, quinoa, mucuna, etc.) and dye-making (annatto, taya, chica, etc.). The University Museum, no. 26626. H(eight) 0.94 m*”.



An additional Inca-related mummy bundle (cf. Shaw, 2019) exhibits the “*black-and-white checkerboard*” technique combined with a red stepped yoke; the tunic (= *unqu*), ca. 1480–1560 CE, of sufficient size for a full-grown man, wraps the bundle where a sacrificed boy was cocooned. In symbolical terms, we think, this life-size *unqu* was the garment of preference the boy-child would have worn in adulthood. We could be looking at a plausible assumption herein, since the “*black-and-white checkerboard*”, plus the upper red area (the color **red**, most likely representing the human circulatory fluid), was associated with military expeditions and other affairs of a similar nature.

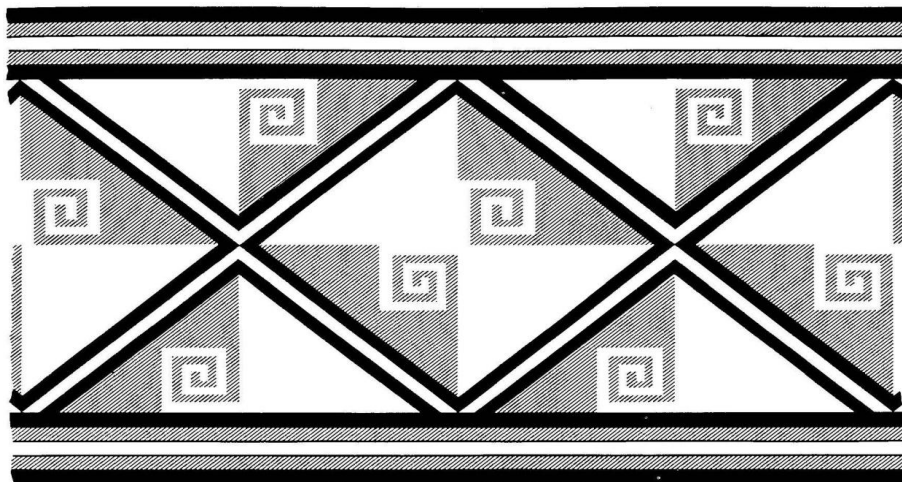


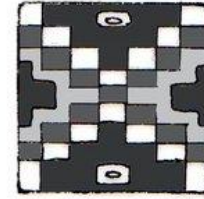
(4) In **architectonic samples**, models affined to *t'oqapu* are not absent; see e.g., Lehmann and Doering (1924: Collotype Plate 7); Paternosto (1996 [1989]: 140, Figure 20); D'Altroy (2005: 137, Plate 6.8); Hogue (2006: 115, fig. 18); Protzen (2018: 638).

Duccio Bonavia (1985 [1974]) collected data on several mural paintings related to the former Inca territory. It is significant that the Inca rendered paintings with an intense geometrical content similar to *t'oqapu*, e.g., at Huaca de la Centinela, Chincha Valley, Perú (Bonavia, 1985 [1974]: 157, Fig. 114) with *triangle*, *rhomboidal*, and *meander-like hook* patterns.

LEFT: An reconstruction drawing of a mural on the walls of an Inca (= Inca) structure as seen by the archaeologist and anthropologist John Howland Rowe in 1958. Inca style, Late Horizon (cf. Bonavia, 1985 [1974]: 157). The walls, part of the pyramid of Huaca de la Centinela, are located in the province of Chincha (Ica region, modern-day Perú).

RIGHT: An elaborate quadruple jambed niche at Ñañaq Uyu (*Isla de la Luna*, Lake Titicaca, Bolivia) in Protzen (2018: 638, Figure 6.3.6); the upper section is reminiscent of the diamond-like (waist)band, a classical *t'oqapu* motif; photo by J-P. Protzen.





Templo de Iñaq Uyu (o de las Vírgenes), en la Isla de la Luna (o de Koati), Lago Titicaca (Bolivia). Author [LBM1948](#).

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Isla_de_la_Luna_01.jpg

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Isla_de_la_Luna_03.jpg

(5) *Qero* (= quero / kero) and *aquilla* (ceramic, wooden, and metal cups / beaker-like vessels), destined for *chicha de maíz* [fermented corn / maize beer] libations, and symbols of reciprocity, homage, and imperial obligation in the Inqario, are another format where *t'oqapu* or *t'oqapu*-like motifs emerge quite frequently (see Rowe, 1999 [1979]: 606; Zuidema, 1991: 151; Arellano, 1999: 257; Frame, 2001: Plate 22; Cummins, 2002; Heckman, 2003: 51; Phipps et al., 2004: 135–136; Mulvany, 2004; Phipps, 2005: 85; Meisch, 2006: 381; Ziolkowski et al., 2008; Ziolkowski (2009); Gentile Lafaille, 2010; The Ohio State University (OSU), 2015; Prieto-Olavarría and Tobar, 2017: 153, Figura 6).



LEFT: Qero con *t'oqapu* del llamado estilo B (Museo de América, Madrid, objeto CEO7557. Foto: M. Ziolkowski); see Ziolkowski (2009: 312, Figura 2).



RIGHT: Quero con *t'oqapu* del llamado estilo A. La parte figurativa corresponde a la escena no.3 “El Sapan Inca y la Coya” (Museo Estatal de Etnografía, Varsovia, objeto MKSL 400. Foto: M. Giersz); see Ziolkowski (2009: 311, Figura 1).

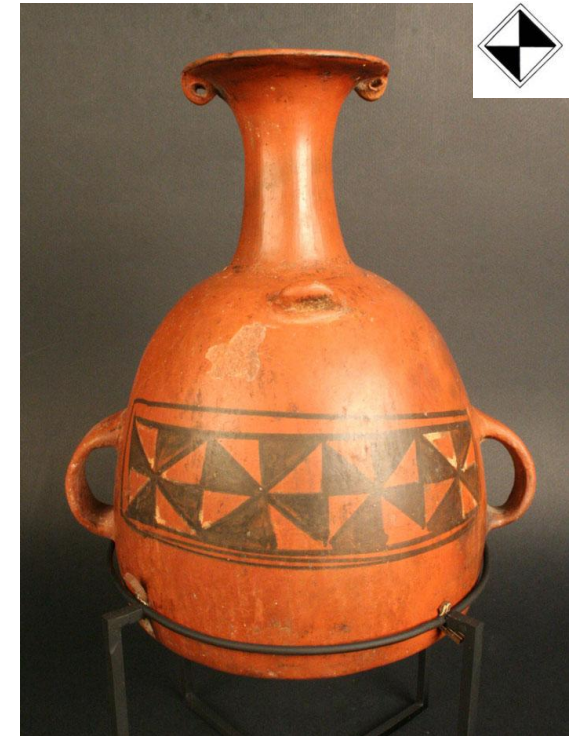
(6) The occurrence of *t'oqapu* –like patterns is also reported on **generic pottery**.

Tamara L. Bray (2000: 169–178, Figure 8) analyzes the imagery of a number of storage jars – alternatively called *urpu* or *aríbolas* [pitcher- / jar-like vessels] – finding in them, rhomboid, quincunx, and other designs, closely resembling the *t'oqapu* elements, and suggesting insignias of the Inca dynasty and statecraft (cf. an excellent storage vessel in Katz, 1983: 310, catalog entry 186).



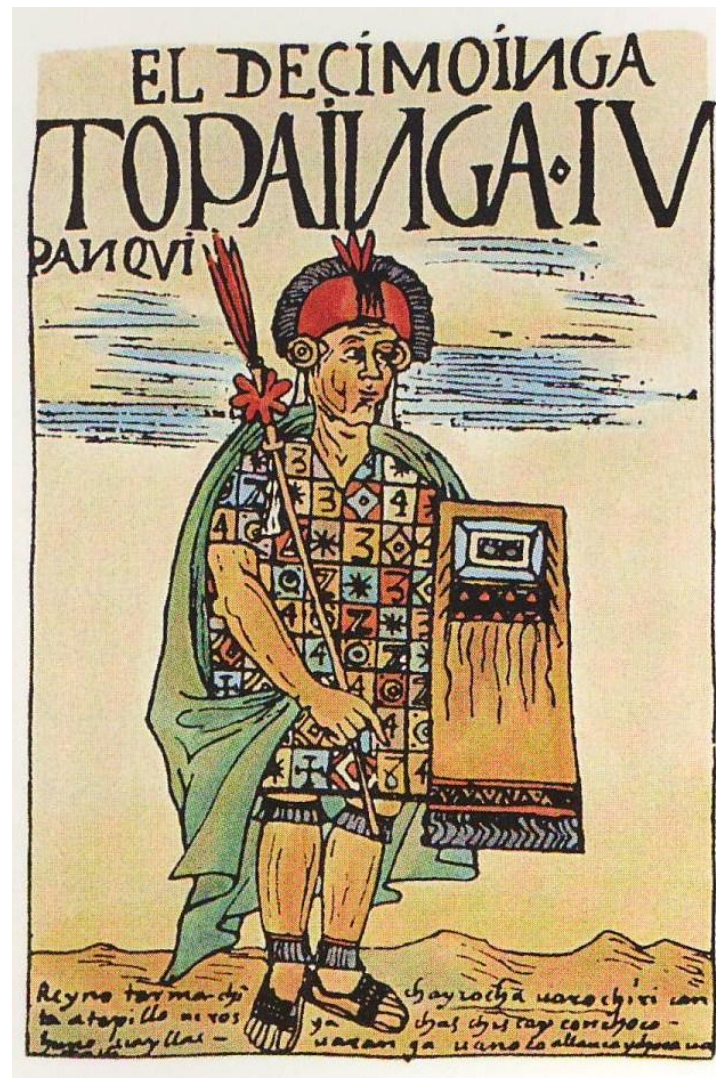
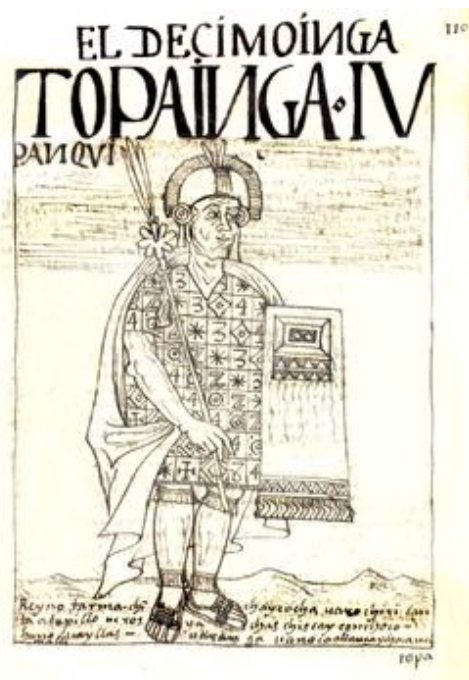
LEFT: An Inca *urpu* (a storage jar used for chicha [a fermented corn beer], water, and other products) shows a diamond-like [rhomboid] structure along a vertical band; see <http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/inca-ceramics.htm> (2021).

RIGHT: Storage bottle *ariballus*; Inca Horizon, Late Period, 1470 – 1532 CE; inventory No. PE-313. Museo Chileno de Arte Precolombino (2021). Notice the bipolar and complementary nature of the design along the horizontal band.



Guamán Poma de Ayala’s Drawings: *t’oqapu* Motifs as Indicators of the Royal Status - “*El Primer Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno*” [The First New Chronicle and Good Government]” (1980 [1615]; cf. Quispe-Agnoli, 2006; Frame, 2007; Ossio A., 2008).

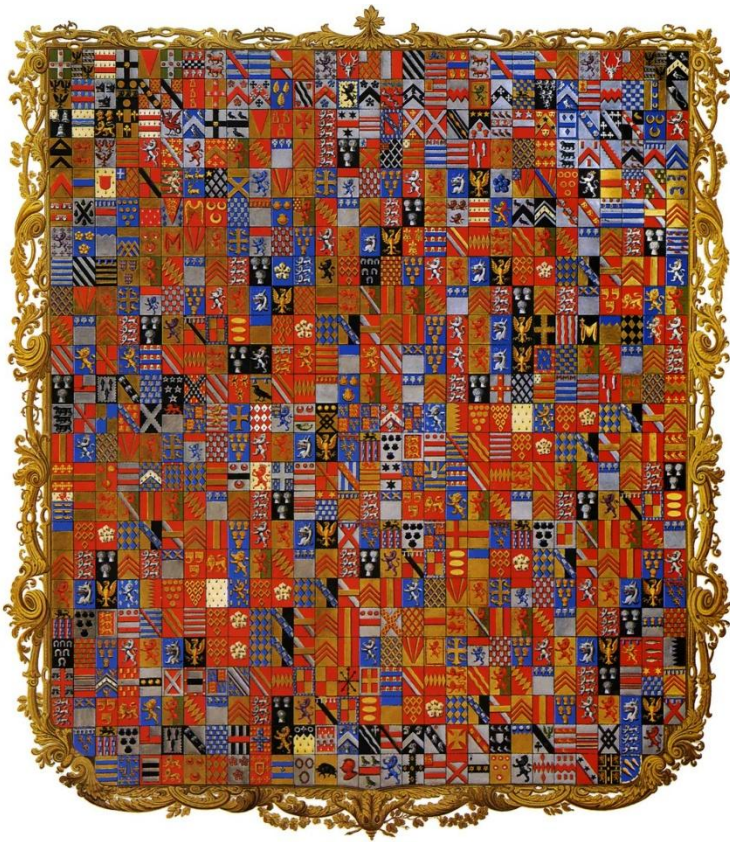
A drawing from Guamán Poma de Ayala (1980 [1615]: Folio 110; cf. Quispe-Agnoli, 2005: 290, Figura 14) shows the tenth ruler Thopa Inqa Yupanqui (reigning *ca.* 1471–1493) of the Inca dynasty in an all-*t’oqapu* *unqu*, regarded as a token of the uppermost social rank.





The possibility that these out-of-standard tunic patterns are value-laden (as they are meant to be intentional and interrelated) cannot be dismissed. The persistence in replicating such a dynamic in ordinary and high-quality manufactures suggests we are not witnessing some casual or rampant pastime. It would seem rather a socially and mythologically-driven activity in accord with Inqa logic, and the conception of time and space in their universe (cf. Estermann, 1998; Cummins, 2011). In this sense, the evidence encountered so far also calls upon concerted work, especially from art historians, anthropologists, textile experts, local informants, semioticians, and linguists, so as to verify or clarify their encoded meaning (cf. Quispe-Agnoli, 2006; Cerrón-Palomino, 2008; Florio, 2013; Clados, 2020). Now, the fact that some *t'oqapu* motifs appear regularly, e.g., *the diamond waistband, the Inqa key, the black-and-white checkerboard*, reveals not only their diffusion in Tawantinsuyu / Inqario, but also their simple “statement/s” and their high-frequency use in terms of significance and other conventions along this semiotic system.

A similar occurrence is noticed in other pre-industrial societies; Payne (1987: 55) in discussing the heraldic practices of the 13th to 15th centuries in England, mentions that some symbols were used extensively, “*The range of pictorial images was not large; but subjects like the symbolic lion, the eagle and the cross were popular*”.



The *Stowe Armorial* coat of arms is the centerpiece of the Gothic Library at Stowe Temple-Grenville, 1st Marquess of Buckingham, between 1805 and 1807 (Wikimedia.org., 2021). The armorial is a 1.4 m diameter heraldic painting of the 719 quarterings of the Temple, variations of the English Royal arms, the arms of Spencer, De Clare, Valence, Mowbray, Mortimer and De Grey (see Wikimedia.org., 2021, Author: Tilman, R. [2018]). The layout of the “*quarterings*” reminds us of the grid-like structure of the *t'oqapu* found in the royal *unqu* held at the Bliss Collection at Dumbarton Oaks, Washington DC (cf. Stone, 2007). Generally speaking, and to express some caution, no equivalence between the Inca and the English armorial traditions is sought after at the present juncture. The contents of each cited specimen are individually and culturally devised / curated, having *no meeting point* whether in temporal or locative terms.





T'iqapu in the Eyes of Modern Researchers

The proposals are structured along the following lines (1) and (2), letting us think that *t'iqapu* horizontal and vertical groupings were designed for a variety of purposes, retaining at any rate “[...] *critical cultural information*” (Pillsbury, 2006: 126).

Line (1) follows the hypothesis of *t'iqapu* as a visual, diagrammatic system of communication that, aside from aesthetic (or emotion-inducing) motivations, was used perhaps to send out diverse messages surpassing linguistic, ethnic, and spatial boundaries.

Line (2) follows the hypothesis of *t'iqapu* as some sort of “writing system”, basically of a logographic nature, in analogy with *logograms* found in other real-world known scripts.



Line (1) – *T'oaqapu* as a visual, diagrammatic system of communication.
Below, the proposals / theories found in the literature can be placed into six (6) broad categories.

(a) *specific and/or mythical places of origin (= paqarina), locations, local distinctions, and ancestry.*

(b) *ethnic, political, and religious status, as indicator of social hierarchy, prestige and power.*

(c) *mythological ideas, heavenly origin, and cosmogony.*

(d) *royal functions, control, dominion, and war strategies.*

(e) *heraldic and calendaric information.*

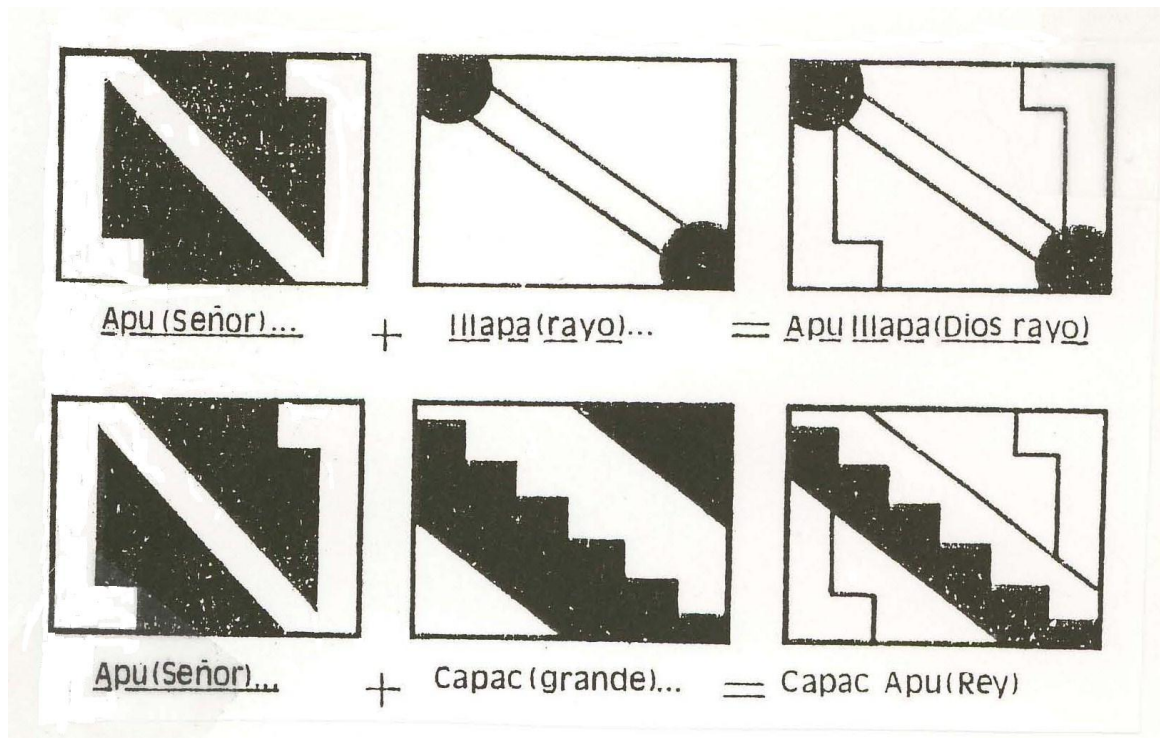
(f) *proposals regarding the connection between staple products (i.e., maize) and patterns in Inca textiles.*



Line (2) – *T'oqapu* Motifs Represent a Writing System

For instance, Victoria de la Jara (1975) pursued the “dualistic”-based methodology.

Making use of the principle of fusion (= “ligaturing” / compounding), de la Jara (1975: 47) offers:



“*Apu* (Señor [= Lord])” + “*Illapa* (rayo [= lightning]),” after recombination yields “*Apu Illapa* (Dios Rayo [= Lightning God])”.

“*Apu* (Señor [= Lord])” + “*Capac* (grande [= great]),” after recombination yields “*Capac Apu* (Rey [= King / Supreme Ruler])”.

The work of Victoria de la Jara (1967; 1970; 1975) paved the way for further interpretations / translations; see Barthel (1970, 1971); Totten (1985); Laurencich Minelli (1996); Burns Glynn (2002); Salcedo Salcedo (2007); Florio (2013), among others.



Photo of V. de la Jara, after American Museum of Natural History (2021).

A modern analogy to *t'oqapu*?

“Peace Sign”

(a 1958 symbol of protest against nuclear weapons that gained popularity in the 1960s).

From Stephen T. F. Poon (2016). “Love, Peace and Psychedelia: the Role of Symbols in the Sixties Counterculture”. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Approach and Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1, p. 160.



A modern analogy to *t'oqapu*?



Emoji images: From Alshenqeeti, p. 59, after Aldred (2014); <https://blazepress.com/2014/10/21-emoji-combinations-use-words-wont-quite-cut/>



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Flourishing Creativity & Literacy

Are Emojis Creating a New or Old Visual Language for New Generations? A Socio-semiotic Study

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“The increasing use of emojis, digital images that can represent a word or feeling in a text or email, and the fact that they can be **strung together to create a sentence** with real and full meaning raises the question of whether they are **creating a new language** amongst technologically savvy youth, or devaluing existing language. There is however a further depth to emoji usage as language, suggesting that they are in fact **returning language to an earlier stage of human communication**. Parallels between emojis and hieroglyphs and cuneiform can be seen which indicates the universality of visual communication forms, rather than written alphabetised language. There are also indications that **emojis may be cultural or gender-specific** [. . .]” (p. 56, blue highlights added).

Oxford's 2015 Word of the Year Is This Emoji



“Face With Tears of Joy” emoji, also known as LOL Emoji or Laughing Emoji.

TIME

BY **KATY STEINMETZ**

UPDATED: NOVEMBER 16, 2015 2:08 PM ET | ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED: NOVEMBER 16, 2015 2:00 PM EST

<https://time.com/4114886/oxford-word-of-the-year-2015-emoji/>

Emojis compared to *t'oqapu*

Is stringing together emojis a form of writing?

Could *t'oqapu* have been used at times in a similar manner?

Were *t'oqapu* used in a writing system (strictly speaking)?

Were *t'oqapu* motifs “words”?

Was *t'oqapu* language?

Are *t'oqapu* on the edge of writing and language?



DON'T BITE
THE HAND
THAT FEEDS
YOU













DON'T CRY
OVER
SPILLED MILK

C. Aldred (2014). “21 Emoji Combinations To Use When Words Won’t Quite Cut It”.
<https://blazepress.com/2014/10/21-emoji-combinations-use-words-wont-quite-cut/>

A modern analogy to *t'oqapu*?

Ambiguities in the reading (interpretation) of emojis

<p>Worried face with cold sweat</p> 	<p>Confused (30.0) Nervous (21.4) Scared (17.1) Frustrated (18.6) Disappointed (12.9)</p>	<p>Confounded face</p> 	<p>Worried (40.0) Confounded face (27.1) Annoyed (17.1) Stressed (15.7)</p>
<p>Face without mouth/ Speechless</p> 	<p>Speechless (64.3) Blank (27.1) Quiet (22.9)</p>	<p>Upside down face/ Feeling silly</p> 	<p>Feeling silly (47.1) Fake smile (24.3) Smiling (15.7) Uncomfortable (12.9)</p>
<p>Hugging face</p> 	<p>Hug (28.6) Feeling content (27.1) Waving (8.6) Blessing someone (21.4) Greeting someone (14.3)</p>	<p>Lying face</p> 	<p>Lying (95.7) Pinocchio (4.3)</p>
<p>Smirking face</p> 	<p>Smirking (48.6) Teasing (25.7) Tricky (12.9) Feeling naughty (8.6) Curious (4.3)</p>	<p>Kissing face</p> 	<p>Sulking (25.7) Whistling (20.0) Kissing (18.6) Flirting (14.3) Tempted (8.6)</p>
<p>Sticking out tongue/ Teasing</p> 	<p>Feeling silly (35.0) Joking (24.3) Joyful (8.6) Funny (17.1)</p>	<p>Widely frowning face</p> 	<p>Unamused (37.1) Sulking (32.9) Feeling gloomy (24.3) Very sad (5.7)</p>

From S. Annamalai (2017). "Undergraduates' Interpretation on WhatsApp Smiley Emoji". *Malaysian Journal of Communication*, vol. 33, no. 4, p. 97.

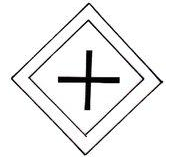
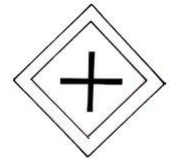
The Challenges of *t'oqapu* Studies

Identifying (allegedly) *t'oqapu* graphemes or allotted phonetic values to them.

No clear one-to-one correspondence has been demonstrated conclusively (see Harrison, 1989: 60), meaning, the precise semantic or phonetic values assigned to the full inventory of *t'oqapu* still elude today's researchers.

Reconstruction of the meaning of *t'oqapu* should be based on the surviving artifacts (textiles or not), whilst acknowledging that *social rank, high prestige, place of origin, and ethnic / group identity* were associated with them – yet their creators and culture are gone.

Was the use of *t'oqapu* localized or widespread? Used only by the elite, or did it penetrate into all quarters of society across Tawantinsuyu / Inqario – and if so, to what extent? Did *t'oqapu* cross borders beyond the Inqa core territory into conquered regions and spheres of influence?



Victoria de la Jara (1967: 242–243): index list of 294 *t'oqapu* units.

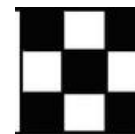
Updates and critical reassessment called for: new material, structural-analytical, statistical, and iconographical approach.

Particular attention: core *t'oqapu* units vs. the variant forms (= allomorphs). *T'oqapu* allomorphs require careful study, similar to scribal allographs, bearing in mind the contextual associations and their morphology.

Determination of provenance for various artifacts (given the objective premises).

Substantial body of textile texts needed for analysis and reliable conclusions.

Proposal: construction of a *t'oqapu* corpus in the fashion of the *Khipu Database Project* (cf. Urton and Brezine, 2009). Careful cataloguing of Inca samples will allow for committing this great legacy to a non-profit online distribution for further study. Such an action will assist in better tackling with the known diachronic and diatopic variations and randomness, while pursuing validity, statistically speaking or not. Some serious efforts are being made in this sense (see tocapu.org / Christiane Clados; currently, the site is not accessible).



T'oqapu Patterns on Inqa Textiles and Other Media: Do They Constitute a Writing System, or a “Pre-Writing” / “Proto-Writing” System?

“From the viewpoint of historical epistemology, proto-writing is not seen merely as a deficient representation of language but rather as a successful means of representing knowledge and transmitting it from one individual to another, and eventually from one generation to the next” (P. Damerow, 2006 [1999]: 2).

If *t'oqapu* motifs prove to be ultimately an instance of pre-writing, or a liaison between pure semasiography and proto-writing (with emerging phonetic elements), it may be assumed that many of the referenced authors would validate their reasoning and intuition, or else, recognize misplaced beliefs (see the discussions of González and Bray, 2008; Cummins, 2011; Clados, 2020). Hereafter, the *archaeology of symbols*, baffling and challenging as it is in anthropological and linguistic sciences, raises particular interest in the case of Inqa *t'oqapu* designs and orders more multidisciplinary teamwork on a local and international level.



T'oqapu Patterns on Inca Textiles and Other Media: Do They Constitute a Writing System?

We do not yet know (an initial assessment yields a visual system based on mnemonic-like principles, and possibly of emerging logographic elements or a stereotypical use of a number of morphemes).

Thank you.

(References cited available upon request;
additional detailed information also available upon request.)

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