



An Approach to the Anthropology of Clothing: The case of the Chopcca Nation

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ABSTRACT: This article aims to propose some preliminary ideas about the origin of the Chopcca people, from the Huancavelica region. This research used the ethnographic method, due to its purpose was exploratory, with a descriptive design. To collect the information, an observation sheet, a bibliographic review sheet and an interview form were used. The results obtained were processed and translated from the Quechua language into Spanish for a better understanding, in the same way, they showed that the origin of the "Chopcca Nation" could go back to the eighteenth century of our era and have a syncretic nuance which would evoke a fusion between European fashion and its adaptation to the Andean scenario, a conclusion that we reach thanks to an anthropological perspective of clothing, which, until now, has not been studied. Finally, we point out that this initial approach will allow to generate a new methodological approach to approach the history of this "nation" from another angle.

KEY WORDS: Anthropology, Ethnology, Fashion, Nation, Oral History.

INTRODUCTION

This article is the product of a patient fieldwork carried out with the "Chopcca Nation", which is characterized by being a culturally recognized identity group of the Huancavelica region in Peru, this methodological approach was carried out during the 2021 Likewise, we can also point out that there are some episodes where this social group was the subject of studies. First, the Peruvian Ministry of Culture published the book "Los Chopcca de Huancavelica. Ethnicity and culture in contemporary Peru" (2013), as a summary, this text was "... *investigación realizada entre los años 2007 y 2009 en los centros poblados de la comunidad de Chopcca por los antropólogos Marleni Martínez Vivanco en la investigación de campo y Pedro Roel Mendizábal en la coordinación...*"¹ Similarly, this social group was declared as "Cultural Heritage of the Nation to the Culture of the Chopcca Peasant Community, from the districts of Yauli, province of Huancavelica; and Paucarará, province of Acobamba, Huancavelica region"; This event was supported by Vice Ministerial Resolution No. 106-2014-VMPCIC-MC dated October 10, 2014, which indicates in its Article 1 "... *que la cultura de la comunidad campesina Chopcca constituye un corpus cultural tradicional y singular que ha logrado mantenerse a lo largo de los años bajo las condiciones más adversas, reafirmando constantemente el valor de la identidad para las generaciones actuales y venideras*" (p. 4) Finally, Kenyon Durand Bustamante (congressman of the Republic of Peru) presented Bill No. 5609/2020-CR entitled "Bill that declares of national interest the public need to create the district of Chopcca with its capital Ccasapata, province of Huancavelica in the department of Huancavelica"; this document, had in its content edges on the social reality of this community.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study used the ethnographic method as the main method, which in the words of Giddens (2007 p. 27) is "*el estudio directo de personas y grupos durante un cierto periodo, utilizando la observación participante o las entrevistas para conocer su comportamiento social, registrando una imagen realista y fiel del grupo estudiado; el trabajo de campo resulta ser una herramienta imprescindible*". This qualitative methodology contemplated the collection of information in situ, through interviews and participant

¹ <https://www.gob.pe/institucion/cultura/noticias/46408-los-chopcca-de-huancavelica-nueva-publicacion-del-ministerio-de-cultura>



observation, which allowed us to achieve a rapprochement with those involved, and to approach the inherent nature of their traditions, history and culture in general.

Context

The Chopcca are located on an altitude floor between 3,700 and 4,000 meters above sea level, likewise, they are made up of 16 geocultural spaces, thirteen described as minor population centers and another three as annexes, ten of these belong to the Yauli district, and the remaining six to the district of Paucará. It is important to indicate that the populated centers are far from each other, they are located in high Andean areas, as stated in the place names that include the term qasa (hill or summit).

Information collected

Our field work managed to obtain 32 interviews, likewise, we had the formal verbal consent of each resident to participate in our investigation, this action allowed us to take photographs, in the same way, on our part, we pointed out that the information collected would be confidential. As for the interviews, they lasted approximately 35 minutes, being conversations in the local language (Quechua) accompanied by some "gifts" such as routes and sweets. Each interview was transcribed and translated so that they could later be recorded in a database.

RESULTS

Despite the great sociological mosaic that represents the "Chopcca Nation" on its cultural, social, religious and economic practices, our interest in this opportunity focused on the word "Chopcca", which to this day maintains a certain shadow among its inhabitants and scholars on the subject.

Some comments state that "...los chopccas nunca han tenido miedo a nada..., desde antes hemos sido fuertes para defender (nuestra tierra) ..."² Also, a villager told us that, "...eso que dicen conocemos hoy de Chopccas eso, era antes un indio así grande, fuerte que se le reveló contra su patrón ..."³

When contemplating these versions, we recognize first of all that "chopcca" is a symbol of Huancavelican identity (linked to rebellion, strength and pride), however, this population has not been studied in depth, it is for this reason that there is no an "official story or version" and various "versions" of the subject emerge. The researchers Navarro and Maldonado (2019 p.61) regarding the name "Chopcca" pointed out that, "... se refiere a un personaje del mismo nombre que representa a un "ancestro en común", y dado que no se encuentran archivos documentales sobre su origen, podemos citar algunas fuentes orales que se remiten a épocas anteriores a la llegada de los incas..."

In this regard, the anthropologists Roel and Martínez (2013) cited by Navarro and Maldonado (2019 p.62) resorted to orality and ethnographic work in the area of our study to state that, "En el actual territorio Chopcca, hace muchos años, habitaba un hombre anqara de nombre Chopcca. Era este un hombre muy valiente y aguerrido, que vestía la vestimenta típica Chopcca. Él hacía valer los derechos de su pueblo. Por eso se enfrentó a las órdenes de sus patrones, negándose a obedecerlos, así que ante esta situación lo crucificaron y lo mataron en la plaza principal. En su honor, los hombres de aquellos tiempos denominaron Chopcca el lugar.."

Crespeigne et al. (2012 p. 262) provided us with a historical element that goes hand in hand with archaeological evidence to the ethnographic source, their contribution being that, "En su historia aparecen episodios que dan cuenta de su existencia desde el año 1460 después de Cristo. Son descendientes de la cultura chanca. Por el año 900 después de Cristo, los huaris de Ayacucho llegaron a Huancavelica llevando su cultura... Luego de la Reforma Agraria, se formaron los 16 centros poblados que hoy forman parte de la comunidad Chopcca, cuyos habitantes poseen su propia identidad. Ellos saben que forman parte de una cultura con valores, creencias y prácticas ancestrales, y que comparten una cosmovisión. Mantienen sus propias formas de gobierno en las que participan niños, jóvenes y adultos.»"

² Interview with a resident of initials R.Q.H. from the town center of Chuñunapampa, district of Paucará, province of Acobamba, department of Huancavelica, on January 13, 2021.

³ Interview with a resident of initials J.A.C.M. from the town center of Chuñunapampa, district of Paucará, province of Acobamba, department of Huancavelica, on January 13, 2021.



This would indicate an association with the Wari culture and its possible descendants with the current communities that today form the so-called "Chopcca Nation". However, nowadays, the term presents suspicions since, although there is a certain oral tradition that tries to give a light explanation of the matter, we have not been able to find any formal document, record or chronicle that speaks of them, as happens with other cultural groups from the Andean area (wankas, taramas, etc). In this regard, the renowned Peruvian researcher Sergio Cangahuala was able to tell us that, "*...He visto por ahí que se habla de nación Chopcca, pero creo que esto es exagerado. Lo que habrá que revisar es la historia de los angaraes ya que los pobladores chupqa(s) pertenecerían a ese grupo mayor. Volviendo sobre el significado es probable que refiera muy probablemente a un fitónimo o zoónimo. Otra cosa más es que, aunque la población actual es bilingüe con una fuerte presencia del quechua, históricamente esas regiones tenían una fuerte presencia de variedades de aymara hoy extintas por lo que es plausible que el topónimo/etnónimo chupqa tenga también esa procedencia.*"⁴

This comment is of vital importance for our study since it highlights the relevant role of language in this mosaic of sources. Based on what has been described, we think that "the chopccas" today settle in what were once Wari settlements, whose language was Aymara, and that they were part of a larger cultural conglomerate called Anqara according to the work carried out by Quincho (2017) and Lavallée and Julian (1983).

Returning to the great ethnographic work of Roel and Martínez (2019 p.99), on the etymology of the name, they told us that, "*... es preciso anotar que la etimología del término Chopcca no ha sido precisada. Una versión sobre el origen de este nombre supone que deriva de la quechua chupa (cola), y refiere que los pequeños poblados chopcca originales estaban asentados en hilera uno tras otro, a manera de la cola de un animal (Quispe Soto, entrevista personal, 2007). Otra explicación sobre el mismo término quechua se sustenta en una característica de su vestimenta: el conjunto de accesorios amarrados para sujetar y decorar los trajes, cuyos remates se llaman chupa (Silvestre 2008:51) –aunque esta versión no coincide con la nomenclatura usada por los chopecas–.*"

In this sense, our findings suggest that the denomination "Chopcca" should be addressed and interpreted in Aymara for the reasons stated above and not giving an interpretation of meaning in Quechua. The latter is perhaps due to the fact that much of what we "believe" as "Andean" is immediately related to the language in question, when in fact this is one more piece of the great and rich variety of cultural expressions of Peru.

RESULTS

One of our hypotheses would contemplate that the word "chupa" would have the meaning in the Quechua language of "tail" or "tail", however, the empirical evidence suggests that it is unlikely that a town could call itself that way (since the tail in the Andean bestiary has a negative symbolic charge, more to the contrary, we find self-denomination linked to the head and eyes as elements of pride and leadership), but if we refer to the meaning in the Aymara language which would be equivalent to "t-shirt", perhaps this could have been a distinctive element either for everyday use, describe some form of manufacturing or economic activity characteristic of this "nation" or something related to geography. This last hypothesis is born because many Andean peoples in ancient times had names of some geographical characteristics (Coricancha = Cori-qori and court-place/temple; golden or gold place/temple) animals (Huamancaca = human-hawk and caca/qaqa-peña; the rock where the falcon rests) or particular social activities to name themselves.

Another hypothesis that we suggest, has as its protagonist the word "chupa" which was once a male garment that was part of the French suit, fashion spread throughout Europe throughout the eighteenth century, this garment consisted of a fitted piece of long sleeves, with flaps and buttoned details, from which a shirt peeked out. This garment was essential in the "French suit". It was used over the shirt and under a jacket. Its structure is situated chronologically around 1760, the following year, a new viceroy of Peru would be appointed, being Don Manuel Amat y Juniet, knight of the Order of San Juan the chosen one (Carrasco, 2003 p. 235).

With what has been described above, we think that "the chopccas" could have been a characteristic social group with a great influence of the 18th century due to the similarity of "original" garments to dress with the French and Spanish. Let us remember

⁴ Personal communication made on January 5, 2021, at 12:07 p.m.



that the “official” documentary sources “...dicen poco o nada (se sabe) sobre Chopcca como circunscripción territorial, ya se trate de una unidad económica o una jurisdicción. Para 1913, una relación de haciendas existentes en la provincia de Huancavelica la cita como hacienda Ccasapata, propiedad de doña Clemencia M. viuda de Herrera...” (Carrasco, 2003 p. 445)

Against this background, we can make a few comments:

The studies or background information compiled on the possible origin of the “Chopcca” have only focused on delving into the subject through oral sources, and not resorting to documentary sources such as minutes, chronicles, old accounting books, wills, among others.

The “traditional” Chopcca clothing observed in the field is not at all functional, that is, with it “you cannot walk” on a day-to-day basis or perform some of your own daily tasks in the field such as agriculture or livestock; It is more than anything a set of ritual and protocol garments, since its iconographic and symbolic details show a lot of detail and industriousness, as well as the uses of important situations such as marriages, anniversaries, etc. An interviewee mentioned to us that, “...este (refiriéndose a una prenda de vestir que estaba tejiendo) sólo se usa cuando te casas, así bonito tienes que regalar para que se vea bien...un traje así con todo te sale (cuesta) maso menos seis mil soles...”⁵ Another element of study would be the hat, which has an edge folded outwards, with various and detailed details on the back, we reiterate with this that this feature is not functional at all, but it is aesthetic and military in nature. We believe that it is likely that European fashion and customs arrived in the city of Huancavelica in the 18th century to be part of the viceroys' daily life and, in addition, their militias.

In the 18th century there was the so-called bicorne, also called the two-cornered hat (Verdú, 2017), it was adopted by high-ranking military officers and armies from 1790, then throughout the 19th and 20th centuries it was a garment characteristic of European diplomats and ambassadors; We also indicate that the bicorne used to be called by the French name of "chapeau de bras" which means “arm hat” and was a very recurrent garment among troops and officers (Muzás, 2003). From what has been indicated, the French name of the bicorn “chapeau” (SHA'pō) draws our attention, which has a similarity to the word “chopecca” (in addition to the similarity in appearance). In this sense, we believe that the French bicorne was the “ancestor” of the current hat worn by the Chopcca people. An also important fact that refers to the word “chupa” is the one reported by the Spanish chronicler Francisco López de Gómara in 1552 who published “La historia de las Yndias y conquista de México”, within the text, in chapter CXLIX ago. mention of this word: “The battle of Chupas between Vaca de Castro and Don Diego”. The aforementioned mentions the civil war between the “conquerors” of Peru, almagristas and royalists for domination and the expansion of faculties within the viceroyalty territory.

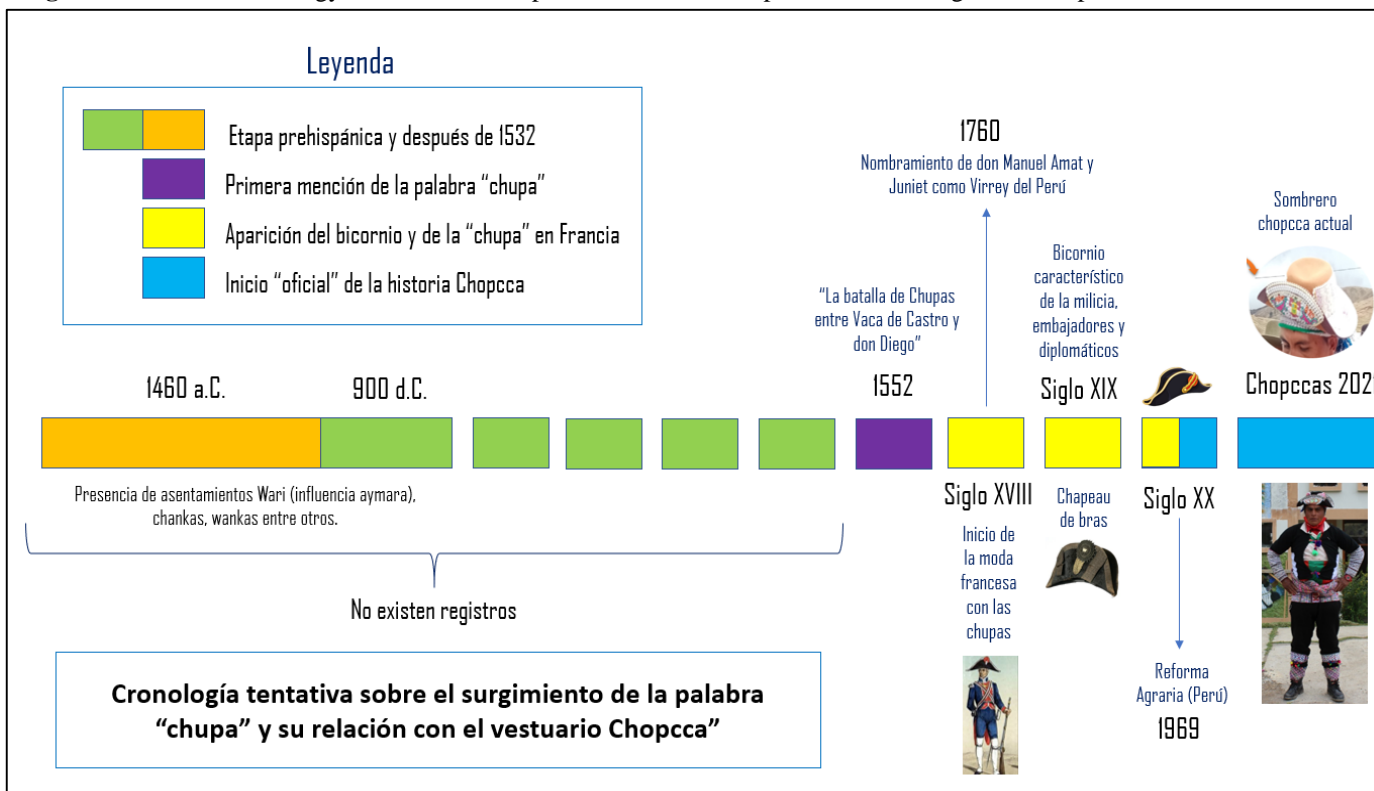
Returning to the dawn of the 18th century and to our hypothesis about clothing, we begin to theorize something very important that Schwarz (1976 p. 297) was able to state that: “Los trajes son temas sobre el cual debían expresarse con frecuencia los antropólogos, pero ha ocurrido precisamente lo contrario: se ha mantenido un silencio sospechoso. El idioma y la fabricación de utensilios han sido considerados siempre entre las características distintivas del hombre, pero lo que concierne al vestir ha recibido escasa atención.”

Based on the above, we indicate that a more in-depth study of the clothing of the Chopcca community based on the comparison we have made in terms of iconography, manufacturing, ritual and comparative temporality could guarantee a better understanding of the historical, social and cultural development of the Chopcca community. this “nation” and generate a clearer line on the bullets of its probable origin. In this regard, Schwarz (1976 p. 303) goes on to say that, “La indumentaria también juega papel de importancia como indicador del status de una persona perteneciente a una comunidad étnica o a una tribu en particular. Así, por ejemplo, a los Nuerse los identifica por la ausencia de sus incisivos inferiores y dentro de ellos, a los hombres, por seis (6) cortadas en la ceja (Evans-Pritchard, 1940, p. 123). A un Tuareg se lo conoce por su velo azul y en las tierras altas de Guatemala la población indígena se divide en grupos territoriales y étnicos, cada uno de los cuales utiliza una indumentaria peculiar. En suma, la capacidad de los vestidos para indicar el status y el rango de un individuo, prescindiendo de las diferencias marginales que puedan existir, es ilimitada y por tal razón no hay motivo para detenernos aquí a examinar sus particularidades.” This premise, without a doubt, is relevant since it shows that the study of culture and the manifestations that emerge from it should take place in a multifactorial and

⁵ Interview with a resident of initials O.A.Q.S. from the town center of Chuñunapampa, district of Paucará, province of Acobamba, department of Huancavelica, on January 13, 2021.

interdisciplinary way, resorting to various sources, and this reflective exercise with the Chopcca people is a proof that we need several lenses to understand reality. Finally, we wish to end this section by sharing a tentative chronological summary of what has been said in this research work (Image 1).

Image 1.- Tentative chronology on the word "chupa" and its relationship with the clothing of the chopcca settler



Source: Own elaboration

CONCLUSIONS

The study of Chopcca clothing should be the subject of a broader investigation, since it could shed light on a very important past full of interculturality, a reason for identity for the history of Huancavelica, and would allow the generation of methodological routes for similar investigations in other countries Andean peoples.

The Huancavelican community that, the "Chopcca nation" is a "brave people", in this regard a resident told us: "...como nación chopcca, guerreros somos, nos dicen así...eso sí todos saben que acá hay respeto...los antiguos era autoridad, nunca le tememos a nadie ..."⁶.

This form of sociocultural syncretism is nothing new in the Andean and Amazonian world within our country and the world since, after the arrival of the Spaniards, a long list of scientific literature emerged that shows that many elements and cultural manifestations went through something similar, in this sense, we can review research such as that carried out by Irarrázaval (1999), Piña (2016), Orellana and Ruiz (2020), among others, on economic, symbolic, social and religious issues in general.

⁶ Interview with a resident of initials F.U.A. from the town center of Chuñunapampa, district of Paucará, province of Acobamba, department of Huancavelica, on January 13, 2021.



If our hypothesis is taken into account to start from a research nucleus, the Chopcca people would still have a pending history to investigate and recently put to exploration since, a revision of documents would date back to approximately the 18th century, if not older.

The temporary scenario of the "Chopcca warriors" and the "adoption of European fashion" could have allowed the emergence of a group of people with specific functions, linked mainly to their predecessors in Europe, that is, servants linked to defense (and attack).

A question arises, if they were soldiers or part of a military regime in ancient times, why is there no record or document that proves or mentions it? We dare to indicate in this regard that there could be information within the Historical Archive of the Huancavelica Region, a task that remains pending for further investigation. It remains to think that this group could have become independent and have managed to bring much of that original "component" to their own lifestyle, being recognized today as "strong warriors". In the event that this premise is true, we would be contemplating a history of cultural development of approximately three centuries (between the 18th and 21st centuries) with some loops that need to be studied.

It would be important to carry out in-depth work on the root of the word "Chopcca", considering the review of more international or national documentary historical archives with reference to the 18th century, which are often being kept in universities, private collections or public libraries. On the above, the French "chapeau" would be a spectrum of the word "chopcca". Now, it could be that this badge (hat) was taken as an element of authority by the "primitive chopcca", a natural fact, since its function was linked to high-ranking military officers, diplomats and ambassadors; and as we know, our Andean populations lived bowed to the Spanish, so an element of this nature would change the "status" without a hitch. Given this, it is relevant to point out that the idiosyncrasy of the current Andean man was very different from that of three centuries ago, so this would be an approximation and theoretical exercise.

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