

Free aymara chola dress essay sample

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Introduction and general background of the culture

The Aymara live in the rugged high plain (altiplano) of South America. The approximate number of Aymara language speakers in the region is two million. These high plain lies between two huge ranges of the Andes Mountains. The major mode of transport here is water via the highly navigable Lake Titicaca. Many Aymara villages line around the lake. The lake is used for fishing, providing reeds to be used in basketry, collecting fodder for livestock and conducting commercial transport.

The Aymara engage in subsistence labor-intensive agriculture and animal keeping to earn their living, and they sell the little surplus from this agriculture. For foodstuffs, they rely on crops like potatoes, barley, and keeping chicken, pigs, and minute herds of sheep, cattle, and native species of alpaca and llama. Centuries of adapting have resulted in subsistence patterns, ideology, and social organization that enable the Aymara to survive this harsh environment.

The most common unit of households is the nuclear family. Their inheritance pattern dictates sub-division of land among each heir resulting in many tiny

plots dispersed through different minute ecological zones. Labor assistance on these plots is provided by the children. Temporary wage labor is also used. The rural Aymara are a socioeconomic class that occupies the base of a hierarchy rigidly controlled by white minorities who reside in the high plain. The Aymara face economic, ethnic, and cultural barriers towards their upward social mobility. Among the Aymara, those who read less, speak less Spanish, and wear indigenous clothes are discriminated against, others are rude to them, and are financially tricked by people from powerful social classes. In this community, women who decide not to get married have the option of staying in their parents homestead or become a foster parent through adoption of children. The man who does not get married may stay with his parents or leave the village.

The Chola Dress

The Chola outfit is the most important symbol of identity for Andean women like the Aymara. The four garments that typically make up the Chola dress worn by Aymara women consists of a bowler hat in black, brown, or dark-green, an embroidered blouse or fringed shawl called mantilla and voluminous ornate pollera skirts, which are worn over several layers of petticoats, and the shoes. This shoes are normally flat-soled or sandals. This is the traditional dress of the Aymara women for those who stay both in towns and rural areas. Women who wear this dress are called Cholas, and their hair is parted in the center and braided in two long plaits, which are joined by a pocacha which is a black woolen tuft.

This distinctive dress called the Chola is derived from Spanish costumes of the seventeenth century. Under the Spanish colonial rule, the indigenous

women were obliged to wear this dress. The most important element of the outfit is the pollera. This is a layered skirt made from lengths of velvet material that can be up to five meters long. The layered skirts are usually wrapped around the waist and reinforced with numerous petticoats. This reinforcement is done to put an emphasis to the woman's hip. Of note, the skirts can make women appear bigger than their actual size. Ultimately, this will represent a glorious celebration of a distinct ideal of beauty of the female species. The pollera can be worn by combining it with boots that are knee-high.

The pollera is made using white linen that has a fine texture, voile, and – cambric. Twelve yards of material are used to make this skirt. A traditional pollera skirt has a white background to ensure the tints of embroidered designs that are blended therein stand out. The designs used are those of flowers, garlands, birds, and any other designs that are of native feeling and origin. Exquisite designs are produced by cross-stitching or by using an elegant needlework called “ talco en sombra” in the local language. The exquisite product is made of two pieces of material that are sewn together. Thereafter, a specific design is made on a single piece of this clothing. This design is then cut out carefully around the edges, turned under, and using invisible stitches sewn to the background. The bowler hats are multi-colored, normally in black or brown with cored rims or bow. The bowler hat became a common piece of clothing in the 1930s. The origin of the hats is in Europe. They were shipped from Europe in the 1920s. These hats were found to be too small to be used by the Europeans and they had been shipped for. Eventually, they were given to the local Aymaras. This heralded their use by

Aymara women as headgear.

The complete Chola dresses are quite expensive. Many Aymara women spend a lot of money in acquiring them. Their prices escalate when one opts for other lavish materials, extravagant jewelry to accentuate the outfit, and elaborate embroidery in accompaniment to the dress. Expensive high-end Chola dresses are sought after to serve as an outward show of pride especially in business. Moreover, the Chola dress has gained acceptance as an expression of pride in indigenous culture, and expression of art.

Conclusion

This in-depth study of the Aymara people of South America helps us to understand their background and culture better. Despite living in one of the harshest environments, and engaging dominantly in subsistence existence, they take pride in their culture and art. The women wear their beautiful Chola dresses and bowler hats with pride, and with full appreciation of their identity. Signature pieces of clothing like these ones serve to preserve our cultures and pride.

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