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Sommario/riassunto

The traditional costumes worn by people in the Andes—women's woolen skirts, men's ponchos, woven belts, and white felt hats— instantly identify them as natives of the region and serve as revealing markers of ethnicity, social class, gender, age, and so on. Because costume expresses so much, scholars study it to learn how the indigenous people of the Andes have identified themselves over time, as well as how others have identified and influenced them. Costume and History in Highland Ecuador assembles for the first time for any Andean country the evidence for indigenous costume from the entire chronological range of prehistory and history. The contributors glean a remarkable amount of information from pre-Hispanic ceramics and textile tools, archaeological textiles from the Inca empire in Peru, written accounts from the colonial period, nineteenth-century European-style pictorial representations, and twentieth-century textiles in museum collections. Their findings reveal that several garments introduced by the Incas, including men's tunics and women's wrapped dresses, shawls, and belts, had a remarkable longevity. They also demonstrate that the hybrid poncho from Chile and the rebozo from Mexico diffused in South America during the colonial period, and that the development of the rebozo in particular was more interesting and complex than has previously been suggested. The adoption of Spanish garments such as the pollera (skirt) and man's shirt were also less straightforward and of more recent vintage than might be expected.

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