

Tejeduría del sombrero: una tradición ancestral en el municipio de Aguadas, Caldas

Hat Weaving: An Ancestral Tradition in the Municipality of Aguadas, Caldas

Tecelagem de chapéus: tradição ancestral no município de Aguadas, Caldas

Patricia Arcila Flórez

Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios - UNIMINUTO

patricia.arcila-f@uniminuto.edu.co

Bogotá – Colombia

Diagramación e ilustración de portada
Andrea Sarmiento Bohórquez

Corrección de estilo
Nataly Marcela Muñoz Murcia



Find this article at: <http://revistas.uniminuto.edu/index.php/IYD>

Para citar este artículo | To cite this article | Para citar este artigo:
Arcila, P. (2024). Hat Weaving, an Ancestral Tradition in the Municipality of Aguadas- Caldas. *Inclusión y Desarrollo* 11.2 (número especial), pp. 15-22.

Recibido/Received/Recebido: August 05, 2024
Aceptado/Accepted/Aceito: September 04, 2024
Publicado/Published/Publicado: November 25, 2024

Artículo de investigación / Research Article / Artigo de pesquisa
Conflict of interest: The authors have stated that there are no competing interests





RESUMEN

El sombrero Aguadeño se ha convertido en un símbolo de representatividad del municipio de Aguadas a nivel regional y nacional, este encarna la labor de las artesanas que encuentran en dicho oficio una forma de sustento, que se ha convertido en un elemento de salvaguarda de la cultura local, puesto que involucra el sentido arriero de la región cafetera. La tejeduría se ha visto permeada por la preocupación constante de una pérdida de relevo generacional que busca la manera de nuevas formas de creación artesanal. Por medio de entrevistas se busca reconocer el sentido de los aguadeños, tanto hacedores como espectadores, su sentido cultural, las expectativas de valor monetario y las necesidades de los artesanos. El ejercicio de investigación posee como objetivo identificar estrategias de protección y preservación de la tejeduría del sombrero Aguadeño como un oficio que configura la idiosincrasia y cultura del pueblo. Se utiliza un enfoque cualitativo, puesto que la recolección de datos no sigue procedimientos estandarizados y su análisis no es estadístico, hay mayor interés en lo subjetivo, la investigación sobre el tejido del sombrero en Aguadas se basa en las emociones, sensaciones, anécdotas y vivencias, las vías para recolectar datos han sido la observación, entrevistas, discusiones grupales e investigación documental.

Palabras clave: tejeduría; relevo generacional; artesanía; sombrero; patrimonio.

ABSTRACT

The Aguadeño hat has become a symbol of representativeness of the municipality of Aguadas at a regional and national level, it embodies the work of artisans who find in this trade a form of sustenance, but this has also become an element of safeguarding the local culture, since it involves the muleteer sense of the coffee region. Weaving has been permeated by the constant concern of a loss of generational renewal, but which also seeks the way of new forms of artisanal creation. Through interviews, we seek to recognize the meaning of the people of Aguadeños, both makers and spectators, their cultural sense, expectations of monetary value and the needs of artisans. The objective of the research exercise is to identify strategies for the protection and preservation of the weaving of the Aguadeño hat as a craft that shapes the idiosyncrasy and culture of the people. There is a qualitative approach, since the data collection does not follow standardized procedures and its analysis is not statistical, there is greater interest in the subjective, the research on the weaving of the hat in Aguadas, is based on emotions, sensations, anecdotes and experiences, the ways to collect data have been observation, interviews, group discussions and documentary research.

Keywords: weaving; generational change; craft; hat; heritage.

RESUMO

O chapéu Aguadeño tornou-se um símbolo de representatividade do município de Aguadas a nível regional e nacional, incorpora o trabalho dos artesãos que encontram neste ofício uma forma de sustento, mas este tornou-se também um elemento de salvaguarda da cultura local, uma vez que envolve o sentido de tropeiro da região cafeeira. A tecelagem tem sido permeada pela preocupação constante de uma perda de renovação geracional, mas que também busca o caminho de novas formas de criação artesanal. Através de entrevistas, buscamos reconhecer o significado do povo de Aguadeños, tanto fazedores quanto espectadores, seu senso cultural, expectativas de valor monetário e as necessidades dos artesãos. O objetivo da pesquisa é identificar estratégias para a proteção e preservação da tecelagem do chapéu Aguadeño como um ofício que molda a idiosincrasia e a cultura do povo. Há uma abordagem qualitativa, uma vez que a coleta de dados não segue procedimentos padronizados e sua análise não é estatística, há maior interesse no subjetivo, a pesquisa sobre a tecelagem do chapéu em Aguadas, é baseada em emoções, sensações, anedotas e experiências, as formas de coleta de dados têm sido observação, entrevistas, discussões em grupo e pesquisa documental.

Palavra-chave: tecelagem; mudança geracional; arte; chapéu; herança.

Literature Review

Aguadas, is a municipality located in the far north of the department of Caldas. According to reports from the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE) (2018), it has a population of 22,823 inhabitants, distributed between the urban center and 68 rural villages. With a total area of 482.7 km², Aguadas is classified as one of the country's 17 Heritage Towns. Its historic center, designated a National Monument in 1982, the National Pasillo Festival, declared a Cultural Heritage of the Nation in 2005, and the Aguadeño hat, which has held a Designation of Origin since 2012, make this town a cultural hub enriched by wisdom, deeply rooted muleteer customs and traditions, and an intangible heritage that remains vibrant in its streets and in the daily lives of its residents.

One of the cultural elements that has brought the greatest renown to the municipality is the production of its most iconic handicraft, which is nationally recognized: hat weaving. This tradition has been an integral part of the lives of the people of Aguadas for decades. In 2022, according to data provided by the Municipal Mayor's Office of Aguadas in a document characterizing Aguadeño hat weavers for the "Somos Artesanos" (We Are Artisans) project, approximately 513 women engage in this artisanal craft as a means of supporting their families. However, this number may be significantly higher, as the municipality includes remote villages that were not accounted for in the census.

One of the most pressing challenges currently affecting this artisanal craft is the decline in generational continuity. The majority of artisans are over 50 years old, while children, teenagers, and young adults show little interest in carrying on the tradition. As one of the 12 artisanal products with a Designation of Origin, according to the Superintendence of Industry and Commerce, the Aguadeño hat holds significant cultural and economic importance for both the department and the country. For this reason, sustainability strategies are essential to ensure the survival of this local craft.

There are not enough texts on the weaving of the Aguadeño hat and its impact on the lives of local inhabitants. The foundation of this investigation is based on the following documents: Valencia Quintero, (2020). Weaving Tradition, Creating Identity, Building History, which systematizes an experience centered on the weaving of Aguadeño hats and their contribution to the identity of a territory. For this purpose, the Cooperativa Artesanal de Aguadas is taken as a reference, highlighting its role in preserving ancestral knowledge and safeguarding the municipality's traditions.

Artesanías de Colombia. (2013). Characterization of the Production Process of Hat-Making in Iraca, Municipality of Aguadas, Caldas. Characterization of the municipality and the population engaged in the craft of hat-making and its production. Soto, (2021). Factors Influencing the Loss of Generational Continuity in the Production of the Aguadeño Hat by the Weavers of Aguadas, Caldas. This study identifies the causes contributing to the decline in generational continuity in the craft of weaving the Aguadeño hat—an emblematic symbol of Aguadas, Caldas—and proposes strategies aimed at safeguarding this cultural heritage.

“ Weaving has been permeated by the constant concern of a loss of generational renewal, but which also seeks the way of new forms of artisanal creation. ”

Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative approach, as data collection does not follow standardized procedures, and its analysis is non-statistical. Greater emphasis is placed on subjective aspects. The research on hat weaving in Aguadas is grounded in the emotions, sensations, anecdotes, and lived experiences of the artisans and admirers of the Aguadeño hat. The data collection methods used include observation, interviews, focus group discussions, and documentary research.

Participants

Artisans, children of artisans, Aguadas residents who purchase the handicrafts, hat traders, the education sector, and the cultural sector have all participated in interviews to assess their perceptions of the hat, its cultural significance, the loss of generational continuity, and sustainability strategies.

Techniques

The research techniques employed included observation, participant observation as the daughter of an artisan with a genuine interest, narrative analysis—focusing on how individuals recount their stories to reveal how they attribute meaning to their experiences and situations—and a literature review.

Phases of Fieldwork

Fieldwork began with a review of texts such as: Monograph on Aguadas by cultural manager Aníbal Valencia Ospina, Tourist Inventory of Aguadas, Caldas, and The Aguadeño Hat: A Symbol of Identity by Carlos Ariel Salazar Cardona. Subsequently, discussions were held with artisans, merchants, children of artisans, cultural managers, and educators in the municipality. It was also essential to understand how Aguadas residents perceive their local craftsmanship, guiding the development of cultural strategies to promote the hat.

Results

The weaving of the Aguadeño hat is one of the most representative cultural elements of the region. It serves as both a cultural symbol and a source of livelihood for many families. However, there is growing concern over the loss of generational continuity in the craft, compounded by limited modernization strategies for securing raw materials and the low financial value currently associated with it. Despite concerns about its decline, the Aguadeño hat has exhibited remarkable adaptability over time. For this reason, the research initiative has introduced a series of cultural, structural, and economic contributions to support the sustainable development of the municipality's artisanal craftsmanship.

Culture plays a crucial role in the sustainability of the Aguadeño hat. Festivals and cultural events serve as vital platforms for its promotion, visibility, and commercialization. However, it is necessary to move beyond mere promotion and focus on the professionalization of artisans so that weaving is recognized and developed as a viable business opportunity. To achieve this, it is essential to strengthen the artisans' skills through certification in occupational competencies, validating their ancestral knowledge. This can be achieved by offering workshops and courses on both traditional and contemporary weaving techniques to younger generations, ensuring that training programs also foster the creation of innovative designs and products using Iraca.

In the search for strategies to revitalize and promote the Aguadeño hat, strengthening the cultivation of the Iraca palm is essential. Therefore, strategies must be implemented to encourage planting through technical support, utilizing mechanisms provided by UMATA—the entity responsible for local rural development—along with bank credit programs and training initiatives for growers. These efforts should focus on developing new techniques for the cultivation, processing, and storage of the palm, thereby improving its quality and yield.

“ hat weaving has been an ongoing process in the lives of aguadeños for decades. ”

Beyond its cultural significance, the Aguadeño hat plays a crucial role in driving tourism in the region. It is necessary to design tourist routes that include visits to weavers' workshops, hands-on experiences where visitors can learn to weave with Iraca palm and immerse themselves in the local culture, as well as guided tours of Iraca palm plantations and artisanal sales points. Promoting fair and responsible trade of artisanal products is essential, along with strengthening collaboration between the local government, weavers' associations, the private sector, and educational institutions. The Designation of Origin must also be valued and protected to safeguard the authenticity and quality of the Aguadeño hat.

In this regard, establishing a weaving school is one of the key strategies for preserving the craft. This institution would provide spaces for younger generations to learn the art of weaving. Additionally, it should serve as a research hub to explore new applications of the Iraca palm across different sectors such as fashion, interior design, and industry. It must also document traditional weaving techniques for the Aguadeño hat and other forms of Iraca palm weaving. The weaving school should integrate educational programs within schools and communities to raise awareness about weaving as a cultural heritage. This includes student social service projects centered on learning the craft, as well as the preservation of traditions through discussion forums and pedagogical spaces with master artisans and hat traders.

Raising awareness about fair compensation is crucial for safeguarding this tradition. To this end, relevant entities must standardize fair pricing and promote ethical trade practices that ensure weavers receive appropriate payment for their work. Additionally, artisans should be encouraged to participate in national and international fairs, digital platforms, and specialized stores. Promotional strategies must also be developed to position the Aguadeño hat and Iraca weaving as unique, high-quality products. Furthermore, supporting the creation and strengthening of weavers' associations will enhance their management and commercial capabilities. Finally, the role of weavers as guardians of tradition should be recognized and celebrated, granting them the social recognition they rightfully deserve.

The future of craftsmanship is a shared responsibility among various stakeholders. It requires a collective effort from the people of Aguadas. Therefore, the implementation of sustainability strategies, training, fair trade practices, innovation, and cooperation is essential to safeguarding the municipality's cultural identity. From a cultural management perspective, it is crucial to support the establishment of artisan cooperatives and the development of cultural projects centered around weaving and the lives of artisans. For this reason, the research process must present safeguarding proposals to entities such as the municipal administration, merchants, and educational institutions.

Discussion

In Aguadas, the craft of weaving Iraca is primarily carried out by women. For them, weaving is a complementary activity rather than a full-time occupation, as most are homemakers whose primary responsibility is their household. When they have spare time, they dedicate themselves to weaving. Currently, due to the low income generated from selling their products, many artisans have stopped weaving, opting instead to take advantage of harvest seasons for crops such as coffee, blackberries, and avocados. Which provide a higher income. Most artisans state that the sale of hats has allowed them to finance their children's education. In Aguadas, weavers are not mass producers, as this is neither their purpose nor their essence. They regard weaving as a supplementary trade, preserving a tradition while prioritizing their household responsibilities.

According to accounts collected at the municipality's tourist information center, as of 1950, more than 7,000 people engaged in hat weaving. However, during activities carried out by the Municipal Mayor's Office (2020–2024), fewer than 600 individuals were identified as continuing this artisanal practice. This decline underscores the need to investigate the challenges faced by artisans, the historical evolution of the Aguadeño hat, and the

measures being taken to improve conditions for those who dedicate themselves to this craft. It is also necessary to determine how generational continuity in the practice of craftsmanship will be ensured within the municipality.

The loss of generational continuity is an issue that must be addressed by local and regional entities. The Aguadeño hat represents the cultural identity of Aguadas and provides recognition in various settings. Its preservation must remain a constant concern for both artisans and those who appreciate this craft. Additionally, fair trade practices, artisans' quality of life, and recognition of the challenges associated with the hat must be prioritized. Sustainable strategies must be developed, from the cultivation of Iraca palm to the establishment of artisan schools. It is also essential to create spaces that allow for a deeper understanding of the perspectives of artisans, collectors, merchants, Iraca growers, the general community, and cultural managers.

Conclusions

Currently, there is a lack of comprehensive reference data on hat weaving in the municipality. For this reason, it is necessary to develop an updated document that highlights the contributions of weaving to both culture and tourism. This research is driven by a desire to deepen the understanding of one of the most significant cultural emblems of the region. Additionally, from a cultural management perspective, contributions can be made to ensure its sustainability and inspire new generations. The scope of this study seeks to capture the perceptions of all stakeholders involved in the production and sale of the hat, both within and beyond the municipality.

According to local merchants, the hat market is valued at 3.5 billion Colombian pesos, with approximately 60,000 units sold annually. This market remains active and continues to provide artisans with a means of sustaining their families. However, further sustainability strategies must be implemented, as younger generations do not perceive the hat industry as a viable business opportunity.

The Aguadeño hat holds such strong cultural significance and sense of identity that it has a dedicated space at the Casa de la Cultura "Francisco Giraldo," which houses the National Hat Museum. This collection includes more than 300 hats from different regions of Colombia, 20 international pieces, and exhibition rooms showcasing the craft. The museum also provides insight into the cultivation of the Iraca palm, a breakdown of the hat's components, the world's largest Aguadeño hat, historical accounts, artisan profiles, festivals, and other key aspects of its cultural relevance. This institution highlights the profound cultural value of the Aguadeño hat, emphasizing how it remains an integral part of daily life for the people of Aguadas and a source of curiosity for tourists visiting the region. According to reports from the municipality's tourist information center, tour guide Luis Fernando Arias states: "The municipality receives approximately 30,000 tourists per year, 80% of whom express interest in learning about the hat," indicating that the hat serves as a key driver of tourism.

Acknowledgments

With gratitude to my mother for teaching me the beauty of hat weaving; to my sister and father for their unwavering support; to the cultural managers, friends, and people of Aguadas for their conversations and shared concern about the generational continuity of the Aguadeño hat; to José Castro for his valuable insights; and to my advisor for his guidance.

Origin

This research project was undertaken as a degree requirement for the Specialization in Cultural Management, and its current status within the document reflects the conclusion of the investigation.

Conflict of Interest

Personal considerations apply, as my mother is a local artisan, and the decline of hat weaving has had a direct and meaningful impact on the development of this research.

References

- (n.d.). Fiestas de la Iraca 2019 en Aguadas, celebraremos la vida con mucha alegría. Retrieved February 27, 2024, from <https://www.aguadas-caldas.gov.co/noticias/fiestas-de-la-iraca-2019-en-aguadas-celebraremos-la-vida-con-mucha-alegria>
- (n.d.). Alcaldía Municipal de Aguadas, Caldas. Retrieved February 27, 2024, from <https://www.aguadas-caldas.gov.co/>
- (n.d.). YouTube: Home. Retrieved February 27, 2024, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YSgyFZQKixk&t=175s>
- Aguadas, Caldas, Colombia - Genealogía. (n.d.). FamilySearch. Retrieved February 27, 2024, from https://www.familysearch.org/es/wiki/Aguadas,_Caldas,_Colombia_-_Genealog%C3%ADa#Censos
- Aguadas, ciudad de las brumas y del pasillo. (n.d.). Pueblos Patrimonio de Colombia. Retrieved February 27, 2024, from <https://www.pueblospatrimonio.com.co/aguadas/>
- Dane. (n.d.). Censo Nacional de población y vivienda. ¿Cuántos somos? <https://sitios.dane.gov.co/cnpv/#!/>
- Enfoque de la investigación: tipos y características. (2020, May 19). Lifeder. Retrieved February 27, 2024, from <https://www.lifeder.com/enfoque-investigacion/>
- Fiestas de la Iraca en Aguadas, tejidos de tradiciones. (2017, June 21). La Patria. Retrieved February 27, 2024, from <https://archivo.lapatria.com/entretenimiento/fiestas-de-la-iraca-en-aguadas-tejidos-de-tradiciones-371186>
- Giraldo, H. (2019, December 16). Aguadas | La Red Cultural del Banco de la República. Banrepcultural.org. Retrieved February 27, 2024, from <https://www.banrepcultural.org/biblioteca-virtual/credencial-historia/numero-360/aguadas>
- Narciso, J. (n.d.). PARTE 1. Información básica. Gobierno de Caldas. Retrieved February 27, 2024, from <https://site.caldas.gov.co/media/pdf/2014/infomunicipios/INFORMACION%20DE%20%20AGUADAS.pdf>
- Salavarieta, P. (n.d.). Aguadas. RED TURÍSTICA DE PUEBLOS PATRIMONIO. Retrieved February 27, 2024, from <https://redturisticadepueblospatrimonio.com.co/es/pueblos/aguadas>
- Artesanías - COOPERATIVA ARTESANAL DE AGUADAS LTDA. (n.d.). Compra y venta Manizales y Caldas - A un clic. Retrieved October 8, 2023, from <https://aunclic.com.co/business/462>

- Artesanías de Colombia. (2013). Caracterización del proceso productivo Sombrerería en Iraca Municipio Aguadas-Caldas. <https://repositorio.artesantiasdecolombia.com.co/bitstream/001/3929/1/INST-D%202013.%201.pdf>
- Artesanías de Colombia. (n.d.). Iraca. Artesanías de Colombia. Retrieved October 9, 2023, from https://artesantiasdecolombia.com.co/PortalAC/C_sector/iraca_191
- Bronislaw Malinowski. (2019, March 9). Una teoría científica de la cultura. unidad libre. Retrieved October 9, 2023, from https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/57040124/ASC_Malinowski_Unidad_1-libre.pdf?1532116608=&response-content-disposition=inline%3B+filename%3DUna_teor%C3%ADa_cient%C3%ADfica_de_la_cultura.pdf&Expires=1696867125&Signature=FDf9aMQm1onX8-joyKdijXsBpChlHCiK7GxW-U~JyVfy
- Etienne-Nugue, J. (2009). Háblame de la Artesanía. Unesco. https://books.google.es/books?hl=es&lr=&id=hc_ISn8CLw4C&oi=fnd&pg=PA2&dq=que+significa+la+palabra+artesania+&ots=8S2BuJqc-j&sig=YITfARRhpl0r6siu8P0uHefmH0#v=onepage&q&f=false
- Hernández, R., y Mendoza, C. (2018). Definición del alcance de la investigación en la ruta cuantitativa: exploratorio, descriptivo, correlacional o explicativo. En Metodología de la Investigación (pp. 104-120). McGraw-Hill.
- Ley sobre Patrimonio Cultural, Fomentos y Estímulos a la Cultura (Ley 397 de 1997). (s. f.). vLex. <https://vlex.com.co/vid/desarrollan-concordantes-fomentos-trasladan-60003176>
- Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Educación (2014) Indicadores UNESCO de cultura para el desarrollo. (s. f.). <https://es.unesco.org/creativity/sites/creativity/files/digital-library/cdis/Patrimonio.pdf>
- Soto blandón, e. (2021). Factores que inciden en la pérdida del relevo generacional en la elaboración del sombrero aguadeño por parte de las tejedoras de Aguadas Caldas [trabajo de grado, universidad católica de Manizales]. https://repositorio.ucm.edu.co/bitstream/10839/3343/1/Factores_inciden_perdida_relevo_generacional_elaboracion_sombrero_Aguadeno_parte_tejedoras_Aguadas_Caldas.pdf
- Superintendencia de Industria y Comercio. (n.d.). Denominaciones de origen. Superintendencia de Industria y Comercio. Retrieved October 9, 2023, from <https://www.sic.gov.co/marcas/denominaciones-de-origen#bootstrap-fieldgroup-nav-item--artesanales>
- Superintendencia de industria y comercio. (n.d.). Protección de denominación de origen. Superintendencia de Industria y Comercio. Retrieved October 9, 2023, from https://www.sic.gov.co/sites/default/files/files/Denominacion%20de%20Origen/sombrero_aguadeno.pdf
- Valencia Quintero, M. A. (2020). Tejiendo tradición, creando identidad, construyendo historia... [Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia UNAD]. <https://repository.unad.edu.co/jspui/bitstream/10596/39041/1/mavalenciaqu.pdf>