This thesis concerns the restricted exchange and keeping of textiles among the Inca. My aim was to show how certain fine textiles were only exchanged among the Inca kinship group and with leaders of high status from the ethnic groups in the provinces surrounding Cuzco. My intention was also to show how the dominant power position of the Incas was reproduced through this restricted exchange. My source of data has been texts written by Spaniards in the 16th century.

The theoretical framework of this study concerns the keeping and exchange of sacred and valuable objects. With this study I intend to show how anthropological theories can raise new aspects in the Inca culture that have not been discovered by other perspectives.

Questions I addressed in this study concerned how the fine cumbi textiles were linked to the Incas. I sought answers to how their belief system was connected with the fine textiles and what this implied when the textiles were restrictively exchanged.

The cumbi textiles had a higher value than the other textiles in the Inca empire. This value was constructed through the association of these textiles with the divine origin of the Incas. Therefore when the fine cumbi textiles were exchanged they not only reproduced the Inca kinship group but also affirmed the difference in their identity compared to the general population. The Incas constructed a network of kinship around the empire through marriage alliances with the daughters of local ethnic chiefs. With these leaders the Incas exchanged the fine textiles. These fine textiles were associated with the mythical origin of the Incas and their ancestors, with their cosmological origin. By referring to a common cosmological origin the textiles strengthened the kinship ties and affirmed a common identity and a distinction towards other social groups. The giving of inalienable textiles to the new kinship members helped to produce and reproduce the group. The fine textiles given by the Inca leaders to the ethnic leaders were therefore not only especially fine gifts but also something showing a specific tie between the two.