



Poncho (Manga) of Pío Pico

Date

c. 1850

Primary Maker

Don Pío de Jesus Pico

Medium

Silk, velvet, cotton and broad cloth

Description

The value of an object is often linked to its historical context or to the significance of those who possessed it. That is certainly the case with respect to this poncho, or manga, that once belonged to Pío Pico. Pío Pico, who began his adult life as a shop operator in San Diego, was to become the first native-born Governor of what was

then called Alta California, and the last of the Mexican Governors to rule there. It was Pío Pico who ordered the sale of the California missions in compliance with the controversial 1833 order from Mexico to secularize them. When American settlers seized control of Alta California in 1846, they declared it the new "Bear Flag Republic". Pico responded by ordering an ill-fated counter offensive and was forced to flee far into the south of Mexico. After the dust cleared, Pico returned to California and reclaimed title to his 22,000 acres of ranch lands. No stranger to the habits of those with superfluous wealth, he developed a habit of gambling, which proved disastrous to his personal fortunes. In 1890, his debtors foreclosed on his adobe house in what is now Whittier, Orange County. After a long and eventful life that spanned ninety-three years, Pío Pico died in Los Angeles on September 11th, 1893.

Dimensions

52 × 93 in. (132.1 × 236.2 cm)