



FRIENDS OF THE IXCHEL MUSEUM

VOLUME TWENTY FIVE • NUMBER ONE • JUNE 2014

REPATRIATION OF RARE TEXTILES



**“At the Museum,
they will be stored
properly and ex-
hibited under ideal
conditions.”**

**TOP: Miniature *huipil* for a
household statue from San Pedro
Sacatepéquez, Guatemala
Dimensions: L: 21 cm by W: 33 cm**

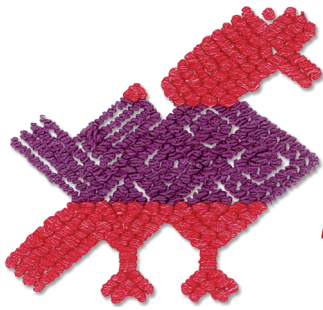
**RIGHT: Larger than full size *huipil*
for the Virgin from San Pedro
Sacatepéquez, Guatemala
Dimensions: L: 93 cm x W: 116 cm
(detail on page 3)**

Over many years, the Friends of the Ixchel Museum has received numerous donations of textiles from our members. And for a long time, these donations overwhelmed us since, in order to be useful, textiles must be catalogued, photographed and appropriately stored. Until this task was accomplished, we had a very nice accumulation of textiles, but not a functioning collection. In 2014, we are pleased to report that we have over 500 pieces in the FOIM collection, and that the entire collection is accessible in digital form. This fact allows a textile exhibit to be curated from Guatemala for an exhibit in Toronto, Los Angeles or Santa Fe. Few museums in the world have this digital capability, but FOIM does.

The collection includes pieces appropriate for all types of exhibits. Whether for a classroom show and tell, a two-day exhibit at Maya Weekend, or a six-month exhibit at a world-class museum, we have material in our collection to accommodate all of these possibilities. Our collection includes pieces of a caliber that any museum would be pleased to exhibit, as well as pieces that could be handled by schoolchildren in an educational setting.

Last year, as we prepared a group of textiles for an exhibit at the Textile Museum of Canada in Toronto, the exhibit curator asked to borrow a 19th century full-sized *huipil* from San Pedro Sacatepéquez, Guatemala, woven for a statue of the Virgin. We considered the request, aware that the museum would be able to exhibit the piece properly, but ultimately decided against lending it because of its extreme fragility. This decision brought us to a further conversation about the extensive FOIM holdings: If we were not willing to lend certain pieces from the collection because we deemed them too valuable or fragile, should we reconsider why we are storing them in a ‘very good’ but not ‘ideal’ climate-controlled collection room, such as exists at the Museo Ixchel?

With this in mind, we decided to offer these pieces to the Museo Ixchel as a long-term loan. At the Museum, they will be stored properly and exhibited under ideal conditions. We identified six pieces that met the criteria of being too valuable, too fragile, and



THE MUSEUM

The Museo Ixchel is located on 6a Calle final, zona 10, on the grounds of the Universidad Francisco Marroquín in Guatemala City. The museum is open from 9am to 5pm, Monday through Friday, and from 9am to 1pm on Saturday. Admission is Q35 for adults, Q15 for students and Q8 for schoolchildren. For further information on library access and holiday closings and more, please visit museoixchel.org or telephone 502 2331 3622

Piece of the Month

In 2013, the Friends of the Ixchel Museum funded a project to display a textile not normally on exhibit at the Museum. The project included design and construction of a handsome stand-alone display case to be located in the lobby, close to the entrance. The intention was to provide a rapidly changing exhibit that would keep the Museum experience fresh. Placement of the exhibit near the entrance was deemed important because many people come to the Museum store to shop and go no further. This immediately accessible changing exhibit highlights the excellence of the Museum to everyone as soon as they walk in the door.

Please visit the Museum website (www.museoixchel.org) to see the current and past *Piece of the Month* exhibits.

3rd Annual Weaving Contest sponsored by Anchor Threads

Museo Ixchel is proud to host this exciting contest, providing the venue for the display of entered textiles and the expertise to judge the pieces. An exciting twist to the contest this year was that the awards ceremony was held in Quetzaltenango, a more central location for weavers to attend. The premise of the contest is that Anchor supplies raw materials—high quality threads for weavers to use in pieces they enter into the contest—in two



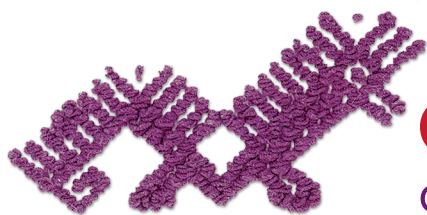
categories: Weaving and Embroidery (traditional textiles) and Innovation and Creativity (open ended design). The categories are judged separately, and Anchor funds the cash awards to the weavers. Congratulations to María Lucía Pocón, from San Raymundo, Guatemala (Weaving and Embroidery) and Marta Estepán, San Juan Comalapa, Chimaltenango (Innovation and Creativity).

***Día de la Mujer* 20th Anniversary Event**

In conjunction with International Woman's Day on March 8th, the Museum Textile Committee *Proteje* sponsors a wonderful annual event. The mission of *Proteje* is to organize weavers throughout Guatemala to produce high quality merchandise of the finest natural threads and dyes that will be attractive to a western market. Each year, more than 100 weavers are invited to *Día de la Mujer*. With expenses for their trip funded by the museum, the day includes an organized program of speakers and discussions on how to improve products—and, of course, a luncheon! Weavers are recognized with awards for their achievements over the last year. *Día de la Mujer* is a wonderful tradition, highly anticipated by weavers and the museum community.

RIGHT: Piece of the Month (April)
San Ildefonso Ixtahuacan
hupil 1970s
BOTTOM: Part of the audience
attending *Día de la Mujer*
March 2014





CHICHICASTENANGO MEN

Ceremonial Headcloths (*S'utes*): A Recent Donation



In 2012, Claudia Smith, formerly of Guatemala but now a resident of the San Diego area, donated 60 textiles dating from the 1930s through the early 1970s to FOIM. These textiles were part of a collection created by her mother, Helen Smith, a long-time resident of Guatemala. These pieces are in remarkable condition: almost all of them are pristine, and have never been washed or used. This is unusual for holdings of older textiles in private and museum collections, most of which have been used ethnographically and exhibit signs of wear. For students of textiles, these 'old but new' pieces are important because they provide information about dyestuffs that never have been exposed to light or to repeated washings and provide almost absolute dating sequences for their use.



The accompanying photo of a ceremonial man's headcloth (*s'ut*) from Chichicastenango (above left) demonstrate both the quality of the Smith Collection and the appearance of unused, never washed 1930s textiles. As part of a man's *traje*, *s'utes* are folded in half, cre-

ating a triangle. The *s'ut* is then placed against the forehead, and the two ends of the triangle are tied at the back of the head so that the tasseled ends hang down (see the early 20th century vintage photograph to the left)

The typical iconography of brocade in the 1930s, as well as for the two previous decades, consisted of small zoomorphic elements organized in rows. Use of silk floss as a brocade thread reached its zenith in the 1930s. The Second World War brought the silk trade from China to almost a halt, and the change-over to rayon and mercerized cotton threads was made in the next decade. Both of these threads provided the surface sheen that weavers sought for their work. Silk continues to be used up to the present day, but in limited amounts due to both availability and expense.

The Claudia/Helen Smith donation has enhanced the Friends' collection of textiles greatly, adding significantly to our ability to mount more comprehensive exhibits in the United States.

LEFT: Two *Cofrades* (members of a religious confraternity) wearing *s'utes* playing flute and drum. Photographer unknown (studio photograph)

REPATRIATION CONTINUED

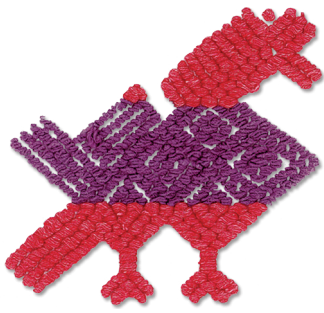
too rare to remain in the US with FOIM, and at our March board meeting in Guatemala presented them to the Museo Ixchel. --As you see, we take our responsibility as temporary stewards of the art and cultural patrimony of Guatemala seriously.

Interestingly, all six pieces are from two different towns named San Pedro Sactepéquez. Five are from San Pedro in the department of Guatemala, and one, an early 20th century altar cloth embroidered in silk floss, is from San Pedro in the department of San Marcos. The five 19th century *huipils* are vestments woven to adorn statues of the Virgin. These *huipils* were made in different sizes: three were for a life-size statues resident in the church, and two were for household statues 16 inches tall. (Included are photographs of one full size and one miniature *huipil*.)

The full size textile is brocaded in natural white and murex-

dyed cotton threads on a red cotton-based cloth dyed with alizarin, an early synthetic dye of madder. The detail photo (above) shows a date of 1899, along with names of the women who were members of the *cofradía* (religious society) that year. The small *huipil* most probably is older, and uses only murex and alizarin-dyed brocade threads. The unusual iconography on this piece is of an animal (horse) on the back of a larger horse. This iconography appears only on 19th century *huipils* made for household saints.





COMMUNICATING WITH FOIM

OUR EMAIL: Communicate with us anytime via foiminfo@gmail.com. Our mailbox is monitored by board member Monika Snodgrass, and she will forward your enquiries or feedback to the right person quickly.

OUR WEBSITE: ixchelfriends.org

Did you know we had one?

...That you can find the most recent bulletin on it?

PLUS an archive of past bulletins, especially useful for research or pre-visit information?

...That you can donate to Friends right on the website?

...That there is in-depth information on fabulous weavings?

Please visit the website – and give us your thoughts. We're working to make the website our main communications vehicle and would appreciate your input on how to make it work for you. There are easy ways to contact us right on the site.

OUR BULLETIN: Currently, the bulletin is our principal way of showing people who we are and what we do. However, the bulletin is increasingly expensive to print and mail, so we hope more and more of you will request email transmission or go to the website directly in order to view it.

If you would prefer direct electronic receipt to your inbox (thus easily shareable), let us know! We're especially interested in what preference our donors might have and for your comments on how to improve the Bulletin; thus a special survey is enclosed in donor bulletins. *LET US KNOW WHEN YOU MOVE...we can't send you our beautiful Bulletin if we don't know where you are.*

PLEASE VOLUNTEER FOR FOIM—we're sure you have great ideas and can help with current and future projects. Check the masthead for board members near you, and let us hear from you. On the 'front burner' is launching of a weaving cooperative in the Washington, DC area, as well as events and potential exhibits throughout the US. Reach board members via foiminfo@gmail.com

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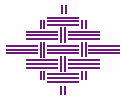
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Our growth is only possible through your generosity! Join Us Now!



FRIENDS OF THE IXCHEL MUSEUM

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Members receive free entrance to exhibitions of FOIM in the U.S. and to the Museo Ixchel in Guatemala City and discounts on purchases in the Museum Shop.

Benefactor	\$1,000	Contributor	\$100
Patron	\$500	Family	\$50
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Checks should be made payable to Friends of the Ixchel Museum, Inc.

Please mail this form with your donation.

For more information e-mail foiminfo@gmail.com

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