



# FRIENDS OF THE IXCHEL MUSEUM



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*San Andres  
Xecul,  
Totonicapán.  
K'iche linguistic  
group.  
Photo by Anne  
Girard de  
Marroquín. 2000*

*Nothing in this  
photo is woven  
on the backstrap  
loom. Note the  
commercial cloth  
in the huipiles,  
the machine  
embroidery. The  
aprons, skirts  
and shawls were  
woven on treadle  
looms.*



## A WAVE OF CHANGE IN BACKSTRAP WEAVING

We knew that the traditional backstrap weaving in Guatemalan villages was changing fast, so when we began our field trips to update our Photo Archive, a project funded by Friends of the Ixchel Museum, we felt we would be "taking the pulse" of the weaving communities.

We had no idea how rapid the change was. For the first time, it was hard to get pictures of women weaving because in several municipal centers fewer and fewer women weave on a backstrap loom; that happens mostly in some of the outlying villages and small hamlets. The change is like an "expansive shock wave" spreading from the municipal centers

outward. One wonders what will happen in a decade from now. Perhaps backstrap weaving will eventually disappear. Perhaps it will become a pure art form for artists and tourists.

It was wonderful to be out in the country again. Our last field work had been done over four years ago when we studied the native brown cotton, *cuyuscate*. Museum Curator, Rosario de Polanco, photographer Anne Girard de Marroquín, and I all enjoy being with people and getting first hand information.

We found that Nahualá is still conserving its traditions but now using more and more acrylic yarn instead of cotton. We saw women

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 2*





# IN THE MUSEUM

**THE GETTY GRANT** work is finished: 2,200 textiles have been examined, photographed and stored in acid free paper and boxes.

**FINLAND** donated US\$ 15,000 to the Ixchel Museum for the cataloguing and conservation of the woolen pieces in the collection.

**THE DANIELE AGOSTINO FOUNDATION** has granted Pro-Teje US\$ 9,200 to build storage, work and retail space within the museum.

**TEXTILES OF THE MONTH**, older weavings from Comalapa, were mounted in the Carmen Petersen gallery. The inauguration coincided with the art exhibit of painters from Comalapa and many villagers attended.

**TWO CHILDREN'S BOOK** were developed by the Ixchel Museum for the Interamerican Development Bank and the Ministry of Education. "Una Historia que Contar" was written by the team that created "Un Poco de Todo," and "Una Cinta que Vuela" was written by Fabiana de Sáenz. The books will be included in 2000 rural libraries.



*Santiago Sacatepequez, Sacatepequez,  
Kaqchikel linguistic group.*

*Photo by María Luisa Schlesinger.*

*The older woman's traditional costume is woven on a backstrap loom. The young woman's huipil is woven on a treadle loom and decorated with machine embroidered flowers.*

**DONATIONS OF PHOTOGRAPHS** to the Ixchel Museum Photo Archive were made by María Luisa Schlesinger and Vivian B. Harvey.



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wearing *huipiles* made of commercial cloth decorated with machine embroidery. Santa María de Jesus is incorporating the designs and colors of different villages into its weavings. The *cofradías* of the town are weakening and it may be that their ceremonial dress will eventually lose its cultural meaning. In Santa María Cauqué almost no one uses the town's distinctive costume on a daily basis: a young girl will wear it perhaps three times a year for local festivals.

In Santiago Sacatepequez we were told that only two old women were still weaving, although we saw many women wearing *huipiles*. The young women of the village work in the textile industry where they earn more in two weeks than they would working two months on a *huipil*. Some women are now weaving *huipiles* on large treadle looms, once used only by men, and the few younger women who continue to weave on a backstrap loom are exposed to a variety of colors and designs and often copy motifs they like in their own *huipiles*.

Previously the Ixchel Museum did in-depth studies of certain communities and published the research. That takes time. Now, with the speed of the changes in the textile tradition, we must gain a glimpse of what is happening in as many communities as possible. Field notes are important, but, more than anything, we need to get photographs of the changes now taking place.

Put another way, the 6,500 textiles of the museum collection form a data bank of the weaving past. The weaving present can best be captured in photographs. Our photographic archive is thus becoming a vital document of the twists and turns in the evolution of the Maya weaving tradition.

Barbara de Arathoon, M.A. in anthropology  
Ixchel Museum Publications & Exhibit Director



# FRIENDS OF THE IXCHEL MUSEUM

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**THE ANNUAL MEETING** was held in Guatemala April 17th and 18th. Aside from the major funding of the photo archive and children's books, funds were approved for a digital camera, the development of a museum website, new modules for the children's museum, and a new exhibit.

**THE MORRIS ARBORETUM** of the University of Pennsylvania will host a natural dye exhibit, sponsored by Friends of the Ixchel Museum. It will open this October and run until March 2002.

**THE PHOTO ARCHIVE** project will fund supplies for the correct storage and cataloging of the existing 6,500 photographs and 7,250 slides, the cataloging work of photographer Anne Girard de Marroquín, and also more field trips to weaving villages.

**PUBLICATION OF TWO CHILDREN'S BOOKS** for rural libraries was made possible by a bridge loan by Friends until the IDB could disperse funds. The money was then used by Friends to publish a second edition of "Un Poco de Todo." Friends will also translate and publish the book in English.

**A SMALL EXHIBIT** of Guatemalan textiles was put up for a year at the Anthropology Museum of El Camino College in Torrance, California, by the museum curatorial class. Members of the board of Friends served as consultants and loaned a backstrap loom, textiles, and artifacts.



*Santa María de Jesus, Sacatepequez.  
Kaqchikel linguistic group. Photo by Vivian Harvey. 2001.  
Ixchel Museum Photo Archive.*

*Cofrade and Texel of the religious brotherhood of Santa María de Jesus in the traditional, backstrap woven attire.*

**A MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGN** will be launched to double our members. Please help us to contact friends and family who care about Guatemalan textiles.

## DONATIONS TO FRIENDS OF THE IXCHEL MUSEUM

*Please help Friends of the Ixchel Museum sponsor weaving projects, fund traveling textile exhibits, translate textile research, and support projects to enrich the Ixchel Museum.*

*Friends of the Ixchel Museum is an American foundation and donations are deductible by the donor for U.S. general income tax purposes. Checks drawn to the name of Friends of the Ixchel Museum, Inc., may be mailed to:*

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**PRESERVING THE TEXTILE ARTS OF GUATEMALA**





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Return Address Requested



*San Pablo La Laguna,  
Sololá.  
Tz'utujil linguistic group.  
Photo by María Luisa  
Schlesinger. 2000.  
Ixchel Museum Photo  
Archive.*

*Note the punch-hooked  
embroidery with acrylic  
thread and the crochet  
border. The skirt, not  
originally of that village,  
is woven on a treadle loom.*