



FRIENDS OF THE IXCHEL MUSEUM



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ALL SAINTS' DAY

On All Saints' Day, the Maya commemorate their dead. They believe that on November 1st the souls of the dead return home. Some Maya communities believe that souls of children return home on November 1st and the souls of adults return on November 2nd.

In preparation, the Maya decorate altars in their homes with flower petals and candles and say prayers for the dead. It is important that their favorite foods be waiting for the returning souls, so the families buy candies and fruits for the souls of the children and prepare hot chocolate and special dishes for the adults. They sprinkle flower petals to make a path from their altar out to the street in front so the souls will find their way home.

They repaint the tombs and crosses of their family members and sweep the cemeteries clean; they adorn the tombs with designs made with petals of bright, pungent marigolds, the "flor de muerto," and with fragrant pine needles. In the evening, entire families go to the cemetery to spend the night; they light candles by the graves and take specially prepared foods.

The best known All Saints' Day dishes are "fiambre," a cold salad made of cooked vegetables, fish and meats, and "cabecera," a compote of pumpkin and brown sugar, which they put on their home altars and leave at the graves for their dead loved ones.



In communities of the Mam linguistic group, such as Colotenango, a marimba plays in the cemetery in the evening and the villagers dance. In other communities, the families take turns ringing the bells of the village church for their dead.

*All Saints' Day
at the
cemetery.*

*The woman is
wearing a San
Pedro
Sacatepequez
ceremonial
over-huipil that
was woven on a
back strap
loom.*

In some villages it is a tradition on All Saints' Day to fly kites that will symbolically go up to the heavens with messages for the dead. The village of Santiago Sacatepequez is famous for its immense kites, some as large as 9 feet in diameter. The kites are made of a bamboo frame lashed together and covered with brightly colored tissue paper cut into intricate designs and fringes. The kites are flown in the afternoon of November 1st, when the wind is strong enough to lift them.

Not only the Maya celebrate All Saints' Day. In ancient Athens, Anthesteria was the ceremony held on the day the dead souls returned home. The Christian and Eastern Orthodox churches celebrate both All Saints' and All Souls' Day, and one of the major Buddhist festivals of China and Japan is Ullambana -- All Souls' Day. Although beliefs and ceremonies differ, throughout much of the world it is felt that the dead need the prayers and love of the living. 🏠

Photographs by John Willemsen from the Ixchel Museum Photo Archive.



A village cemetery in all its splendor for All Saints' Day, adorned with marigolds and chrysanthemums



Marigold petals and a single candle at a tomb.




Kites fly high above Santiago Sacatepequez on All Saints' Day.



IN THE MUSEUM

Curator Rosario Miralbes de Polanco won a Getty Foundation grant to attend a congress in Ottawa in September at the Canadian Conservation Institute.

Art publisher, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., will publish a book on Mayan textiles including pieces from the Ixchel Museum collection and a chapter on Mayan textiles by Dr. Linda Asturias de Barrios. Jeffrey Foxx, photographer of "Living Maya", has taken the pictures for the book.

The second permanent exhibit, Mayan textiles from the 1950 to the present, opened July 20th. It depicts everyday and ceremonial life of contemporary Mayas and has 30 mannequins arranged in village scenes. 




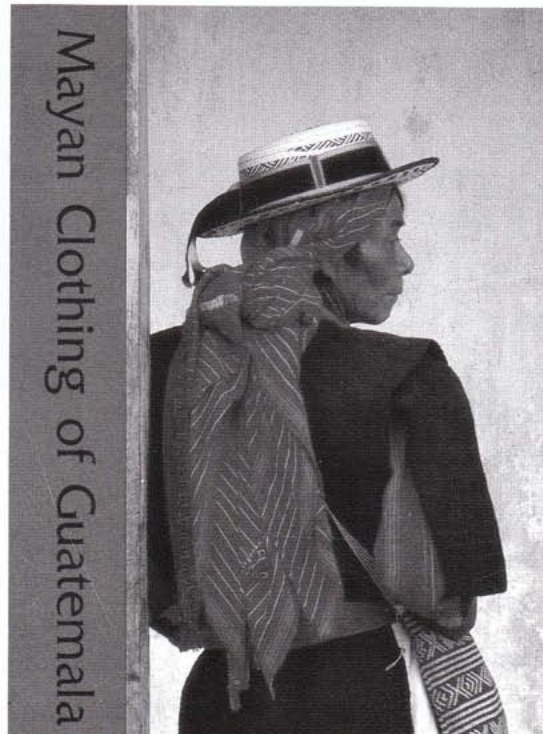
Mannequins from the new exhibit.

FRIENDS OF THE IXCHEL MUSEUM

Friends of the Ixchel Museum, Inc. held its annual meeting in New York City on May 6th, 1994. New officers and board members were elected.

"The History of Mayan Clothing," is available in both English and Spanish. It is shown in the Ixchel Museum to visitors and serves as an introduction to the permanent exhibit. It is the second video that Friends has funded.

The Cofradia Exhibit opened to great enthusiasm in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Honorary Chairman of Friends, Lucia Hempstead, Founding member of the Ixchel Museum, Marianne Echeverria, and President of Friends, Suzanne Davis, were at the exhibit. Dr. Linda Asturias de Barrios gave lectures on the Cofradia and the history of Mayan weaving. 



The cover of the video "The History of Maya clothing"

Friends of the Ixchel Museum
P. O. Box 27283
Los Angeles, CA 90027

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Please help Friends of the Ixchel Museum sponsor weaving projects, bring textile exhibits to the U.S., translate textile research, and fund videos that bring to life the tradition and artistry of Guatemalan textiles.

Friends of the Ixchel Museum is incorporated under the Not-for-Profit Corporation Law of the State of New York and has qualified under the rules of the U. S. Internal Revenue Service as an organization to which donations may be made which are deductible by the donor for U. S. federal income tax purposes. Checks drawn to the name of Friends of the Ixchel Museum, Inc., may be mailed to:

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P. O. Box 27283

Los Angeles, CA 90027



An
extraordinary
giant kite of
Santiago
Sacatepequez
being readied
for its flight on
All Saints' Day.

Photo by Joya
Hairs. Ixchel
Museum Photo
Archive

PRESERVING THE TEXTILE ARTS OF GUATEMALA