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Gods and Empire: Huari Ceremonial Textiles **July 1, 2005 – January 15, 2006**

June 9, 2005, Washington, DC — Gods and Empire: Huari Ceremonial Textiles, an exhibition featuring 12 tapestry-woven objects drawn from the Museum's extensive collection of Huari textiles, will be on view at The Textile Museum July 1, 2005 – January 15, 2006. The Huari Empire, which flourished during the 7th and 8th centuries, was based near the modern city of Ayacucho, Peru. The powerful empire conquered a vast area that includes most of the coast and highlands of what now constitutes Peru. Gods and Empire: Huari Ceremonial Textiles will explore what textiles and other evidence can tell us about Huari religious practices. Textiles on display will include garments such as a mantle, headband and several tunics, as well as two non-garment textiles featuring a colorful and distinctive ceremonial iconography. The exhibition is curated by Ann Pollard Rowe, the Museum's Curator of Western Hemisphere Collections. She has published articles on Huari style textiles, including mantles, and tunics depicting musicians, for The Textile Museum and for Dumbarton Oaks.

Archaeological evidence of the Huari Empire includes ceramics, found primarily in tombs, with Huari secular designs or religious iconography. Textile preservation is rare in the highlands because of seasonal rainfall. However, because the Huari Empire conquered such a vast area, fine tapestry-woven textiles with designs similar to those found on Huari ceramics have been found in the coastal desert. The Textile Museum is fortunate to possess an outstanding collection of these Huari style textiles.



Fragment (detail), Huari style
Peru, probably found on the south coast
ca. AD 750-800
The Textile Museum 2002.20.1
Anonymous gift

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Offering deposits of smashed ceramics and archaeological evidence of the brewing of large quantities of corn beer, perhaps laced with a hallucinogenic substance, suggest some aspects of Huari religious ritual. (The seeds of the *Anadenanthera colubrina* plant contain a hallucinogen known to have been in use during the time of the Huari Empire.) The iconography shared by Huari ceramics and textiles includes a deity with a rayed face and attendant staff-bearing, winged figures. Textiles depicting fire-making using a fire drill and others depicting musicians, including men with panpipes, a deer-headed trumpet, or a whistle, and women beating drums, suggest other aspects of Huari ceremonial practice. The textiles themselves seem likely to have been used in such a ritual context.

Gods and Empire will feature a spectacular large textile measuring eight feet in length and two feet high, with repeating sections depicting a rayed deity head, staff-bearing, winged figures and a scene of two men making fire with a fire drill. The fragmentary textile was given to The Textile Museum in 2002 and then painstakingly reassembled by the Museum's Conservation department. A full-scale reconstruction, depicting what the textile may have looked like when originally created, will be exhibited alongside the conserved fragment. It is clear from its non-garment format and from the representation of the principal Huari deities that the textile must have had some ritual use, perhaps display or sacrifice or some combination of the two.

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Founded in 1925 by George Hewitt Myers, The Textile Museum is an international center for the exhibition, study, collection and preservation of the textile arts. The Museum explores the role that textiles play in the daily and ceremonial life of individuals the world over. Special attention is given to textiles of the Near East, Asia, Africa and the indigenous cultures of the Americas. The Museum also presents exhibitions of historical and contemporary quilts, and fiber art. With a collection of more than 17,000 textiles and rugs and an unparalleled library, The Textile Museum is a unique and valuable resource for people locally, nationally and internationally.

The Textile Museum is located at 2320 'S' Street, NW in Washington, DC. The Museum is open Monday - Saturday 10:00 am to 5:00 pm and Sunday 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm. Admission is free; suggested donation is \$5.00. For further information, call 202-667-0441.

For more information or images, please contact Cyndi Spain at 202-667-0441, ext. 17, or by email at cspain@textilemuseum.org or visit www.textilemuseum.org/about/pressroom.htm.