



## THE TEXTILE MUSEUM

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### **Textiles from Q'ero, Peru on view at The Textile Museum** **Exhibition highlights weaving tradition of remote Andean community** **March 21 – August 18, 2002**

**February 19, 2002, Washington, DC** — An exhibition featuring textiles from Q'ero, a remote indigenous community in the Cuzco area of southern Peru, will be on view at The Textile Museum March 21 – August 18, 2002. In the community of Q'ero, located high on the eastern slopes of the Andes mountains, weaving is the central form of artistic expression, incorporating techniques and designs evolved from the pre-Hispanic past.

The exhibition, *Hidden Threads of Peru: Q'ero Textiles*, includes more than 35 examples drawn from The Textile Museum's collections, the American Museum of Natural History in New York, and from a private collector. The exhibition is curated by Ann Pollard Rowe, Curator, Western Hemisphere Collections, The Textile Museum. The exhibition is accompanied by a full-color catalogue co-authored by Rowe and John Cohen, a photographer, documentary filmmaker and musician who has made numerous trips to Q'ero over the past 40 years.

#### **The Q'ero Community**

It takes an average of two days by foot or on horseback to reach Q'ero from the nearest road, and outside visitors to the community are rare. By using ecological niches at different altitudes, the community is able to be relatively self-sufficient. They keep alpacas, llamas, and sheep in high pastures, grow several dozen varieties of potato at the upper limit of agriculture, and grow corn at lower altitudes. This self-sufficiency and isolation has helped the community to maintain its independence and preserve its ancient cultural traditions to an unusual degree. The well-preserved cultural traditions found in Q'ero make the community unique, as does the characteristic weaving style that readily differentiates Q'ero from other communities in the surrounding area.

#### **Q'ero Weaving**

Q'ero weavers make textiles from yarn spun from the hair of their own alpacas, llamas, and sheep. Q'ero yarns are spun with a drop spindle and woven on the staked-out loom, both of which are ancient pre-Hispanic technologies. The exhibition includes shawls dating from as early as the late 19th century, as well as recent examples that illustrate the evolution and abstraction of Q'ero design motifs over time.

Pattern weaving throughout the Cuzco area shares certain features in common, including being decorated with brightly-colored lengthwise bands (warp-patterned) and designs. The distinctive textiles of Q'ero have designs depicting the *chunchu* (tropical forest Indian) wearing a feather headdress and *inti* (the sun), a rayed diamond, used to decorate women's shawls and men's festival ponchos and coca bags. Another distinctive feature of Q'ero textiles is the use of hidden warp yarns to



Photo by John Cohen

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create 3-color patterning that is equally clear on both faces of the fabric. While this technique is used in some other Cuzco area communities, in Q'ero it is carried to virtuosic heights. Q'ero weaving also makes lavish use of stripes with yarns of opposite directions of spin, to create more subtle patterns within monochrome areas. Weavers in Q'ero also use a discontinuous warp technique of pre-Hispanic origin to make textiles with a distinct quartered design executed in the natural colors of alpaca yarn.

Q'ero is the only place in Peru where a ceremony has been recorded that is conducted specifically in honor of the handwoven textiles produced there. Conducted at the Christian feast of Easter, this ceremony, in which shawls and scarves woven during the previous year are blessed, makes explicit the value the community places on weaving as a medium of artistic expression.



Woman's shawl  
Q'ero, Peru, late 1980s  
The Textile Museum 1999.7.5  
Gift of John Cohen

### Catalogue

The exhibition *Hidden Threads of Peru: Q'ero Textiles* is accompanied by a full-color catalogue co-authored by curator Ann Pollard Rowe and John Cohen, who has made eight trips to Q'ero over more than 40 years. The catalogue includes Cohen's photographs and text on Q'ero life, as well as previously unpublished field information from anthropologist Steven Webster. The catalogue is co-published by The Textile Museum and Merrell Publishers, London. Production of the catalogue was made possible by generous gifts from The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, The Charles Delmar Foundation, Béa Welsh Weicker Irvin, and Marion Stirling Pugh.

### Educational Programming

Several educational programs highlighting Andean arts and culture are scheduled in connection with the exhibition, including the following:

**Lecture** – Anthropologist Catherine Allen, “Understanding Andean Social Structures,”  
Sunday, April 7 • 2:30 pm. Fee: \$7/TM Members; \$10/non-members.

**Lecture** – Anthropologist Steven Webster, “Q'ero Rituals,”  
Thursday, April 11 • 6:30 pm. Fee: \$7/TM Members; \$10/non-members.

**Lecture** – Anthropologist and weaver Ed Franquemont, “The Weavers Eye: Understanding Andean Textiles,”  
Thursday, April 18 • 6:30 pm. Fee: \$7/TM Members; \$10/non-members.

**Lecture & Book Signing** – Sociologist Kevin Healy, “Llamas, Weaving, and Organic Chocolate,”  
Sunday, April 21 • 2:30 pm. FREE.

For a complete listing of educational programming at The Textile Museum, please visit [www.textilemuseum.org](http://www.textilemuseum.org).

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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 traditional societies 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 over 17,000 textiles and carpets and an unparalleled library, The Textile Museum is a unique and valuable resource for people locally, nationally and internationally. For further information, call 202-667-0441.

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**For more information or photographs**, please contact Julia Neubauer, Public Information Assistant, The Textile Museum, 202-667-0441, ext. 17. The Textile Museum is a private, non-profit museum open Monday through Saturday 10:00 am to 5:00 pm and Sunday 1:00 to 5:00 pm. Admission is free; suggested donation \$5.00.

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