

ABEGG-STIFTUNG

Media release, September 2022

16 SEPTEMBER TO 13 NOVEMBER 2022
OPEN DAILY FROM 2 P.M. TO 5.30 P.M.

AN INCA MANTLE FROM THE COLONIAL PERIOD



To supplement its exhibition of textiles from Ancient Peru, the Abegg-Stiftung is to show yet another treasure from its storage rooms: a brightly coloured, finely worked tapestry shoulder mantle dating from the period around 1600. It was made after the conquest of Peru by the Spanish and combines materials and motifs from both worlds. The mantle, which will be on display for two months, is thought to be the oldest of just five such garments of its kind and quality still in existence worldwide.

Mantles in the form of a simple rectangle of cloth were part of the costume traditionally worn by Inca women. They were draped over the shoulders and pinned together at the breast. The colours and patterns told of the owner's social status and origin. Such mantles were worn long after the fall of the Inca Empire. Henceforth, however, elements of European fashion and culture were woven into them, especially in garments made for the elite, like this one. In addition to classical Inca patterns – small rectangular fields filled with abstract, geometrical shapes – and animals native to Peru such as monkeys, llamas and parrots, it also features figures in European dress. Also striking are the large, white, tongue-like motifs. They imitate the bobbin-lace trimmings that were an integral part of European dress in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

That the mantle was made to a high standard is evident from its rich and varied decorative scheme and the costly materials out of which it was woven. These come from different parts of the world: fine wool from alpacas or llamas and cotton from Peru, silk from Asia and metal threads from Europe. It is an exquisite garment and as a symbol of power and luxury must have been the property of a lady belonging to the highest echelons of society.

Both media release and photo are available as e-mail attachments.

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Caption:

Detail of the Inca shoulder mantle. Peru, southern highlands, colonial period, late 16th/early 17th century. Tapestry made of cotton, camelid wool, silk, and metal threads. Abegg-Stiftung, inv. no. 416

The exhibition «**HUMANS, BEASTS, GODS – TEXTILE TREASURES FROM ANCIENT PERU**» will remain open until 13 November 2022.