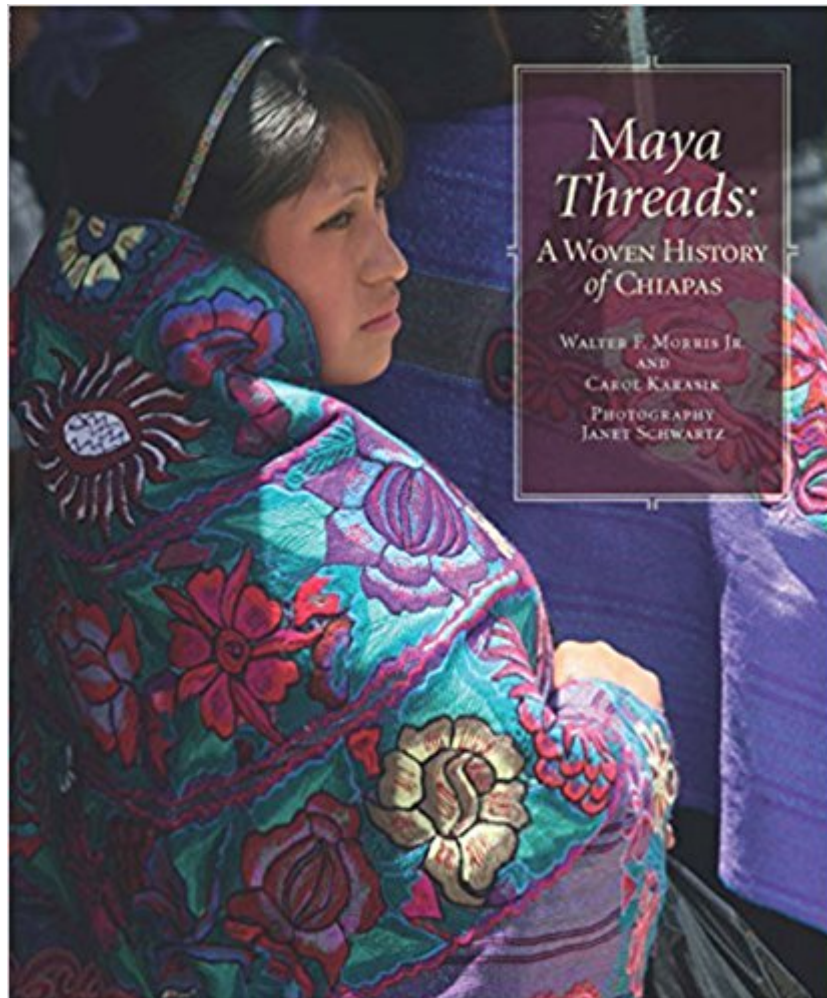




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# Maya Threads: A Woven History Of Chiapas



## Synopsis

Through the pages of this incredibly-researched history and photo gallery, the world of the Maya lives on through the lens of its culture and costume, still seen today in the state of Chiapas in southern Mexico. In a region battered by centuries of invasions, subjugations, civil wars, and severe economic hardship, the Maya continue to celebrate and sustain their heritage in extraordinary traditional dress and festivals that are both riotous and sacred. Their ever-evolving, colorful, beautifully-handcrafted dress features exquisite gauze fabrics that trace their origins from the 9th century AD to a present-day lowland village; festival wear that blends Roman Catholicism and paganism, reverence and mockery; gloriously brocaded and embroidered wardrobes that tie communities together; and embroidery techniques that reflect displacements and migrations in other words, fabrics that trace the history and evolution of a people. Two Maya experts and a photographer painstakingly record the remnants of influence from the Aztecs, Spanish conquistadors, Catholic missionaries, and the unseen gods and spirits that guide Maya culture today."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Immeasurably deep, endlessly layered and nuanced, aesthetically beautiful, resonating with the grounding of ancient ways yet in constant, dynamic flux, the world of the traditional Maya is incomprehensible to those who have not breathed it into their beings. Truly rare are those from the outside who understand it, rarer still are those who can respectfully transmit the complexity of this society to those of us on the outside. Chip Morris is one of these rare individuals, intelligent and

humble, with humor and profound insight gained through close to four decades of life in the Chiapan highlands. He is also an excellent storyteller and he and his coauthor, Carol Karasik, do honor to that skill as well as the rich culture they share with us in this book." — Eric Mindling, Traditions Mexico Cultural Tours, Oaxaca, Mexico

Walter F. Morris, Jr. speaks with a voice of authority derived from his thirty years of experience working with Maya textile artists in Chiapas, Mexico. His coauthor, Carol Karasik, brings her own experience of the country and its people and an accessible writing style to the book, and Janet Schwartz's beautiful images speak their own language about Maya clothing in bright detail. Maya Threads covers the clothing and customs of Chiapas from ancient to present times, and the changes that have occurred as new materials and influences have affected the culture." — Margot Blum Schevill, coauthor, Maya Textiles of Guatemala

Contemporary indigenous dress in Chiapas is a fascinating amalgam of pre-Hispanic Maya traditions and influences from the modern market economy, filtered by the creativity of the people who make and wear it. The authors [of this book] lovingly describe how and why it changed from then to now, based on long-time familiarity with Chiapas as well as new field work and interviews. Together with the gorgeous photographs, there is significantly more detail on the subject here than ever before, in some cases with the exact year and innovator identified. It is warmly recommended to travelers and scholars alike." — Ann Pollard Rowe, author, A Century of Change in Guatemalan Textiles

It will be of great help and interest to anyone working in the field of Central American textiles and clothing, as well as those looking for inspiration for their own work. Well worth having!" — Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood, Director, Textile Research Centre

Walter F. Morris, Jr. became a deep expert in the textiles and culture of the Highlands after traveling to Chiapas as a tourist in 1972. His fluency in Tzotzil and his extensive time in Maya villages have given him unique insights into the history and symbolism of Maya textiles. He is a founder of Sna Jolobil, a weaving collective based in San Cristóbal, which both supports weavers and fosters excellence in native textile arts. He received a MacArthur Award in 1983 for his work in textile symbology in Chiapas. Carol Karasik is a writer and editor who has been studying ancient astronomical alignments at Palenque. She is the author of *The Drum Wars: A Modern Maya Story* and *The Turquoise Trail*. Janet Schwartz is a native New Yorker who came to Chiapas in 1978 on a Fulbright Scholarship to study the Bonampak murals. She has gone on to become a clothing designer, a tour guide, and ultimately a journalist/photographer with thousands of bylines to her credit. They all live in San Cristóbal, Chiapas (Mexico).

For those who love handwoven textiles, this book is a "must have." The narrative about the history of Mayan weaving in the highlands of Chiapas begins with a scholarly explanation of the correlation between images that appear in ancient Mayan temple carvings and myths, and continues through the story of how the images and the artistry of Mayan weavers has been preserved and elaborated through the centuries. The tale moves through Mexican history from the time before the Spanish conquest, the colonial period after the conquest, the Mexican revolution, and forward to the modern era. The photos and the text also address the differences in the weaving arts in different villages, the weaving and embroidery techniques, and the costumes and feast days of the various villages. The book is very well written, and the photos are spectacular. I highly recommend this book.

Photography not as nice as I had hoped (snapshot quality) but lots of pics, and \*\*amazing\*\*, knowledgeable history of this ethnic fashion genre!

Another great book by Chip Morris, updating other work done about the textile art of Chiapas.

Excellent history of the Chiapas through textiles.

Very nice book. Highly recommended!

Excellent work

Beautiful, inspiring.

I enjoyed reading this book A LOT and the beautiful photography as well. I respect the authors' approach to tell the stories of costumes, brocade, embroidery and weaving of over a dozen villages and hamlets in the state of Chiapas. For years, Morris and Karasik have engaged in rigorous exploration to trace and explain the story of daily and ritualistic costumes, and I found that the text is void of the sadly prevalent Western intervention. I believe that the authors enjoy an intimate and respectful connection with the peoples in Chiapas, and the book reflects this and honors the Maya of today and their history. I want to thank the authors for that. Maya myths, Spanish colonization, trans-Atlantic travels, the Mexican Revolution, and the more recent Revolucion Zapatista have all played a role and each one can tell a part of the story of aesthetic shifts and of the new identities that people want to tell through their dress and

celebrations. The authors intertwine these major narratives with legends and stories of individuals who express their independence through colors, styles and modifications. Also, as I learned about the endurance, transformation, adaptation and revival of a non-linear textile history of thousands of years, I wondered what a book with a similar purpose would tell thirty years from now about the new pan-Maya identity expressed in festive and daily garments. I agree with what other readers have pointed out: this book is full of revelations, but it is also full of cross-cultural proof that weavers in different parts of the world capture a collective and individual vision of the sacred universe. As a language instructor who aims to help develop understanding and cultural awareness in her students, and as a weaver who was raised in a Western way of life but adopted as an apprentice by the native weavers in the Peruvian highlands and by the Arhuaco of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta in Colombia, I find this book valuable to anyone interested in textiles, history and culture and even to anyone who wants to have a rich experience traveling in Chiapas, because soon after I started reading it, I decided that one of my upcoming weaving journeys is Chiapas.

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