



Weaving with the Maya: Innovation and Tradition in Guatemala

Pia Tohver PhD

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This book discusses how the materiality of weaving and wearing cloth parallels the construction of personhood among the Maya in Guatemala. Maya clothing is famed for bright colours that define a Maya person and exhibit community-bound origin. The efficacy of Maya cloth is revealed during the process of weaving, in which the selection of colours and thread types affect the quality of the finished cloth. More so, weavers' skills are dependent on the relationship of the body with the loom, for the ability to weave good quality cloth. For Maya women, weaving is an important activity during which both cloth and personhood is created and maintained. Weaving is an occasion to exchange information pertaining to the making of cloth as well as dealing with aspects of womanhood. Weaving as cultural performance encompasses the gathering of women and enables weavers to connect with women within and outside their kin group. Tourism has expanded the popularity of Maya cloth and weavers have introduced new designs, colours and patterns to comply with the tourist market. Doing this, Maya women have attained a powerful economic presence in the local and global world through the innovation of cultural knowledge.

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