



Maya Threads: A Woven History of Chiapas explores the beautiful and intricate Mayan textiles of Chiapas, Mexico. When Walter F. Morris, Jr. (“Chip”) relocated to Chiapas, Mexico, in the early ‘70s, he was not just an outside observer looking in; rather, he quickly became an active participant in the Mayan daily life. As he established his life in Mexico’s southernmost State, he learned how deeply interwoven the symbolism and colorways of the area’s indigenous dress, household fabrics, and ceremonial pieces are with the culture and history of the people.

His new book, *Maya Threads: A Woven History of Chiapas* (Thrums Books, March 2015), coauthored with Carol Karasik and Janet Schwartz, is the essential guide to the history, meaning, and evolution of these textiles—from pre-Columbian royal raiment to the latest manifestations of ancient symbols and styles.

Chiapas hosts one of the country’s largest indigenous populations with a strong cultural identity. *Maya Threads* focuses the authors’ well-trained and observant eyes on the fabrics, techniques, designs, and colors that make the region one of the finest and most varied living textile histories in the world. Morris notes, “Underlying their fashion statements are well-considered religious and political views and a solid sense of identity.” Textiles are its leading handcraft and the clearest expression of its complex history.

Maya Threads offers an intimate look at the life and times of the people through thirteen centuries, including migrations, conquests, spiritual life, political changes, as well as celebrations and rituals. Proclaiming influences from the Aztecs, Spanish and French conquistadors, Catholic missionaries, unseen gods and spirits, nearby South Americans, and other earthly elements, the garments they wear showcase distinct weaving patterns, colors, designs, and stitching.

The women of Chiapas have been creating their clothing for four thousand years, evolving their stitches, their cuts, their colors, and their fit. But, there is still a strong underlying vision of design that radiates.

Morris notes, “This book isn’t about fashion per se but how a culture preserves traditions, adopts new ideas, and adapts to changing times. Throughout their turbulent history, the Maya have clung to tradition while riding the waves of change. This remarkable resilience has

guaranteed their survival, and nowhere is their success clearer than in their beautiful and diverse costumes.”

With more than 250 stunning photos, illustrations, and maps, *Maya Threads* explores a full range of textiles and offers an in-depth look at the region’s people. It vibrantly showcases an exuberant, private people whose textiles are constantly evolving on their own terms.

Maya Threads is the ultimate sourcebook for anyone interested in the culture and history of Chiapas. Perfect for an armchair traveler, fashion student, textile artisan, curious observer, or world traveler, this book offers a fascinating historical journey through fabric.

Author Bios

Walter F. Morris, Jr (“Chip”) came to Chiapas as a tourist from Boston in 1972 and has stayed on to become deeply expert in the textiles and culture of the Highlands. His fluency in Tzotzil and his extensive time in Maya villages have given him unique insights into the history and symbolism of Maya textiles, which he has shared generously in his writings. Chip 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 produced a number of books on modern Maya culture. She is the author of *The Turquoise Trail*, a popular book about intercultural exchange between Mesoamerica and the Southwest. She recently published a novel, *The Drum Wars: A Modern Maya Story*. For the past ten years she has been studying ancient astronomical alignments at Palenque.

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.

Book Details:

Title: *Maya Threads: A Woven History of Chiapas*

Author: Walter F. Morris, Jr (“Chip”), Carol Karasik, Janet Schwartz

Publisher: Thrums Books Distributed by Small Press United

Publication: February 15, 2015, \$34.95, Paper, ISBN: 978-0-9838860-6-8

Textiles Arts/Cultural Studies/Mexico, 224 pages, 9” x 11”

245 color photos, 16 b/w illustrations, 6 maps

Walter F. Morris, Carol Karasik. Centuries ago the Maya people created a magnificent culture. Pyramids, temples, astronomical sites, populous cities, and a culture of beauty and sophistication marked what we now know as southern Mexico and Central America. The mysterious "collapse" of the great city-states of the Maya world to the 10th century is as great archaeological mystery. And yet the Maya people, and their culture, live on. Especially in the state of Chiapas in southern Mexico. Even with civil wars and severe economic hardship, the Maya continue to celebrate and sustain their