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Carol Hendrickson. *Weaving Identities: Construction of Dress and Self in a Highland Guatemala Town.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995. xiv + 245 pp. $19.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-292-73100-4; $35.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-292-73099-1.

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Located on the PanAmerican highway about fifty-five miles west of Guatemala City, Tecpan is an important market town and the *cabecera* of the *municipio* of the same name. For the Kaqchikel Maya women of Tecpan, traditional dress or *traje* is used to construct and is a visual expression of indigenous identity. It reflects ethnicity, gender, education, politics, wealth and nationality.

This book is a revision of Hendrickson's 1986 PhD dissertation at the University of Chicago. The dissertation was based on fieldwork in the early and mid 1980s. The book benefits from three additional summers of fieldwork in the early 1990s.

The book will find an audience among those interested in the Maya, traditional weaving and dress, and the use of dress as means of defining ethnic, national, and gender differences. It will also be of interest to individuals interested in the Maya government that inflicted terror and death upon its Maya people. The book is accessible, and my students in a course on the Maya enjoyed reading it.

Hendrickson acknowledges the influence of Paul Friedrich's book *The Princes of Naranjo* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986) and Fernand Braudel's *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976). We see Friedrich's influence in her attempt to situate herself and her Kaqchikel informants in their historical and social setting. To her credit, Hendrickson does this in a more felicitous and less tedious manner than did Friedrich. >From Braudel, she borrows his three categories of time as an interpretive framework and organizing device.

Chapters Two and Three deal with patterns that she identifies as persistent, unchanging and timeless. Chapter Two focuses on the geography of clothing, how indigenous *traje* contrasts with identity. Chapter Three focuses on the wearer of *traje* and the role that it plays in constructing enduring images of the Maya.

Chapters Four and Five treat regular repeated cycles that coincide with the life history of individuals and clothes. These cycles correspond to social time, social history, or conventional or stereotypical change. Chapter Four examines the role of clothes in the socialization of individuals and how changes in clothing define different stages in the life of the individual. Chapter Five examines what Hendrickson calls the cultural biography of *traje*. She discusses the choice of threads, weaves and design and the use of an item of *traje* from when it is new until it is a rag.

Chapter Six treats history of events and individuals. This is "traditional history" and examines contemporary changes in the production and use of *traje*. Finally, Chapter Seven treats the ideological and emotional content of *traje*.

Chapter Two: The most common threads are made from either wool or cotton. Each material has a different history. Wool from highland Guatemala is spun by hand. Cotton thread may either be imported or hand spun of cotton from lowland Guatemala. Brown cotton is produced in small quantities, spun into thread, and woven into the most prestigious of Tecpan *huipiles*. Silk thread is used rarely. All threads are locally available.

Municipios differ in the color, style, design patterns and manner of wearing *traje*. The most distinctive and symbolically densest article of *traje* is the *huipil* that usually signals *municipio* identity. In Tecpan *huipiles* differ in style. Each style has its unique history and is worn in different contexts. A woman may choose to wear the characteristic *huipil* of her mother's, her father's or her husband's *municipio*. Other factors affecting the choice of *huipil* include economic status, the weather, Maya pride and individual choice. *Huipiles* from different *municipios* are not all judged equal. Local Maya regard some as of better quality, and they borrow these asymmetrically across *municipio* boundaries. *Huipiles*, and *traje* overall, are a visible sign of Maya identity and solidarity.

Vestido on the other hand reflects the outside, non-Maya world. In decreasing order of value, it may be tailor-made, ready-made or homemade. The best *vestido* is imported from the United States. *Vestido* from Guatemala and Chimaltenango, the department capital, is less prestigious.

Chapter Three: Hendrickson notes the complexity of the image of the enduring Indian, an image constructed, marketed, praised, manipulated and denounced at the local, national and international levels. For non-Indians at the national and international levels, the Indian in traditional dress expresses and signals Guatemalan identity. The Indian woman in *traje* conveys a passive, domestic, apolitical image and is used to sell Guatemala as exotic, accessible and safe. This image links the present Maya with their past and with nature. The Indian is glorified for profit. At the local level, however, the expression of Indian identity may be perceived as a threat and the Indian debased as only good for manual labor.

Even from the Maya perspective, the use of *traje* has both positive and negative qualities. It may suggest that the individual is responsible and diligently trying to live according to Maya values. On the other hand, it may brand the wearer as low status. Women in *traje* are considered beautiful. Men in *traje*, on the other hand, are considered non-masculine and of low status.

The meaning of *traje* is complex and negotiated, for "the public presentation of self is often precisely calculated; the wearer chooses to emphasize one aspect or another without always knowing the full consequences of the act" (p. 97). Meanings are intended, supposed, perceived and denied.

Chapter Four: Infants are "cold," weak and vulnerable at birth and must be protected by clothing from the glance of someone who is "hot." They do not have full public social identities, and therefore, Indian and Latino infants are often dressed alike. At six months, an Indian child is baptized and its *padrinos* give the child a gift of clothing. This begins the socialization of the body through clothing. Until two years of age, the child is not responsible for his actions. Around two years of age, there is a change of clothing, and the sexes are more strictly differentiated and the child is expected to begin showing self control.

By six or seven, young boys and girls are attending public or private schools. Here, for the first time, they regularly interact with individuals from outside the family. At school, youths have much more opportunity to interact with members of the other sex than did members of their parent's and grandparent's generations. Boys continue to have more freedom than do girls. Closest friends are still of the same sex.

When girls are from eight to ten, their mothers begin to teach them to weave on the backstrap loom. When they are older, some boys may begin to weave on the large treadle loom. They will learn from a member of their family or become an apprentice to someone outside the family.

When they begin school, girls become more aware of and concerned with their appearance and clothing. Female beauty is judged by the hair, skin, facial features and clothing. In a traditional context, the Maya value high cheek bones, broad sloping nose and dark complexion. These same features are not valued in the larger society. The individual's character and actions also contribute to judgments about beauty.

Not all adult women weave and wear *traje*; instead, Indian women "change from *traje* to *vestido* most frequently in the years preceding marriage, a period when all young people are actively defining their social persona through dress and other public emblems" (p. 116). A generation ago, marriages were arranged and the age of marriage was between sixteen and seventeen. Among the poor and individuals living in rural areas, arranged marriages are still common. In Tecpan center, romantic love is now common, and there are many unmarried individuals in their twenties. In most cases, courtship and marriage still require parental blessing.

The bride's family gives her new *traje* for prenuptial events. This signals the end of their obligations to raise her properly. The groom's family gives the bride new *traje* for the wedding itself. In the early 1980s, the bride wore *traje* and the groom a suit. The favored dress included a white skirt with six inches of lace at the hem, white shoes, white veil and a *huipil* with a white base. Economic hardships in the 1990s often resulted in less elaborate wedding attire.

Older women are less likely to wear *traje* than are younger women. Very old women are respected as sources of knowledge and links to the past. This past includes knowledge of older styles of *traje*. At death the body and clothes are washed before burial. White clothing in good condition is appropriate.

Hendrickson argues that "Maya women's productive activities and reproductive powers are central in defining them as the embodiment of Maya culture and Maya community" (p. 131). She quotes Kay Warren to the effect that "women perpetuate the culture" (p. 132).

Chapter Five: Like people, clothes have life cycles. The weaving of a *huipil*, the most symbolically dense ar-

ticle of *traje*, involves a choice of thread, color of thread, type of weave, and design motif. The initial choice of the quality and type of thread affect the end product. Color symbolism must be considered in the choice of the thread color. Although Tecpan has a core set of design patterns, women may modify these patterns in their scale, spacing, quantity, placement and color combination. Usually, they seek maximum color contrast. This makes the final product more *alegre*.

When judged dirty, *traje* is washed inside out. Only younger woman wear night clothes. Typically, women only remove their *huipil* and loosen their belt upon retiring. Men sleep in their clothes. Some *traje* is worn to rags. In other cases, *traje* may be recycled or sold as authentic dress to tourists. The money is used to purchase new thread.

Chapter Six: *Traje* is not static. Hendrickson argues "that attempts at change in *traje* are, in fact, attempts at or hopes for transformations in social relations" (p. 183). She offers four examples of how *traje* has changed in recent times. In one case, a single woman made an innovation in the technique by which floral designs were executed. In a second case, a young Maya priest had the chasuble for his ordination made from handspun brown cotton with traditional Tecpan designs. In the third case, naturalistic designs which began as an innovation on blouses subsequently spread to *huipiles*. The final case represented the introduction of an old, traditional design pattern which had long been abandoned.

Chapter Seven: Finally Hendrickson argues that "To wear *traje* is to say 'we are Maya"' (p. 193) and that *traje* "represents the image of Maya as an autonomous people with a history and culture all to themselves" (p. 194). The meaning of *traje* is always complex, ambiguous and contextual. "*Traje*, in fact, is always surrounded by a complex of overlapping, sometimes complementary, and sometimes contradictory meanings. These meanings become more or less important, more or less evident, in the interpretation of an event depending on the people involved, what is said, who is wearing the clothes, what events have preceded the moment, and other factors" (p. 196).

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