

Marvin Cohodas: Contemporary Maya Ritual Dancing and Weaving Arts Collection CAE2008

Introduction/Abstract

This archive contains materials related to “Dance of the Conquest” in Guatemala, a ritual dance-drama with masks and costumes that may be nearly 500 years old and in some communities is presented annually for the festival of the patron saint. Additional materials relate to contemporary weaving by Maya women of Chiapas, México and Guatemala.

Biographical Note: Marvin Cohodas

Marvin Cohodas, Professor Emeritus for the University of British Columbia’s Department of Art History, Visual Art & Theory has interests that encompass both ancient American visual representation (i.e. ‘Pre-Hispanic Art’), contemporary ritual and weaving arts of Maya peoples in Southern Mexico and Guatemala, and Native American basket weaving in California and Nevada. Research on late 19th and early 20th century weaving for the curio trade resulted in a book on two Northern California basket weavers, Elizabeth and Louise Hickox. He is also an exhibited basket weaver.

Scope and Content

Rather than assuming a single world view shared by all members of this society, Marvin Cohodas looks at Ancient Maya visual representations as comprising a series of competing discourses associated with different media, social groups, and institutions. He is particularly concerned with understanding the objects made and/or used by Maya women and children, two groups that have generally been ignored in culture-historical constructions of kings and conquests. Cohodas is also engaged in a study of popular representations of the Ancient Maya, especially in magazines and television documentaries. This project arises from concerns with the impact of knowledge produced about ancient Maya peoples on the ways in which contemporary Maya are seen by the national governments of Mexico and Central America and by foreign (particularly United States) political and economic interests in the region. Unfortunately, Cohodas’ archive of studies of Pre-Hispanic Maya arts and their contemporary representation in various media was destroyed in 2015.

Cohodas’ most recent research project on Maya arts is concerned the “Dance of the Conquest” in Guatemala (<http://baile-conquista.sites.olt.ubc.ca>), a ritual dance-drama with masks and costumes. This dance may be over 400 years old and in some communities is presented annually for the festival of the patron saint. He is interested in: the history of the dance; its theatrical, musical, dramatic, and visual aspects; its use as a ritual offering; and its potential for expression of resistance towards exploitation and discrimination by the dominant non-Maya minority in Guatemala.

This archive is currently in process.