

***Made in Mexico: Zapotec Weavers and the Global Ethnic Art Market.* W. Warner Wood. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008. 264 pp.\***

Reviewed by Walter E. Little

Oaxaca is a well-traveled place. It has been the object of tourists and academics from Mexico and the United States who for decades have gone looking for locked-in-the-past indigenous people and cultural traditions, Spanish Colonial architecture, revolutionary Mexico, savory delicacies like *mole poblano* and finely distilled *tequilas*, and skillfully made handicrafts, especially Zapotec textiles. This Oaxaca is well known and anticipated—the Oaxaca that attracts tourists, handicraft collectors, and anthropologists.

In *Made in Mexico*, W. Warner Wood takes the reader on a tour of Zapotec textiles unlike any other Oaxacan tour. Rather than the typical tour (and even ethnographic encounter), which begins in Oaxaca, Wood's tour begins far away. His tour is one that challenges the reader to rethink what Zapotec textiles are and who weaves them. It ranges from California to New Mexico and Mexico, across hallowed museum collections, high-end art dealers' shops, national Mexican and foreign tour groups, and Oaxacan weavers' and merchants' households.

The book is organized into two parts. The first, "Constructing and Consuming the Zapotec," consists of three chapters dedicated to exploring the production of meaning as it relates to Zapotec individuals and textiles. A diverse cast of characters constitutes these chapters: They are weavers and merchants who are located in the same house complex in Teotitlán or in multiple sites in Oaxaca, elsewhere in Mexico, New Mexico, and California. They are Mexican tourists and U.S. tourists, each trying to discover distinct hidden, mythic pasts. They are Mexican and U.S. guides and U.S. textile brokers, collectors, and handicraft shop owners—each of whom situates themselves in the Zapotec story and retells it. And they are the many academics that have likewise told the story of Zapotecs and their textiles. Wood also places himself within his critical engagement of theory, ethnographic practice, and the construction of what it means to be Zapotec and just what are Zapotec textiles. In exploring this meaning, he traces historical and spacial linkages. The Santa Fe gallery, the national Mexican handicraft exposition, the Oaxaca City markets and shops, and the multiple—sometimes scattered regionally, nationally, and internationally—weaver-merchant households are all sites where that which is Zapotec comes to be legitimized, made authentic, or even contested. As Wood shows, Zapotecs are clearly sophisticated participants in these processes.

The second part of the book, "Crafting Textiles and Weavers," consists of another three chapters that focus more intimately on textile production, learning to weave, and the specific ways that such production and learning processes culminate in disciplined bodies that are entwined in transnational economic and social relations, as well as relations of late capitalist production. Wood's picturesque descriptions of production techniques, learning to weave, weavers, and weavings are also in dialog with the body of ethnographic literature.

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Wood's book-as-tour takes the reader from what one would assume is the most accessible, a restaurant in Los Angeles, California, and a tour in Teotitlán del Valle, to the least accessible, the inner reaches of the Zapotec household and the processes of learning to weave. It would be a mistake to read Wood's ethnography in this fashion. Restaurant, tour group, art dealer, textile collector, scholar, weaver, merchant, and all other characters, including textiles, that Wood describes are mutually and concurrently constructed through the production, circulation, and consumption of knowledge and things and each other.

Wood frames the book "around the concept of a community of practice" (p. 19) to explore all practices and spaces that "inform the attitudes expressed in museums, galleries, and texts,...create our fetishized realities [that] inform our attitudes toward Zapotec textiles and their producers,...[and configure] the conditions for legitimacy...for the Zapotec" (p. 19). Wood is concerned with the complex of, movement of, and various embodiments of Zapotec textiles, weavers, merchants, and even tourists, dealers, and scholars. The ethnographic focus is on Zapotec weavers and merchants and the textiles that they weave and sell, but they cannot be understood (however fleetingly since Wood claims "the limits of the community of practice are constantly being created and destroyed, by each and every practice" [p. 18]) without considering how all are mutually constituted and inextricably bound to each other.

Wood draws heavily on Lev Vygotsky's theories of learning and Pierre Bourdieu's theories of practice, as well as several other social theorists to describe what factors into the concepts, materials, imaginations, and people that are Zapotec and whose meanings and materialities are in constant motion. This ethnography is certainly about globalization—the circulation of ideas, things, and people. What Wood reveals is not a production-circulation-consumption feedback loop, nor is it a free-floating sea of ideas and things randomly affixing themselves across space and time or being plucked by enterprising individuals. The flexible, fluid identities that Wood describes are fixed within a matrix of social, historical, and economic relations. Mexican national tourists' fetishes of authentic Indian pasts become embodied in the symbolic power of cochineal used to dye some Zapotec textiles whose meanings are constituted through local and national significations. Zapotec weavers learn to weave by doing and disciplining their bodies within a cultural and economic field of power relations. And foreign textile dealers, Zapotec weavers and merchants, border-crossing tourists, academic analyses, and internet web pages play parts in the meaning-making processes that give rise to what is Zapotec and what that means.

The chapters that specifically treat learning processes of weaving are deftly written in a narrative that feels like a piece of fiction. Wood's ability to tell a story and to identify others' stories drew me into the ethnography and into the complex, but clearly explained and adeptly utilized theoretical arguments that he makes throughout the book. He also includes a comprehensive discussion of Mexican anthropology of handicrafts, providing an excellent introduction to this often overlooked body of scholarship.

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