

contributions of the papers read as a group would have strengthened the book as a collection. For example, several of the papers are insightful examples of how analysis of dress allows for deeper understanding of the complex interaction among competing religious systems, market forces, group identity, and individual agency. The articles by Tarlo and Daly demonstrate that forms of dress that may be univocally read as religious symbols by some are actually implicated in a historically and interpersonally complex web of class, gender, and religion. The articles by Hill, Meisch, Keenan, and Crippen and Mulready show that dress, while changing in response to forces of market, religious conversion, and "fashion," can carry within it cultural memory, which is, ironically, both embraced and forgotten by those wearing the clothes.

These insights are at odds with some of the more simplistic approaches to religion found in the book, as when Arthur contends in the introduction that Durkheim's projections about the growth of secularization have "come true" (p. 2). In another example, Renne uses the practice of novitiate dressing in Yoruba wedding garb when taking their first vows to argue that the women have achieved harmony between Yoruba and Catholic cultures, while ignoring the fact that the wedding garb is symbolically repudiated as women don the European-based habit by the end of the rite. Despite these weaknesses, the strength of this collection is that many of the articles demonstrate the manner in which dress symbolizes and enacts the material and ambivalent power of religions, in individual lives and for group identities, both historically and today.

### **Linda Welters, ed., *Folk Dress in Europe and Anatolia: Beliefs about Protection and Fertility***

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Welters, Linda, ed. *Folk Dress in Europe and Anatolia: Beliefs about Protection and Fertility*. Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1999. 243 pp., 36 b&w illus., cloth, \$100, ISBN 1 85973 282 8; paper, £14.99, ISBN 1 85973 287 9.

After approximately twenty years of extensive research, Linda Welters has become strongly associated with the study of Greek folk dress. In this edited volume entitled *Folk Dress in Europe and Anatolia: Beliefs about Protection and Fertility*, she collaborates with eight other authors to explore some ways in which indigenous and especially ritual clothing from a broader geographic area defines femininity and protects the wearer from evil. The volume comprises twelve chapters of ethnographic description and analysis from Greece, Turkey, the former Yugoslavia, Macedonia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, the Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Russia.

Welters has given the opening chapter to E. J. W. Barber, well known for her book on *Women's Work: The First 20,000 Years* (1994). The opening chapter is a re-publication of an article that she first published in 1994, in *Dress* 21, examining the "Antiquity of East European Bridal Clothing." Barber examines data extracted from great geographical, cultural, and temporal scope extending from the Peloponnesian Peninsula to Poland and

Central Russia, and from 20 000 years ago until historical time. On the basis of this data, she posits "that some of the oldest features of human clothing have been preserved among the conservative marital traditions of southeast Europe, and also that the very first clothing that humans fashioned...was designed to mark the social status of women" (p. 28). She emphasizes this conclusion in her second contribution to the book (Chapter 7, "The Curious Tale of the Ultra-Long Sleeve (A Eurasian Epic)"): "Many people today perceive clothes as being first and foremost for warmth and protection from the elements, but once again...our evidence suggests that prehistoric European clothing developed originally as a means of promoting women's fertility through rituals and charms. Only later did other aspects of clothing, such as warmth or modesty, become important" (p. 128). Barber's work forms a kind of supporting foundation, geographic and thematic, for most of the rest of the volume.

The theme of "fringes," picked up first in Barber's article, is a case in point. In her review of women's clothing in the village of Kocakovacik, Turkey ("Traditional Turkish Women's Dress: A Source of Common Understandings for Expected Behaviors" (Chapter 3)), Marlene Breu argues that the fringe that hangs down from a narrow, long sash, is to emphasize a woman's buttocks.

She observes that women's clothing, the colours chosen, the forms developed, and where they are positioned on the body, are aesthetically combined to serve as markers of the phases in the female life cycle, particularly with respect to fertility and sexuality. Vesna Mladenovic picks up this theme in her article entitled "Threads of Life: Red Fringes in Macedonian Dress" (Chapter 6). Red fringes are enjoyed as a pretty accent on women's folk dress, marking the wearer as suitable and available for marriage. Simultaneously, they are believed to protect the body from the evil eye. Yet again, in Welters' discussions of fringes in Greece (Chapter 4) and (with Kuhn-Bolsaitis, Chapter 10) in Latvia, the themes of women's sexuality and protection re-emerge.

The reader gains the impression that the remarkably coherent thematic focus of the present volume is the result of a remarkably consistent field of ethnographic study. Welters' review of women's life cycle and the Greek clothing that encodes it (Chapter 5, "Gilding the Lily: Dress and Women's Reproductive Role in the Greek Village, 1850-1950") is especially pertinent for the geographical scope it contributes to the discussion.

The claim that certain clothing items, decorative motifs, and techniques have been maintained through millennia, not as invented traditions, but as preserved traditions, is a striking aspect of this volume. They are exciting claims because such continuities are not to be found everywhere on the earth's surface. They are also problematic claims because it is difficult to analyse meaning through time when the ethnographic data are sparse and relatively shallow. In this volume, similarities are noted between the appearance of items in historic and prehistoric time. In several of the contributions, there appears to be the expectation that the meanings of the material items will have persisted with the appearance of the material. These are powerful assumptions that deserve more focused exploration and testing, especially with respect to research methodology.

Patricia Williams, in "Protection from Harm: The Shawl and Cap in Czech and Slovak Wedding, Birthing and Funeral Rites" (Chapter 8), while noting that "Motifs derived from fertility-giving sources passed from generation to generation and resulted in changes in form and meaning" (p. 152)

also points to persistence in the relationship between motifs, their names, and their meaning.

In "Living Textile Traditions of the Carpathians" (Chapter 9), Mary Kelly discusses the goddess figure, Berehinia, and her associations with other fertility and protective symbols. The Hutsuls in the Ukraine were protected from many socially disruptive influences by their remote location in the mountains, being able to therefore keep "alive customs from the past" (p. 158) and perhaps offering the possibility to trace links in material culture back to Neolithic times. Some symbols and associated meanings appear to have survived even the disruption of migration to North America.

The final two chapters in the volume approach history somewhat differently, by pairing transformation and continuity. In "To Ward Off Evil: Metal on Norwegian Folk Dress" (Chapter 11), Laurann Gilbertson explains how the perceived protective powers of silver belong to the past, and that the traditional decorative silver items worn by Norwegians today have become markers of identity.

In Chapter 12, "The Dynamic Relationship Between Lithuanian National Costumes and Folk Dress," Ruta Saliklis explores what happens when a folk is dislocated from its traditional heritage — in this case by recent political and economic processes — and resorts to inventing and reinventing its history through dress forms. The dynamics of discontinuity described in this chapter emphasize the continuities pointed to elsewhere in the volume.

The themes in this volume are worthy of a longer term research agenda. What is the full geographical and cultural scope of the themes of fertility and protection, for example? What is the logic of the geographic scope of this volume? Is a claim being made about a textile region? A comprehensive map indicating all the regions under discussion would have been useful to the reader. Furthermore, the relationship between persistent designs and their associated meaning needs to be problematized. Mechanisms of persistence and transformation of meaning need to be addressed theoretically and methodologically.

This volume is one in Berg's dynamic *Dress, Body, Culture* series. The series editor is Professor Joanne Eicher, University of Minnesota.