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## Book Reviews / Comptes rendus

Joanne Eicher (ed.), *Dress and Ethnicity: Change Across Space and Time*, Oxford and Washington, DC: Berg, 1995, 316 pages.

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*Dress and Ethnicity* is the second in the Ethnic Identities Series recently initiated by Berg publishers. The book comprises 15 articles and focusses on ethnic expressions in several regions of the world including Scotland and Brittany, Cypress, Greece, Japan (2 articles), Nigeria (2 articles), Herero, Swaziland, Israel/Palestine, the U.S.A. and Ecuador. The articles include the proceedings of a seminar on "The Social Construction of Ethnic Identity" at the Institute of Social Anthropology, University of Oxford in 1989, as well as other invited contributions. Contributors hail from the disciplines of social anthropology, art history, folklore and human ecology/home economics. All have based their findings on field research. As the title indicates, the exploration of ethnicity has been developed in this volume through the analysis of dress.

The editor, Joanne B. Eicher, has devoted her career to the study of dress, particularly in Nigeria, and has published extensively on the topic, including *Dress and Gender*, co-edited with Ruth Barnes, and *Dress and Identity*, co-edited with Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins and Kim K.P. Johnson as well as numerous articles. Eicher's hand is particularly evident in this volume. Many of the North American contributors have studied or collaborated with her. Her influence on a new generation of scholars of dress has been significant and this volume is, in part, both a celebration and a record of that achievement. Eicher's introductory essay pleads for the end of the analytical neglect which dress has suffered in the study of ethnicity and summarizes the kinds of contributions—as represented by this volume—which dress can make to the study of ethnicity.

Both the study of ethnicity and the study of dress have moved toward analysis of process with a focus on agency and the factors which figure in the negotiation of identity. Dress is a subtle indicator of the nuances and dynamic of ethnicity for many reasons, but primarily because dress is an ever-present proclamation of social position for everyone at all times: everyone always wears clothes. Furthermore, clothing changes faster than political platforms and ideology, and formulates social position faster and sometimes with more facility than

this may be verbally expressed. Clothing is a very primary social analytical resource—when its messages can be decoded. Without exception, the authors in this volume are concerned with the process of identity construction and the peculiar and powerful abilities of clothing to reveal that process.

All of the authors have had to wrestle to some extent with the ambiguities of what is conceptualized as "traditional" just as have the people about whom they are writing. Tradition, by definition, is unchanging, immutable and faithful to some authentic past time—even though the needs of the times are always changing, and similarly the content of "tradition" is also changing. The substantial literature which deals with the theoretical dimensions of this ambiguity (e.g., Dominguez 1986; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) is referenced by several of the authors, and their conclusions contribute to a literature, also substantial and still expanding, which addresses a variety of dimensions of this issue through clothing (e.g., Niessen, 1993; Schevill et al. 1991).

In the opening essay, Malcolm Chapman writes of the image of traditional apparel as a "frozen frame" in the passage of time, and Linda Welters writes of the micro and the macro dimensions of clothing selection and interpretation. The analogies of camera image and lens are useful for reviewing the contents of this book as its analyses range from the close focus on individual agency to the broader scope of social and historical survey, and always the interpretation is of one or a set of clothing images for one or a set of ethnic identities.

Deborah Durham for instance, in "The Lady in the Logo," takes as her image a particular dress which was selected by the Herero Youth Association as "extremely appropriate" to represent them. She notes the foreign inspiration of the Herero dress and discusses the reasons why the local interpretation of the dress renders it nevertheless appropriate. Yvonne J. Seng and Betty Wass have selected an early and a recent image of the "Traditional Palestinian Wedding Dress" to show how it has changed radically in fabric, design and patterning, but has nevertheless retained its value as a symbol of national identity. Indeed, the adaptations made to the garb may well be one of the primary reasons for its persistence. An inversion of this theme is found in Helen Bradley Griebel's "The West African Origin of the African-American Headwrap." The form of this particular item of apparel has persisted virtually unaltered through a long period of tumult-

tuous social change—and its symbolic power has remained as vibrant as its meaning has been changeable.

Such clothing facts are neither exceptional nor mere curiosities. Eicher and Erekosima continue their long-term collaboration on the analysis of Kalabari (Nigeria) dress in this volume with an article entitled, “Why Do They Call It Kalabari? Cultural Authentication and the Demarcation of Ethnic Identity.” Their sweeping, primarily macro focus reveals how the variety in Kalabari dress depicts internal political order and relations with close and distant ethnic neighbours. They rely on their theory of the “cultural authentication process” to explain the dynamic by which new elements are continually incorporated into Kalabari dress but continue, all the while, to visibly distinguish the Kalabari from those around them. It is this ability to continually change and accommodate new circumstances while retaining a sense of constancy in identity which is particularly suited to the material attributes of clothing. This article is paired neatly with Barbara Sumberg’s “Dress and Ethnic Differentiation in the Niger Delta,” detailing the dress interests and styles of the Nembe, a group neighbouring the Kalabari and sharing many cultural characteristics with them—but maintaining subtle distinctions. By juxtaposing Kalabari and Nembe styles of dress, Sumberg explains how political, social and economic factors may have informed their differences and helped shape their sense of identity.

Similarly, according to Annette Lynch in “Hmong American New Year’s Dress: The Display of Ethnicity,” Hmong immigrants to the United States have changed their indigenous dress conventions to meet their changed social circumstances. They have begun to combine elements of clothing from their different subgroups thereby proclaiming a common Hmong heritage, rather than emphasizing their subgroup differences. Lynch zooms in occasionally to personal interviews for an intimate sense of how the “traditional look” is negotiated and consciously constructed by individuals to meet the demands of their new social context.

Linda Welters’ discussion of “Ethnicity in Greek Dress” touches upon many of the same issues. Again, taking a broad focus, she depicts the ethnic dress variations found in Greece used by the people to distinguish themselves—in much the same way as the Ijo people of Nigeria and the Hmong of southeast Asia. And like the Hmong in their new context, when the Greeks have adopted a national image, they have constructed a “traditional look” of unity which masks the ethnic variety of which it is composed.

Malcolm Chapman, in “‘Freezing the Frame’: Dress and Ethnicity in Brittany and Gaelic Scotland” beautifully compares the unique social and political factors involved in the historical moment when the tartan kilt was put forward (frozen) as the “traditional dress” of Highland Scotland (a set of garments which “has *never* been the popular dress of anyone, outside the Scottish Highland regiments of the British army” [p. 7]), with that same moment a century later in Brittany when an equally historically inaccurate “traditional dress” was formulated as an object of tourism. The

frozen images answer the social and political demands of the times.

According to Masami Suga in “Exotic West to Exotic Japan: Revival of Japanese Tradition in Modern Japan,” the Japanese experienced a potent wave of nostalgia in 1993 when Masako Owada married Crown Prince Naruhito in a traditional style which contrasted sharply with the Westernized style of modern-day Japan. This wave of nostalgia included the commercial availability of a 12-layer wedding kimono, so that “a Japanese woman can temporarily experience the timelessness of the *Kozoku* [royal] life, just as in a romance novel. It is a fantasy, a convenient visual celebration of stardom. . . . The modern Japanese can re-visit their past, re-discover their tradition, and re-define their Japanese ethnicity through the means they know best—buying” (p. 114).

The forces of modernity are also central in D.P. Martinez’s “Naked Divers: A Case of Identity and Dress in Japan.” She reveals that because the *ama*, or female divers for abalone, have traditionally gone about their task with no clothing, they have been conceptualized as marginal in sexualized and kinship idiom, but also as “traditional.” They have had to respond to these classifications in order to situate themselves more comfortably in their country.

The theme of individual agency is an important one in this volume, as clothing matters unite the sociological and psychological levels. Ann Bridgwood zooms in close to the motivations and deliberations of Turkish Cypriot girls in “Dancing the Jar: Girls’ Dress at Turkish Cypriot Weddings.” In the acculturative setting where Turkish Cypriot girls are located between the norms of their cultural heritage and those of their adoptive Britain, they must skilfully manage their wardrobes to appear both respectable (in traditional terms) and modern (in their new setting). So doing, they both construct and reflect the current interpretations of cultural values. In “Becoming a Bunu Bride: Bunu Ethnic Identity and Traditional Marriage Dress,” Elisha P. Renne also emphasizes female agency. Becoming a bride in a traditional marriage is difficult in this part of Yorubaland because of the cost involved, and many married women only achieve it later in life. Again, the “tradition” which is preserved on this occasion is a counterpoint to the forces of modernity and thus, “despite their lack of authority and official political incentives, Bunu women have played a role in constructing and unifying a district-wide identity, through their insistence on the performance of traditional marriage” (p. 136). Carolyn Behrman describes the “ongoing construction and negotiation of women’s gender identities” (p. 196) in “‘The Fairest of Them All,’ Gender, Ethnicity and a Beauty Pageant in the Kingdom of Swaziland,” as this is expressed through differential expectations and habits of bodily adornment of the Swazis and “colored” (European, Indian or non-Swazi African) inhabitants of the nation.

Eicher has noted that a group of Japanese businessmen in an American hotel lobby wearing pin-striped suits would make a radically different impression than that same group in the same setting wearing kimono. It is easy to be so impressed by a change from indigenous, traditional attire to

Western-style attire as to overlook the fact that the same process is involved in this kind of apparel change as in modifications of the indigenous look. In "Ethnic Conflict and Changing Dress Codes: A Case Study of an Indian Migrant Village in Highland Ecuador," Carola Lentz presents the social factors which compel Ecuadorian Indians to adopt the garb of the dominant society and how the centrifugal conservative forces of the village interact with the centripetal forces external to the village where the men derive their labour employment.

In her concluding chapter, co-written with Barbara Sumberg, entitled "World Fashion, Ethnic, and National Dress," Eicher highlights new trends in dress and attempts to construct universal distinctions. As the globe has become more tightly knit, the distinction between Euro-America and the rest of the globe has given way to integration, and the discreteness of ethnicity has given way to universal trends. She encourages the use of the terms "world fashion" or "cosmopolitan fashion" and stresses the interrelationship between ethnic dress and world fashion, and individual choice. She describes a nuanced and ever-changing dress-cape: "individuals' wardrobes in many places contain both cosmopolitan and ethnic dress ensembles, allowing them to adapt with ease to communicate effectively with others and establish their desired image as any given situation demands" (p. 305).

## References

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**Richard Jessor, Anne Colby et Richard A. Shweder, (dirs.),** *Ethnography and Human Development: Context and Meaning in Social Inquiry*, Chicago et London: University of Chicago Press, 1996, 516 pages (broché).

Recenseur: *Raymond Massé*  
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La prétention des éditeurs de ce recueil de rendre justice à la résurgence des méthodes ethnographiques dans les sciences sociales n'est pas, au départ, de nature à stimuler l'intérêt de

lecteurs anthropologues déjà convaincus de leur pertinence, déjà conscients des limites des enquêtes transversales et des entretiens formels de recherche et déjà soucieux de resituer les manifestations de culture dans le contexte de l'environnement social qui sert d'assise aux transactions de la vie quotidienne. Toutefois, les 21 textes de cet ouvrage, écrits par des sociologues, des psychologues et des anthropologues, n'en constituent pas moins des contributions originales et stimulantes à la réflexion portant sur les enjeux méthodologiques posés par l'ethnographie et, de façon plus globale, par toute approche naturaliste visant l'analyse des rapports entre contextes (social, économique, politique, etc.), pluriethnicité et quête de sens.

Le récent virage pris par la psychologie et la sociologie vers les méthodes qualitatives s'explique, selon les éditeurs, par un souci de recontextualiser les comportements humains et, ici, le développement de la personne dans un univers social et culturel plus large. Ces contextes sont autant les «cultures» véhiculées par chaque communauté ethnique que les diverses strates contextuelles auxquelles l'individu réfère, à l'intérieur de chaque communauté, pour donner un sens à sa vie. Plusieurs textes de l'ouvrage référeront, de même, au «contexte biographique» qui resitue les croyances et comportements de l'individu dans le cadre d'une histoire de vie, dimension longitudinale inaccessible aux études transversales à larges échantillons.

Le livre est divisé en trois grandes parties suivies d'un texte de conclusion. La première partie traite de l'épistémologie de la représentation ethnographique de la réalité. Trois thèmes y sont particulièrement débattus: le statut épistémologique de la «réalité» et de sa construction; la possibilité pour les chercheurs d'avoir accès à la «pensée des autres» (considération omniprésente chez des collaborateurs issus du milieu de la recherche psychosociale); et la question de la validité de la recherche ethnographique.

Tel que le propose Jessor en introduction de cette partie, le livre est un plaidoyer en faveur de la complémentarité des approches qualitatives (ethnographiques) et quantitatives. La plupart des textes constituent d'ailleurs des illustrations d'une telle complémentarité. Suivant la tendance dominante du discours nord-américain sur la recherche qualitative, les éditeurs insistent pour souligner les limites d'une opposition radicale entre méthodes qualitative et quantitative. Tout l'ouvrage prend ainsi l'allure d'un plaidoyer en faveur d'un dépassement du postulat d'antinomie qui opposerait irrémédiablement ces approches: on évacue donc ici tout débat sur l'incommensurabilité des paradigmes de recherche et l'on prend nettement partie pour un pluralisme méthodologique.

L'optimisme de la plupart des auteurs qui considèrent l'ethnographie comme une alliée des méthodes quantitatives s'explique en partie par leur propension à limiter ce débat sur la complémentarité au niveau de la nature et du traitement des données qualitatives et quantitatives. Les réflexions des 20 dernières années ont mis en évidence la porosité des frontières démarquant données qualitatives et quantitatives de même que la profonde parenté des logiques d'analyse de