

Justine M. Cordwell and Ronald A. Schwarz, eds. *The Fabrics of Culture: The Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment.* The Hague: Mouton, 1979. \$70.00.

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In *The Fabrics of Culture*, dress and body adornment are viewed as a communication system. This interpretation is reflected in the selection and organization of the twenty-two studies on the theme of dress compiled in this volume, most of which were presented at the Ninth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences. The studies have been grouped into five categories which follow a theoretical framework clearly presented in the first section. Entitled "Cloth, Culture and Communication," this section provides a broad theoretical model for the study of dress as a conveyor of symbols functioning as part of a total communication system. The second category, "Signs, Symbols and Social Order," discusses the types of information about history, religious beliefs, and sociopolitical organization that symbols in dress can communicate. "Man, Masks and Morals," the third category, stresses the heightened meaning of dress symbols in the context of a masquerade, and the fourth, "Cloth of Culture Change," demonstrates how dress forms and their symbols can change in response to other changes in culture. The fifth category, "Textiles and Technology," concerns itself with techniques of production and marketing rather than the symbolic meaning of dress itself.

Apart from this last section, the editors' theoretical framework determines the order of the categories; thus, it is particularly useful to discuss them with that order in mind. While all studies will be mentioned, space permits that only the more instructive be discussed in any great detail.

Equal attention must be given to each of the four articles in the first section, because of the complementary information they give about a theoretical approach to the study of dress. In the first, sociologists Roach and Eicher outline ten social functions of cloth, e.g., "as Political Symbol," "as Sexual Symbol," "as Definition of Social Role," "as Indicator of Magico-Religious Condition." Thus, they establish social context.

Context serves as only one criterion in Schwarz's theoretical approach to the study of dress, presented in the second article. In it, Schwarz argues that clothing, like the body itself, can be viewed as a total system which incorporates the social context, the function, the human body, and its natural environment. Dress and body adornment within this broadly

defined framework serve as a conveyor of symbols through which "social action and communication" are generated. He demonstrates this through a structural analysis of the dress of male and female Gambianos, the design and production of which communicate information about role-gendering in this Columbian culture. Male superiority is seen in terms of production. The hats, a symbol of political status and worn above, are made by men, while the cotton garments worn below are women's work. And yet, sexual equality, also evident in Gambianos culture, is interpreted by the male-female symbols placed in opposing positions on the garments, which Schwarz sees as contradicting this hierarchical order.

Cordwell, in the third essay, takes a more historical approach. She cites the earliest known examples of body painting and tattooing to 1500 B.C., during which time there is evidence of mining and trade of ferrous oxide (red ochre) used to lessen the deterioration of skin. Using this evidence as a functional and historical base, she presents a detailed survey of body decoration, cross-culturally outlining the varying functions and the geographic distribution of individual practices. She also offers reasons for the distinctions between temporary and permanent decoration and for evolutionary changes in body decoration over time.

To conclude this section, Keali'inohomoku, a dance ethnographer, demonstrates how the structure of Japanese dance movement is partially determined by the spatial limitations of the kimono garment. In so doing, she argues that cloth not only expresses culture but shapes it as well. Thus, through the efforts of these five authors, the reader is presented with a dynamic model for the cross-cultural study of body adornment as a symbolic system, viewed in a specific environmental and situational context, capable of expressing and shaping culture and undergoing change over time.

The section headed "Signs, Symbols and Social Order" follows, with a discussion of the symbolic function of clothing in differentiating sexes; reinforcing kinship patterns, ethnic identity, and social status; and communicating history. Cole maintains that for the Samburu of Kenya, beads and other forms of dress communicate important information about Samburu culture. The color of the beads is one important criterion. White is linked with Samburu myths of origin; strings of green and black, worn by pregnant women, ensure safe delivery. How beads and other forms of adornment are worn can differentiate sexes and establish social status. When girls marry, they wear iron circlets on their wrists and elaborate beaded necklaces. Men of warrior status (Moran) apply ochre to their uncut hair as a symbol of manhood.

Samburu decorative forms are noticeably distinct from those of surrounding ethnic groups; thus Samburu identity is also validated through their dress.

For the Yoruba of Nigeria, beads also communicate information about history, social identity, and status (Pokornowski); clothing attire serves similar functions for a variety of North American Indian groups (Mauer) and for the Badagra of India (Hockings). In discussing the Badagra, Hockings makes the important point that the ceremonial exchange of cloth serves to reinforce kinship ties, particularly at times when such links are threatened.

The next section, "Man, Masks and Morals," shows that masquerades give heightened meaning to dress symbols and provide channels of communication not permissible in everyday life. For example, the wearing of cloth and masks can conceal the individual's identity and thus permit communication with the spirit community. The nature of the costume can also determine which spirit is to be addressed, as Reinhardt suggests in her description of the varied costumes worn to honor different Mende spirits. However, Reinhardt fails to ask why particular masked spirits dictate certain costume styles.

Drewal addresses this very problem by analyzing the structure of Yoruba Egungun and Gelede masquerade costumes in terms of the specific social aims of the masquerade itself. Egungun honors the ancestors with an elaborate masked display involving cloth. This event, according to Drewal, is sponsored by one family, which purchases the cloths in the market and then has them tailored at a formidable expense. Thus, the costume speaks of the dignity of the sponsoring family whose financial means have permitted them to honor the ancestors with a very expensive display of cloth. The costuming of Gelede conveys a very different message. The aim of this masquerade is to appease the witches believed to be harmful to the community. The Gelede garment, consistent with the more collective concern of the masquerade, is made up of untailed cloths, borrowed from each member of the community.

Masquerade events can also permit the display of antibehavior, role reversal, and exaggeration for emphasis, aimed at assuaging social tensions and establishing social order. Masquerades performed by the Mexicans of the village of Uruapan display three main mask types reflective of important figures in the community: Negritos (emulating colonial overseers), Viejitos (young dressed as elders), and Hortelanos (the gardeners, the dominant workers of the community). Combined, these masked figures provide the theater through which the dynamics of their social structure are acted out. For example, the Hortelanos, who figure most prominently in the event, are accompanied by the Marinquillos, or female escorts, impersonated by men. While said to honor the women who

carry food to the Hortelanos at work in the fields, the Marinquillos also provide a social vehicle through which Hortelanos manhood is defined, such as when the Hortelanos behave furiously and rather protectively toward their "female" escorts who offer kisses to spectators.

According to Ottenberg, similar displays are characteristic of Igbo masquerades at Afikpo, Nigeria. There, middle-age members of the ruling men's society parade through the village in costumes impersonating men and women of the village, foreigners, and historical figures such as the Aro slave traders, active in past centuries. Based on the range, interpretation, and sequence of dress types appearing in the procession (e.g., earlier dress forms followed by European varieties), the Afikpo Igbo communicate information about age, status, role-gendering, and history.

Changes in dress and the symbols associated with it are often an indication of culture change, as Houlberg and others demonstrate in the next section, "Cloth of Culture Change." In her discussion of Yoruba hairstyles, Houlberg points out that hair is an important vehicle for communication of information about Yoruba culture. Traditionally, certain hairstyles were strictly used in certain religious cults, others for royalty, and still others to indicate social status. Now the boundaries are not so rigid; any who wish to wear the styles may choose to do so. Houlberg sees this as an indication of change in the religious, social, and political make-up of Yoruba society. The wide range of recent styles referring to popular culture, which she documents, also points to change. However, Houlberg avoids asking *why* the changes occur amidst culture change.

This question is also overlooked in Miller's discussion of changes in Potawamoni Indian dress and Trofimova's essay about changes in dress among the Azerbaidzhan of the Caucasus. While the intrusion of Western or Russian cultures accounts for changes in dress in these two cultures, neither factor explains why the changes took place.

Wass attempts to answer such a question in her discussion of Yoruba dress. Documenting (through photographs) changes in dress styles over a seventy-five year period, Wass notes a high percentage of European dress during colonial rule, with a noticeable reversal of that trend during the period of Nigerian nationalism. Thus, as a statement about one's political identity, dress is likely to undergo change in response to changing political trends.

Identity is also a motivation for change in Siona dress which, according to Langdon, is traditionally used to establish social ties with powerful figures in the community. Traditionally, such a figure was the shaman, controller of the powerful spirits (Yage). The Siona identified with the shaman by decorating their bodies with painted designs which he had envisioned. These designs continued to appear on cloth attire introduced by the Franciscan missionaries after 1700, suggesting the continued importance of shaman activity following their arrival. However, with the increasing impact of Western culture, the role of the shaman has dwindled and power is now in the hands of the white intruders, economically in control of the area. Dress, continuing to serve as an identity symbol, is now linked to this new power structure and is noticeably Western in character.

Two authors talk about the ill effects that dress changes can have on culture. Ehrenfels editorializes about the psychological, physical, and social abuse that "Western" dress can have on Third World cultures. A more specific problem is dealt with in Roach's article on the impact of technology in the United States in the nineteenth century. Industrial developments in North America encouraged a more functional men's attire. The impracticalness of women's dress, left unchanged, then hampered their abilities to enter male industrial professions. Thus, Roach's findings lend support to Keali'inohomoku's theory that clothing can shape culture—in this case, the formation of sex roles.

The one section of the book that avoids discussion of the symbolic significance of dress is the final one, "Textile and Technology." In it are detailed accounts of techniques, marketing, and consumption of three different textile industries. The logical ordering of the three articles makes an interesting statement about evolutionary change in textile production. The first is about Yemen weaving tradition, several thousands of years old and seemingly impervious to change (Klein). Sierra Leone resist-dyeing, discussed by Wahlman and Chuta, is again craft of a historical dimension (introduced from the north) but with the addition of new materials, techniques, and an ever-expanding patronage. A totally nonindigenous textile tradition is discussed last, in Neilson's article outlining Manchester produced wax-resist cloths. Initially introduced through trade to West and Central Africa, these British-manufactured textiles are now solely used for African consumption, dictated by the latter's preferences for color, motif, and overall design.

While such material may be of interest, I question the editors' reasons for including this section in a book dealing primarily with cloth and body adornment as communication. In this regard, the section on masks also poses certain problems. While the main theme is dress used in masquerades, many of the au-

thors (Drewal, Esser, and Reinhardt, specifically) go much further in their descriptions of the event, occasionally losing sight of the main focus, the meaning of the dress itself. One article, Houlberg's on Yoruba hairstyles, seems misplaced. While change is implied, her focus is mainly on the symbolic function of hair; thus her article would have been more appropriate in the section on symbols. One final criticism concerns the range of cultures represented: certain of them are over-emphasized at the expense of others. For example, why include four articles on the Yoruba while ignoring entirely the rich traditions of dress and body adornment among the cultures of Indonesia and of the South Sea Islands? The inclusion of these cultures would only enhance the scope of the book, which already points to some interesting cross-cultural patterns regarding dress. For example, in a number of cultures, men take to impersonating women for the purpose of reinforcing male, and thus female, sex roles. Efforts to achieve status may explain why the clothing of men is traditionally more susceptible to change than that of women, as noted by Cole, Wass, and Miller.

The cross-cultural dimension of Cordwell and Schwarz's book makes it a valuable contribution to the literature on dress and culture. Even more valuable is the highly instructive and sensibly expanded symbolic approach to the study of dress which the editors have presented. In spite of my few criticisms of the book, (which includes its almost prohibitive price of \$70 (and no color plates), I strongly recommend that *The Fabrics of Culture* be purchased, or at least read, by those interested in learning about dress as a communicator of culture.