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Folk Dress in Europe and Anatolia: Beliefs about Protection and Fertility (Dress, Body, Culture)

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Shortlisted for the Katharine Briggs Folklore Award 2000.

Relationships between dress and the body have existed in European and Anatolian folk cultures well into the twentieth century. Traditional cultures have long held the belief that certain articles of dress could protect the body from harm by warding off the 'evil eye,' bring fertility to new brides, or assure human control of supernatural powers. Ritual fringes, archaic motifs, and colors such as black and red were believed to have powerful, magical effects.

This absorbing and interdisciplinary book examines dress in a broad range of folk cultures - from Turkey, Greece, and Slovakia to Norway, Latvia, and Lithuania, to name but a few. Authors reveal the connection between folk dress and ancient myths, cults and rituals, as well as the communicative aspects of folk dress. How is an individual attired in a specific ensemble located within a community? Is the community the gendered one of women, the village of residence, the larger geographical region or the nation? The intriguing connections between dress and the supernatural beliefs of agrarian communities, as well as the reinvention of such beliefs as part of nationalism, are also discussed.

This book represents a significant contribution to the growing body of literature on the cultural meanings of dress, as well as to material culture, anthropology, folklore, art history, ethnohistory, and linguistics.

Nominated for Millia Davenport award.

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