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Memory in Oral Traditions: The Cognitive Psychology of Epic, Ballads, and Counting-out Rhymes

David C. Rubin

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Long studied by anthropologists, historians, and linguists, oral traditions have provided a wealth of fascinating insights into unique cultural customs that span the history of humankind. In this groundbreaking work, cognitive psychologist David C. Rubin offers for the first time an accessible, comprehensive examination of what such traditions can tell us about the complex inner workings of human memory. Focusing in particular on their three major forms of organization--theme, imagery, and sound pattern--Rubin proposes a model of recall, and uses it to uncover the mechanisms of memory that underlie genres such as counting-out rhymes, ballads, and epics. The book concludes with an engaging discussion of how conversions from oral to written communication modes can predict how cutting-edge computer technologies will affect the conventions of future transmissions. Throughout, Rubin presents the results of important original research as well as new perspectives on classical subjects. Splendidly written and farsighted, *Memory in Oral Traditions* will be eagerly read by students and researchers in areas as diverse as cognitive psychology, literary studies, classics, and cultural anthropology.

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