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Preface

Costume, dress, outfit, jewelry, adornment, regalia, investiture—these words possibly conjure many and varied associations in the mind of the reader. But what was the significance of dressing and ornamenting people and objects, and of articles of regalia, for the peoples of precontact Meso- and Central America? This question lies at the heart of this volume, the outgrowth of the session entitled “Costume and Dress in Formative Period Mesoamerica and the Isthmo-Colombian Region,” held in 2010 at the annual meeting of the Society for American Archaeology, St. Louis, Missouri. Both the originating conference session and this publication have endeavored to approach the topic in a synthetic manner, uniting scholars who have either considered issues of Formative period costuming elsewhere or whose general interests intersect with the topic. One goal has been to create a platform for scholarly exchange and discourse that traverses regional specialization and schools of thought. In fact, most of the cultures included in this book (with the exception of the Maya) are typically left out of surveys of world dress (e.g., Pendergast 2004).

Moreover, while dress and regalia are investigated widely in the field, publication of results is dispersed or specialized. Therefore, the topic has yet to be treated synthetically, especially for the Formative period. Few studies focus on the cultural relationships between Mesoamerica and Central America (also known as the Isthmo-Colombian Zone or the Intermediate Zone, indicating Central America and the circum-Caribbean), despite the clear evidence of these connections. As the various chapters of this volume indicate, there was considerable formal and technological variation

in clothing and ornamentation throughout this area. Nevertheless, the early indigenous cultures of these regions shared numerous practices, attitudes, and aesthetic interests.

The chapters of this book use the term “Formative” to refer to a spectrum of time (approximately 1200 BCE to 300 CE) in both regions. Traditionally, scholars indicate this epoch by regionally specific nomenclature. While “Formative” is derived from Mesoamerican studies, often alternating for “Preclassic,” we believe it is effective for this book as a broad indicator of temporal and cultural development, in which certain cultural characteristics coalesced and became reflected in costuming practices. In some parts of the Isthmo-Colombian region, the era, during which traits identifiable with the Mesoamerican Formative are found, extends much later in time—to around 950 CE (refer to Chapters 1 and 2; see also the discussion in Chapter 14). It is during this profoundly significant era in both regions that we witness the emergence of civilization in the material and artistic records, as well as the earliest evidence for interaction between Meso- and Central America—the basis for our temporal and regional focus.

TERMINOLOGY

The wide range of cultural practices discussed by the authors prompts a brief consideration of terminology. The English language employs a number of terms to describe these practices, such as costume, clothing, dress, attire, regalia, or adornment, some of which may raise concerns in cross-cultural applications. Probably the most problematic of these would be “costume,” which some would see as having been trivialized by association with Halloween practices or other occasions of “dress-up,” as in the use of “costume jewelry” (see Eicher and Roach-Higgins 1992). Historically, however, this term is a loan from French, where it is associated with concepts of traditional or habitual attire (> *costume* “custom, habit; clothes, dress”; the English “custom” derives from the same term). In fact, nearly all the general terms for costume are French borrowings, including “attire” (> *atirier* “to equip, ready, prepare”), “garment” (> *garnir* “fit out, provide, adorn”); dress (> *dresser, drecier* “raise [oneself], arrange, straighten, direct”), and “adorn” (> *aorner* “to order, arrange, dispose, equip; adorn”). An important exception is “clothes,” originally the plural of “cloth,” a term of Germanic origin that referred to felted or woven material. Another is “regalia,” which has kingly connotations. Owing to the highly generalized meanings of many of these terms, we, as the editors of this volume, have elected not to dictate any specific terminology to the

authors of individual chapters. In this preface we employ “dress” and “body art” interchangeably and inclusively.

A survey of Mesoamerican and Central American indigenous languages reveals a rich terminology for attire and adornment. As in English, some of these terms refer to dress in general, while others name specific types of garments or articles of status. In many Mesoamerican cultures woven fabric was a sign of culture and civilization; hence, terminology for attire was often closely related to that for textiles.¹ For example, Mayan languages—which are better documented than most ancient Mesoamerican languages—have a large number of general terms for clothing that carry strong connotations of covering the body with fabrics. Some of these terms have limited distribution, such as Greater Kanjobalan **k'uul* “blanket, jacket, fabric, clothes,” Eastern Mayan **tzo7ow* “blanket, jacket, coat, something to protect oneself,” Huehuetenango **qap* “fabric, clothes,” and K'ichean **7atz'ib(aq)* “clothes, fabric” (Kaufman 2003:1011, 1012, 1015). Two widespread Proto-Mayan terms for clothing are **b'uhq* and **nooq'*. The word **b'uhq*, translated as “blanket, jacket, clothes, fabric, huipil,” refers specifically to the act of covering something, as attested in Yucatec *b'uuuk*, which means both “clothes” and “roof [thatch]” (Bricker, Po'ot Yah, and Dzul de Po'ot 1998:37). A reflex of this term is known from the Classic Maya script, where it appears on a painted vase in the expression *in-b'uhk* “my clothes” (K1398; see Kerr n.d.). In this case, the reference is to the hat and cloak of a god who has been stripped of his finery.

The other widely distributed term for clothing is Proto-Mayan **nooq'*, which means “clothes, fabric” in Lowland languages but perhaps originally meant “cotton,” as reflected in Eastern Mayan languages (Kaufman 2003:1015–16). A second Proto-Mayan term, **q'uu7*, usually means “nest,” but also “blanket, jacket, coat, clothes” in some languages (Kaufman 2003:1013). A reflex of this term (*k'u*) is also documented in the ancient Maya script, but here it probably refers to a bird's nest rather than clothing. It is worth mentioning that the Maya script preserves a number of additional terms for specific items of dress, including *ko'harw* “helmet,” *pik* “skirt,” *pixo'l* “hat/headdress,” *tup-aj* “earflare,” and *uh-aj* “necklace.” Historical linguistics suggests that several of these terms existed during the Formative period, the epoch covered in this volume.

THE SCHOLARLY STUDY OF DRESS

The central issue explored in this volume—the human body and its representation as a site of social identity as expressed in dress and adornment—has already attracted considerable scholarly attention in diverse fields (see Eicher

2000, 2001; Joyce 2005; Schildkrout 2004). The data is richest in more recent societies, constituting the lived experience of dressed and/or adorned individuals. In Mesoamerican and Central American archaeology, we must rely upon physical remains of jewelry and clothing, sometimes in association with skeletal remains (e.g., Chapters 1, 6, 13), as well as representational art, such as figurines or monuments (e.g., Chapters 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9). The early epoch covered in this book is dominated artistically by figurines, but there are also abundant artifacts that were once worn as ornaments. Indeed, some of the earliest deposits in ancient Mesoamerica consist of jewelry ornaments (Joyce 2001:20). As the chapters indicate, these artifacts and images provide rich yet controversial sets of data that are relevant to understanding body art.

Each of the chapters in this volume takes an approach to studying body art that is rooted in a particular history of scholarship. It is therefore useful to examine the conceptualization of and approaches to the study of body art, particularly as relates to the study of ancient Meso- and Central American societies. These studies lay the foundation for the current volume and provide the basis for future investigations, particularly in other periods and areas of ancient American body art.

It has been traditional in anthropology and cultural studies to analyze the various types of adornment as separate categories of “body supplements” versus “body modifications” (Eicher and Roach-Higgins 1992:8). Clothing, jewelry, and handheld objects such as staffs or musical instruments fall into the first category, while permanent or temporary marks on the body or the shaping of the body itself constitute the second category (Eicher and Roach-Higgins 1992:18). Many scholars of ancient Meso- and Central American dress focus on only one of these types. For example, there are several studies of loom-woven fabrics among the ancient Maya (Joyce 2001;Looper 2000; Morris 1985). Likewise, Anawalt’s (1981) major study of Postclassic Mesoamerican clothing emphasizes cloth body-covering garments.

More recent investigations, however, find that the traditional scholarly categories of dress type serve little purpose, prompting some scholars to propose more inclusive groupings under the rubrics of “adornment, body art, or dress” (see Eicher and Roach-Higgins 1992; Shukla 2008:3). One of the main justifications for this approach is through the observation that regardless of type, various items of dress serve a similar function, mediating between the individual and society (Eicher and Roach-Higgins 1992:13; Shukla 2008:389–90). Indeed, Rosemary Joyce (2008:40) refers to Preclassic Honduran beaded ornaments as “prosthetics” that were intended to modify and extend the body’s surface for social effect.

Although a wide array of dress types was used in early Mesoamerica and Central America, predominant among them are coiffure, hair removal, body paint, tattooing, jewelry made of shell or jadeite, clothing made of woven or nonwoven fabric (frequently cotton or maguey), headdresses (often feathered), and a variety of handheld objects (Anawalt 2001a). Metal adornments were used in Central America by the fifth century CE and became increasingly important in Mesoamerica over the course of the Postclassic (Hosler 2001:310; Sharer and Traxler 2006:576; see also Cooke et al. 2003:94–95). Because of widespread ideologies associated with the head (Houston, Stuart, and Taube 2006:60–61; López Austin 1988), this part of the body received considerable emphasis, including the use of nasal and ear piercings and ornamentation placed in the ears and nose, cranial modeling, dental modification (filing, inlays), hair styling/shaving, and ornamentation of the hair with jewelry (see Joyce 2003, 2007, 2008).

The three social contexts that are relevant for the analysis of material culture, including dress, are creation, communication, and consumption (Glassie 1999:41). Contexts of creation may emphasize either the manufacture of objects or materials or the assembly of individual clothing elements into ensembles (Shukla 2008:387). The traditional domain of art history, stylistic analysis, provides crucial insight into the creator's society and the cultural domain for which the item of dress is intended. Thus, there are numerous contexts through which body art may be explored in the ancient Americas.

VISUAL COMMUNICATION

Both classic and more recent studies insist that dress styles communicate social information (Eicher and Roach-Higgins 1992; Shukla 2008:390; Wobst 1977). By evoking style, these studies emphasize the potential of clothing as a visual signifier—that is, a semiotic field that conveys relatively concrete symbolism (Bogatyrev 1971). The scholarly concept of clothing as a semiotic system is clearly rooted in notions that pervade popular culture (e.g., “blue collar” vs. “white collar”). In archaeology and art history such symbolism is thought to be readily accessible, as it is “read” from asymmetries or binary pairs that are revealed through structuralist pattern analysis (see Schwarz 1992). For instance, later ancient Mesoamerican clothing is structured according to a number of contrasting dyads, such as the loincloth versus skirt and huipil (male : female), cotton versus maguey (elite : commoner), animal hide versus woven fabric (barbarian : civilized), and clothed versus naked (dominant : subordinate; adult : youth) (Anawalt 2001a:339–43, 2001b:813; Boone 2000:47; Schele 1984:43).

The notion of identity usually serves as the concept through which scholars interpret the relation of individual instances of body art usage to social, political, religious, occupational, sexual, and personal contexts (Roach and Eicher 1965, 1979). Pravina Shukla (2008:405) points out that display and interpretation of dress implies a historical dimension, both individual and cultural. Although individual histories tend to be occluded in studies of non-Western visual culture, this is merely an artifact of documentation and scholarly bias. Individual histories are critical to the study of attire in any culture, given its physical association with individual bodies.

The classic ethnographic studies of the symbolism of dress find links to concepts of gender, sexuality, local identity, ethnicity, medicine, magic and protection, ancestors, spirits or other religious observance, morality, punishment/subjugation, warfare, exchange, and social class (Barnes and Eicher 1992; Eicher and Roach-Higgins 1992; Faris 1972; Gröning 1997; Mershen 1989; Roach and Eicher 1965, 1979; Schildkrout 2004; Schneider 1987:412–13; Strathern and Strathern 1971; Turner 1980). A number of these studies point to various dimensions of the status symbolism of body art and clothing, including reproductive or marriage status, initiation, and age-grades. Alfred Gell (1993) found that tattooing in Polynesia was inconsistently related to social class but was widely used to mark “existential” class, distinguishing humans from gods.

Several aspects of social identity and dress have been explored in archaeology as well (Sørensen 1997, 2000:132; Treherne 1995). In the ancient American context, the analysis of social identity expressed through dress has been uneven, with some aspects explored in detail and others virtually ignored. One major area of research has been gender, particularly with reference to later periods in Mesoamerican history (Anawalt 1981; Bruhns 1988; Follensbee 2009;Looper 2000; Reilly 2002; Tate 1992:70–84, 1999, 2002; Taylor 1992). It is sometimes assumed that biological sex differences “have a significant influence on social expectations of what constitutes maleness or femaleness as expressed through the materiality of objects” (Green 2007:285). Accordingly, correlations between sexed humans and particular classes of ornaments with which they are associated may be used to ascribe gender to these ornaments (see Joyce 2001:30–34). Joyce (1993, 1999, 2001, 2002) discusses an important aspect of gender identity—sexual availability, attractiveness or eroticism—in a consideration of the relationships between dress and the sexualization (or de-sexualization) of both males and females of various ages (see also Blomster 2009).

Much work has also been done relating aspects of dress to status, rank, or social class in ancient Mexico and Central America (Schele and Miller 1986:66–73). In Mesoamerica evidence for ranking through body art appears

in the earliest traditions through the increase in depicted and actual ornaments appearing in Late Archaic sites like Paso de la Amada (Lesure 1999). Richard Lesure (1999:217) associates these changes with the increasing importance of rank distinction (see also Brown 2007). Similarly, shell jewelry at the Preclassic Maya site of K'axob is linked to status (Isaza Aizpurúa and McAnany 1999). Other aspects of rank or status include the use of tattooing among the ancient Maya as a mark of (male) warrior status, associated with painful rites of passage, but also as a mark of thieves (Thompson 1946:19). In more complex societies like the Aztec, laws strictly regulated the material and design of garments in relation to social class and military rank (Anawalt 1981:27–30, 2001a, 2001b).

Scholars of ancient American art are also interested in the sacred or religious dimensions of body art, particularly its widespread use to indicate cosmological and mythological identities. Ceremonial attire is frequently believed to symbolize the vertical levels of the universe or various deities (Bassie-Sweet 2002; Baudez 2000; Freidel and Suhler 1995; Hoopes 2005; Houston and Stuart 1996; Schele and Miller 1986:68, 71–72, 77; Taube 1985; Young-Sánchez 2010). The tendency of ceremonial dress in ancient Mexico and Central America to facilitate supernatural contact has direct analogies in ethnographic cultures (e.g., Feeley-Harnik 1989).

In contrast to gender, status, and religious identity, other areas of body art symbolism remain virtually untouched by Precolumbian scholars. For example, numerous cross-cultural studies link dress to ethnicity (Eicher 1995; Schildkrout 2004:332; Schneider 1987:413; Wobst 1977). However, the discussion of ancient American dress in relation to ethnicity has been minimal (cf. Anawalt 1981). Many scholars also note the magical or amuletic functions of body art in both recent and ancient contexts throughout the world (Andrews 1994; Gell 1998:191; Mershen 1989; Schwarz 1979:25–26; Tannenbaum 1987). And yet Precolumbian art historians and archaeologists almost never address these aspects of dress in an extended manner.

Like scholars of dress in other areas, Mesoamericanists and Central Americanists display a distinct tendency to conceptualize dress primarily as a medium of display. These studies are thus tied to modern and postmodern notions of the body as a metaphor, in which culturally constructed meanings are inscribed upon the body (see Foucault 1977; Lévi-Strauss 1963; cf. Csordas 1996:12). In either perspective, the body is conceptualized as a screen or mirror that is acted upon by either an inner or outer agency.

In a dissenting view, several scholars note the extremely limited semiotic potential of dress. For example, if textiles are interpreted as “texts,” then why

is it so difficult to identify concrete symbolic content encoded in textile motifs (Schneider 1987:414–15)? In fact, Grant McCracken (1987) points out three major ways in which clothing differs from a linguistic code. First, it employs fixed signs that are most useful for semiotic repetition rather than rhetorical creativity. As he argues, dress “allows for the representation of cultural categories, principles and processes without at the same time encouraging their innovative manipulation” (McCracken 1987:120). Second, dress often obscures meaning: “The semiotic information of material culture appears typically to seep into consciousness around the edges of a central focus and more pressing concerns” (McCracken 1987:121). Thus, dress refers to cultural concepts, some controversial, in an indirect way by insinuating them into daily life through dress habits. Finally, in order to mark social diversity, dress frequently emphasizes variation rather than an invariant code (McCracken 1987:121).

Accordingly, some scholars of body art note that the body is not only a representation but is more fundamentally a presentational medium. For example, Schildkrout (2004:338) observes, “The body, as a canvas, is not only the site where culture is inscribed but also a place where the individual is defined and inserted into the cultural landscape.” Accordingly, we may supplement the structuralist/postmodern concept of the body and its adornment through a consideration of the body as a site of social processes. Scholars interested in the integration of dress into systems of exchange as well as more broadly conceived phenomenological approaches have elucidated these problems.²

EXCHANGE

Cross-cultural studies point to numerous examples of the integration of clothing and ornament into systems of exchange, particularly in association with marriage, funerals, or sometimes as general currency (Bisson 1975; Green 2007:285–86; Schneider 1987:410–11). The association of dress with status or class seems closely related to a more general function, particularly of jewelry, as a means of storing wealth (Fernea 1965:33; see also Weiner 1989). Building on Marcel Mauss’s (1967) notion of the social histories embodied in gifts, David Graeber (1996:8–9) argues that the display of wealth implies a history of gifts given to a ruler. It therefore exercises an indirect power of persuasion, inspiring acts of homage toward the person who displays it (Graeber 1996:8–9).

In ancient Mexico and various parts of Central America, jadeite and shell beads and other ornaments, cloth (plain and decorated), featherwork, and copper and gold jewelry were forms of wealth that regulated societies both internally and externally and were particularly important in social interactions in ranked

societies (Anawalt 1981:29–30; Hirth and Hirth 1993; Joyce 1993:261–63; Quilter and Hoopes 2003; Reents-Budet 2006; Stuart 2006; Taube 2000). Interestingly, masks in Aztec society also had profound socioeconomic functions and were specifically associated with the extraction of tribute from subject peoples (Klein 1986). They validated the stratification of society through supernatural sanction and signaled the wearer’s control over the deity depicted. For the Aztecs, luxury items could be exchanged for subsistence goods (Brumfiel 1980). However, in other ranked societies, such as the Classic Maya, luxury items, mainly acquired through trade or tribute, were primarily displayed on the body or interred with the dead (Demarest 2004:160; Freidel, Reese-Taylor, and Mora-Marín 2002). If these items represented territorial claims, their display may have been intended to command subsistence support (see Earle 1987:69).

Various properties of jewelry and dress in ancient Mesoamerica seem to have contributed to their use as media of exchange. For example, cloth was often woven in standard widths, was fairly easy to store and transport, and was also suitable for display and gifting (see Murra 1962). Beads served as an ideal currency because they could be easily transformed back and forth from generic forms such as single strands to unique forms such as larger pieces that were displayed on the body (see Graeber 1996:13).

When not used as currency, wealth items were frequently conceived as heirlooms in ancient Mesoamerica (Gillespie 2001; Joyce 2000a). In the case of heirlooms, the histories of these objects become particularly salient. Their particularities bestow distinctiveness on the owner of the object, and its display is principally used to indicate social difference (Graeber 1996:6). Studies of Maya shell and jadeite ornaments note that many heirloom objects were also tribute items (Stuart 2006). The significance of such objects was thus bound up in their histories of movement and ownership by diverse persons, one of whom was sometimes commemorated through an inscription on the object itself. They are a good example of the likely role of much body art in the ancient Americas as inalienable possessions or “transcendent treasures” (Weiner 1992:3).³

Some heirloom objects were believed to be inherited from the gods themselves and were thus particularly prestigious and sacred (Klein 1986:159, 2008). These concepts probably relate to the widespread belief that the acquisition of finely crafted items from distant locations confers upon these items a prestige or value tied to ancestors, gods, or heroes (see Helms 1993). The investiture of trade goods with cosmological or mythical value provides a crucial link between economics and aesthetics that is directly relevant to the goals of this volume.

The consideration of dress within the interconnected contexts of creation, distribution, display, and disposal, then, allows us to move beyond the simplistic notion of dress as symbol. Potentially, dress may engage diverse modes of signification; however, owing to its association with bodies, indexicality (the capacity of signifiers to point to a referent with which it is spatially coterminous) seems to be among the richest modes of signification that clothing may exploit (see also Gell 1998). Indeed, various studies have explored the indexical dimensions of costume, such as Mershen's (1989) examination of the life histories embodied in jewelry, encompassing the people who created and used it, or Webb Keane's (2004) exploration of the functions of clothing among historic Pacific Islands peoples, which suggests that it is through indexical and iconic qualities that clothing achieves social effectiveness.

In the Mesoamerican context, David Haskell (2012) provides a detailed model for the analysis of the indexicality of the production and exchange of Tarascan obsidian lip plugs. Again, drawing upon Mauss's model of gift exchange as a means of building intersubjective social networks, Haskell argues that the indexical processes of production and distribution of lip plugs served to extend the king's political authority to the Tarascan nobility. The display ("discursive framing") of these objects was performed in various contexts, some of which were designed to unambiguously point to specific chains of intention.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACHES

The reconceptualization of dress as a material component of social process rather than a badge or similar social "inscription" is a question central to phenomenological theories of the "lived body" (see Merleau-Ponty 1976). The body as a subject in practice represents a potentially productive horizon for the interpretation of clothing, encompassing various domains. These include creation of dress items and ensembles, dressing and undressing, consumption as a site and process, the relationship between the physical body and adornment, the body in motion, and experiences of modification by the dressed/shaped person (Entwistle 2000; Steele 2001). An excellent example of how dress changes the body and the body changes dress is found among the Requibat Bedouin of northwest Africa, whose indigo-dyed clothing confers a blue tint to their skin (Cordwell 1979:73). Another is Umberto Eco's (1986:192–94) discussion of the way in which tight jeans structure posture and movement and thereby constitute an "epidermic self-awareness." Indeed, the consideration of the skin as a liminal sensate zone, rather than a neutral screen

for projection or inscription, suggests a new way of conceptualizing the role of dress in mediating the subject and society (see Fleming 2001:84; Gell 1993:39; Schildkrout 2004:323). Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) concept of the habitus asserts that it is through bodily practices that symbols are made "concrete." This is important because it acknowledges that the values and associations of dress are not predetermined but inculcated through bodily acts. As such, the acts of making clothing, gifting it, destroying it, as well as dressing and undressing, focalize routine and in the process create meaning.

If costume and body art represent a "second skin" through which individuals interface with society (Hansen 2004:372; see also Turner 1980), then these myriad acts of adornment must be essential to the process of embodiment. For example, the Warlpiri (aboriginal Australian) term *kururwarri*, which includes body art, connotes the visual traces of events that structure the relationship between persons, ancestors, and the landscape (Biddle 2001:178). Thus, marks on the skin allow women to extend the body to encompass the landscape as well. Such acts of adornment create the body as a subject that is "necessary to be" (see Csordas 1993, 1996).

Scholars have already commented on the way in which bodily experiences structure the significance of body art in ancient Meso- and Central America. A prime example is the ritual of nose piercing and the insertion of a turquoise jewel, which various Postclassic Mesoamerican societies considered to be an act of royal legitimation (see Blomster 2008:32). In this case, the ritual is a dual act, involving the puncturing of the body, which is a rite of personal transformation, as well as the insertion of ornament, which functions as a status symbol (see Schildkrout 2004:323). However, through its association with the body, the jewel becomes a sign (index) of ritual. Indexical functions of jewelry also come into play as jewelry is alternately attached to and removed from the body (Joyce 2000b; see also Joyce 2007). Another example of the phrasing of symbolic content as embodiment appears in Classic Maya art, where overlords receive textiles and other items of regalia as tribute from men wearing white capes and *Spondylus* shell necklaces (Houston, Stuart, and Taube 2006:244-47; Reents-Budet 2006:114). This ritual "bundling" of the men's bodies highlights the role of clothing as a medium that explicitly communicates status relationships through the skilled labor embodied in luxury goods as well as the performative act of court presentation. The embodied status of these offerings also perhaps signifies the labor tax levied on the subordinate men's factions.

The experiential focus of phenomenology also relates closely to technologies of production. The social and cultural analysis of production involves the exploration of tools and methods, acquisition of materials, and the social

context of production, such as training or rituals associated with body art creation. Considerations of these issues are generally limited in studies of adornment, mostly focusing on textiles (see Shukla 2008:392). Likewise, in the ancient American context, production remains a relatively unexplored area of body art research, despite the evidence readily available through materials analysis.

Although technical knowledge has long been recognized as symbolic (Dobres and Hoffman 1994; Lemonnier 1992), the concept of technological style denotes the concretization of these attitudes in the physical qualities of crafted objects (Hosler 1994; Lechtman 1977). One of the most discussed dimensions of technological style in ancient Mesoamerica is the association of the structural elements of textile fabrics and the processes of spinning and weaving with aspects of cosmology, gender, and sexuality (Hendon 1997; Klein 1982;Looper 2006; McCafferty and McCafferty 1996; see also Schneider 1987:413; Schneider and Weiner 1989:9). In a rare discussion of this issue in the domain of ceramics, Joyce (2008) looks at the parallels between the structure and process of making of pottery figurines and the life and death cycles of the Formative period denizens of Honduras.

Because these processes are part of the lived experience of the subject, they pertain broadly to phenomenology. For example, Dorothy Hosler (1994) discusses the ideas embodied in West Mexican metal regalia, particularly bells, hair attachments, sheet-metal pieces worn as pendants and crowns, and large tweezers, also worn as pendants. The cultural values associated with these items were not symbolic abstractions but were inherent in the physical properties of metal ornaments, mainly associated with their colors and sounds. From Mexico to Colombia, many indigenous groups linked metallurgical processes with fertility (Falchetti 2003; Hosler 1994:230). By reframing the significance of dress in terms of material properties and technological processes, these studies move toward a theoretical rematerialization of dress and, by extension, the body.

VOLUME OVERVIEW

The chapters of this volume consider varied and wide-ranging aspects of dress and adornment among the Formative period cultures of ancient Mesoamerica and Central America. Subjects addressed by the contributors include the development of technologies, materials and methods of manufacture, non-fabric ornamentation (including cranial and dental modification, hairstyles, tattooing, body painting, jewelry, animal pelts, and plumage), reconstruction

of regalia sets as coherent entities, symbolic dimensions (such as implications for social status, gender, and ritual, and the dressing or bundling of objects), representational strategies, and clothing and adornment as evidence of socio-political exchange.

The book documents the elaborate practices of costume and adornment over a wide geographical swathe, from Panama, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua, northwest through Honduras, into the state of Oaxaca in Mexico and the Soconusco region of southern Mesoamerica, over to the Gulf Coast Olmec region (Olmec), and finally into the Maya lowlands. The chapter organization reflects a desire on the part of the editors to invert traditional approaches that open with discussions of Mesoamerican art and archaeology, then leading to Central American. The chapters address how, why, where, what, and when articles of dress or adornment were worn. However, the authors are also mindful of human agency and personhood for the wearers and makers. Indeed, it is this revivification of these ancient peoples and their cultures that is the primary goal of this volume.

While many of the contributions to this volume focus on body art as marks of social and individual identity, many also consider how these meanings are embodied through ritual performance, exchange, and technologies of production. The first chapter, by Karen O'Day, sets the overall tone for the volume, emphasizing the personal dimension of dress and adornment as reflected in burials at Sitio Conte, Panama. The experimental articulation of dress elements (mainly metal ornaments) into ensembles calls attention to the embodied dimension of social identity. Chapter 2, by Laura Wingfield, explores the role of dress as a marker of religious and social status in early Nicoyan societies of Costa Rica and Nicaragua. Using ethnographic analogies, her study makes the case that body painting, hairstyles, headgear, pendants, and handheld objects shown in ceramic figurines expressed shamanic roles of the individuals depicted. Chapter 3, by Rosemary Joyce, frames a discussion in semiotic terms of the woven, twined, or braided textiles depicted on early figurines from the area of Playa de los Muertos, Honduras. She argues that the prominence of textile imagery on these figurines points to the processes of production and networks of exchange through which value was ascribed to actual textiles. In Chapter 4 Jeffrey Blomster analyzes Formative period figurines from Oaxaca as evidence for how their creators conceptualized the intersections of gender, sex, and status. Although these figurines “fix” identities in permanent representations of hairstyles, clothing, and ornaments, diverse social actors manipulated the pigmentation of the figurines as part of a continuing discourse on social identity. Chapter 5, by Guy David Hepp and

Ivy A. Rieger, returns to the topic of figurines and gender identity, this time in the context of Formative period coastal Oaxaca. The analysis of these figurines suggests that gender roles related to patterns of bodily ornamentation, but also that gendered adornment patterns did not correspond exclusively to dichotomous male and female biological sexes. Chapter 6, by John Clark and Arlene Colman, examines the meaning of one type of ornament, earspools and flares, across a number of cultures in Formative Mesoamerica. They find that the evidence favors interpreting these objects as having diverse symbolic references, including beautification, status, and superhuman sensation. In Chapter 7, on gender and costume in Olmec art, Billie Follensbee continues the discussion of gender versus sexual identity as reflected in body adornment. She observes that while some high-status elements of attire are often linked to sex, other items seem to be gender-neutral, gender-ambiguous, and mixed-gender and therefore have a variety of possible interpretations. Chapter 8, by Katherine Faust, compares the presentation of ornamentation in relation to the surface of the body in Olmec and Huastec art. She finds that the style and meanings of the bodily inscriptions adorning these figures are similarly structured, corresponding to shared psychologies of bodily perception. Preclassic Huastec body art traditions are the focus of Chapter 9, by Sophie Marchegay. Working with figurines excavated at the site of Loma Real, Tamaulipas, the author documents a wide range of modifications of the body, including cranial modeling, scarification, body painting, ornaments, headdresses, and jewelry. Chapter 10, by Caitlin Earley and Julia Guernsey, relates the use of geometric framing bands in Preclassic Mesoamerican art to textile technologies and costuming traditions. This study suggests the importance of the conceptual overlap between these mechanisms for delineating space and for wrapping objects or persons. Chapter 11, by Whitney Lytle and F. Kent Reilly, discusses the relationship between Olmec regalia and the ritualized process of bundling sacra. The close linkages between Olmec regalia and sacred maize bundles show how the process of wrapping in textiles establishes a metaphorical connection between kings and maize. Chapter 12, by Karon Winzenz, moves to the Maya area, discussing the symbolic dimensions of cloth shown in the murals of San Bartolo, Guatemala. Through a detailed examination of the fabric techniques and contexts of the garments depicted, she argues that cloth was sacralized through creation, symbolic elaboration, and ritual use. Chapter 13, by Matthew G.Looper, explores the correlations between dress and the body in Preclassic Lowland Maya representational art and burials. Finally, Chapter 14, by John Hoopes, summarizes and comments upon the contributions of the previous chapters and points toward areas for future investigation.

NOTES

1. The best-documented native language of Mexico, Classical Nahuatl (spoken by the Nahuatl/Aztecs), has two main terms for clothing: *tzohetzomabtli* and *(tla)quēmitl*. The first of these, *tzohetzomabtli*, is often glossed as “rag” in colonial dictionaries (Molina 2001:154r; Siméon 2002:738). However, this term was also used in the eighteenth century with reference to a burial shroud in the form of a habit of the Virgen de la Merced in the Toluca Valley (Pizzigoni 2007:76). This probably reflects the more general meaning of the root of *tzohetzomabtli*, which is the reflexive/transitive verb *(i)tzom(a)*, “for something to get sewn; to sew something” (Karttunen 1983:101). The other Nahuatl term, *(tla)quēmitl*, is translated as “dress, clothes, cape” (Molina 2001:134r; Siméon 2002:422) and is based on the transitive verbal stem *quēm(i)*, meaning “to put on or wear clothes” (Karttunen 1983:208). Modern dialects of Nahuatl preserve similar terms with nearly identical meanings (e.g., Brewer and Brewer 1971:99; Key and Key 1953:214).

2. Crossley (1996) argues that the structuralist and poststructuralist conceptions of the body are complementary to the phenomenological approach.

3. The notion of “transcendent treasures” is directly attested in Nahuatl. A more specialized term for regalia in Nahuatl is *tlatqui-tl*, translated as “property, clothes” (Molina 2001:142r) and derived from the verb *(i)tqui* “to carry something, to govern people” (Karttunen 1983:108, 300). In *Primeros Memoriales*, *tlatquitl* refers to accoutrements or wearable assets (Sahagún 1997:260) and is often coupled with the term *tlauiç(tli)*, meaning “arms, insignia” (Molina 2001:145r).

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