

World Clothing and Fashion: An Encyclopedia of History, Culture, and Social Influence

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Article begins on next page

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Article

It seems highly counter-intuitive that an encyclopedia of an almost purely visual phenomenon – fashion and clothing – should have an extremely limited number of illustrations, and that those few illustrations should be in black and white. This is reason enough to consider this reference work not worth purchasing.

The encyclopedia is also not extremely well written, researched or fact-checked. For example, the article on Erté attributes Cecil Beaton's iconic *My Fair Lady* (1964) Ascot scene costumes to him; Erté was an influence on Beaton's concept for the scene but not the designer. The essay on

Hippie and Mod fashions describes Mary Quant in such a way that it sounds like she was only a model instead of an influential designer and entrepreneur; the article under her own name is more accurate. The essay on Japanese fashion shows what looks like a Chinese brocade coat, labelled as a kimono; the article on Central American, Mexican and Caribbean clothing mislabels the pictured cornrow-and-braids hairstyle as dreadlocks. The author's opinions are also often curious. Were Cretan men really less interested in fashion simply because they wore less clothing, as the article on Greek clothing, ancient, states? The frescos of Knossos would argue against this; the male and female figures are equally beautifully coiffed and clothed; the men's kilts as elaborately bordered as the women's skirts and bodices; and the loincloths she mentions as typical male wear were practical garments worn by both sexes for the bull dancing.

Such carelessness, on top of the inadequate illustrations, leads me to recommend against the purchase of this book.