ORAL TRADITION

ORAL TRADITION

Joseph Harris
Harvard University
Old Norse

Lauri Harvilahti
Finnish Literature Society
Russian, Finnish, Altai

Lauri Honko (✝)
Turku University
Comparative Epic

Dell Hymes (✝)
University of Virginia
Native American, Linguistics

Martin Jaffee
Hebrew Bible
Univ. of Washington

Minna Skafte Jensen
Odense University
Ancient Greek, Latin

Werner Kelber
Rice University
Biblical Studies

Françoise Létoublon
Université Stendahl
Ancient Greek

Victor Mair
University of Pennsylvania
Chinese

Peter Middleton
University of Southampton
Contemporary Poetry
Performance

Nada Milošević-Djordjević
University of Belgrade
South Slavic

Stephen Mitchell
Harvard University
Scandinavian

Gregory Nagy
Harvard University
Ancient Greek, Sanskrit,
Comparative

Joseph Falaky Nagy
Univ. of Cal./Los Angeles
Old Irish

Susan Niditch
Amherst College
Hebrew Bible

Walter J. Ong (✝)
St. Louis University
Hermeneutics of orality and
literacy

Shelly Fenno Quinn
Ohio State University
Japanese

Burton Raffel
Univ. of Southwestern
Louisiana
Translation

Karl Reichl
Universität Bonn
Turkic, Old and Middle English

John Roberts
Ohio State University
African-American

Joel Sherzer
University of Texas/Austin
Native American, Anthropology

Joseph Sobol
East Tennessee State University
Storytelling

Dennis Tedlock
SUNY/Buffalo
Native American

J. Barre Toelken
Utah State University
Folklore, Native American

Ronald J. Turner
Univ. of Missouri/Columbia
Storytelling

Andrew Wiget
University of New Mexico
Native American

Paulu Zedda
Università di Cagliari
Sardinian

Contents

This page is intentionally left blank.

Editor's Column

With this issue *Oral Tradition*, founded in 1986 at the University of Missouri, reaches a milestone: the conclusion of its twenty-fifth year of publication. The raw numbers are significant–more than 500 articles comprising more than 11,000 pages treating close to 100 different oral traditions worldwide from ancient to modern times. But two other measurements are perhaps just as telling. Since 2006, when the journal first became available online, open-access, and free-of-charge (with all review procedures intact and in force), our constituency has increased from a maximum of 1200 paper subscriptions to an annual readership of over 20,000 from 216 countries and territories internationally. Just as importantly, we now receive submissions for possible publication from a much wider range of colleagues studying a much more diverse group of traditions from more markedly varied theoretical perspectives. In addition, many articles now feature audio, video, photographic, and other support in the form of eCompanions, thus providing multimedia experiences of performers, performances, audiences, and the like. In this way the electronic medium has liberated the understanding of oral traditions from what can be contained in a text, just as it has radically democratized access and contribution. In short, by taking advantage of the natural homology between humankind's first and most recent communications technologies, an OT-IT homology explored in the Pathways Project, the journal is well placed to continue its growth as a comparative, interdisciplinary forum for scholars and students around the world.

Earlier this year, on February 10th, the Center for Studies in Oral Tradition celebrated its own quarter-century anniversary with several memorable events. Chief among them was the donation of the personal libraries of Albert Bates Lord and Mary Louise Lord to the CSOT and the University of Missouri. We are enormously grateful to Nathan and Mark Lord and their families for this remarkable act of generosity, and are excited to be able to offer this unique resource to visiting scholars and students as well as our own campus community. To mark the donation of the library, the College of Arts and Science at the university has created the Lord Fellowship, which will provide a stipend for visiting researchers who wish to use the collection and other resources of the CSOT. The inaugural recipient is Agniezska Matkowska of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland. As another aspect of the February commemoration, Mark Bender of Ohio State University delivered the 25th Lord and Parry Lecture, entitled "Butterflies and Dragon-Eagles: Processing Epics from Southwest China," which will be published in *Oral Tradition* next year.

On the same evening of February 10th we also announced the launch of a new initiative patterned after the online migration of the journal: the International Society for Studies in Oral Tradition. The purpose of this Internet-based association is to further the original and continuing mission of the CSOT as a whole–to facilitate the study of oral traditions by promoting and facilitating exchange among all constituencies. With the electronic platform and a variety of virtual tools in place, we will support such activities as individual, person-to-person contacts; group discussions over topics of mutual interest; eSeminars and eConferences; and an eArchive for the deposit of primary and secondary materials. Membership in the ISSOT is free and open to all, and we have built a system that optimizes access while protecting identity through

gatekeeping. We hope that the Society will contribute to enhanced democratization of work in our shared field, a goal that harmonizes with the core nature of our joint inquiry.

Finally, a few words about the present issue of the journal, which is perhaps the most ambitious and diverse in *OT*'s history and in that respect a harbinger of contents to come. Kiri Miller opens the forum with an ethnographic exploration of sacred harp memorial lessons, a tradition native to the American South, made richer and more immediate by the author's dual, insider/outsider perspective as both a participant and an ethnomusicologist. Next, Adélékè Adéèkọ́ probes the nature and function of orality and literacy in Ifá divination stories from Nigeria, with special attention to the meaning and authority of the inscription system (illustrated photographically). Our third article, by L. I. Davies, queries the applicability of contemporary ideas of orality/literacy and popular vs. elite culture in eighteenth-century England by focusing on Henry Bourne's *Antiquities of the Common People* and John Brand's *Observations on Popular Antiquities*.

Katarzyna Mikulska Dąbrowska opens up a fascinating new area for the journal with her comparative examination of secret, oral-traditional language in Aztec magical discourse, showing how patterned, recurrent expression is imaged in two media: the visual (iconic, idiomatic figures) and the verbal (formulaic, idiomatic phraseology). This groundbreaking contribution is lavishly illustrated with striking re-drawings from religious manuscripts. On a different note, Albert Casals, Jaume Ayats, and Mercè Vilar then explain how they harnessed an oral traditional form for pedagogical purposes, using Catalonian improvised song in local primary schools. An eCompanion containing videos and photos helps the reader to grasp how this traditional medium is repurposed in novel ways.

From northwest China, Wang Guoming offers a rare glimpse into Tuzu *Gesar*, an oral epic tradition little known outside China but which articulates with the Tibetan and Mongolian versions of the expansive Gesar cycle that stretches across central and eastern Asia. In addition to the description of the Tuzu performances, Wang has provided photos and a 20-minute video of the singer, Wang Yongfu, that we are pleased to make available as an eCompanion with English subtitles (by Li Xianting). Next, Kati Kallio considers the large and multi-generic body of oral traditions from Ingria in the Finnish-Estonian region, with emphasis on the performance and "interperformativity" of swinging songs and lullabies; her presentation, which treats the multimedia nature of the performances, includes transcriptions and audio excerpts of sung materials.

Another, more general theoretical perspective on music and oral tradition is Francesca R. Sborgi Lawson's discussion of the implications of musicological research for studies in orality and literacy, in which she examines relationships among oral performance, notation, and electronic media. In a much different area, Fay Beauchamp makes the case for the Asian origins of the Cinderella folktale, tracing its pattern and features to the Tang Dynasty and the Zhuang ethnic group located in the Guangxi province, now within the People's Republic of China.

Finally, and fittingly, this twenty-fifth year of *Oral Tradition* closes with a bibliography of Albert Lord's writings, as compiled by Morgan Grey from an obituary article and Mary Louise Lord's additions. Neither the Center for Studies in Oral Tradition nor this journal would exist without Albert's encouragement and fundamental contributions, and we hope that giving pride of place to his seminal work makes that point. In a real sense, and notwithstanding the explosion of

comparative, interdisciplinary research and scholarship on oral tradition that has made this field so rewarding and intriguing for an ever-growing international constituency, the quarter-century comes full circle, ending where it began.

Let me close with an inadequate word of thanks to all those who have participated in the birth and nurturing of *Oral Tradition* as it has evolved from a rough-hewn idea through blue-penciled manuscripts to the (then-)miracle of in-house typesetting and now to a digital avatar on the Internet. Charles Gribble was an indispensable member of the midwifery team, with his and George Fowler's sponsorship of the journal's publication by Slavica for almost twenty years. Deans Milton Glick and Ted Tarkow, and now Dean Michael O'Brien, have trusted the CSOT and *OT* initiatives and have been essential partners in the ongoing project from the start. Generations of graduate editorial assistants, more than two dozen in all as chronicled in the succession of mastheads, have performed faithfully and often brilliantly the tasks of copyediting, proofing, and communication with authors, while the Center's IT managers, Mark Jarvis and Jamie Stephens, have enabled the journal's transition from paper to the web and all that has followed in the wake of that migration. Closer to home, a supremely supportive family has created a context that both supports and places in proper perspective all academic undertakings: in addition to more recent arrivals Joe and Bella, my deepest thanks to (in chronological order) Isaac, Lizzie (about coeval with *OT*), Joshua, and especially Anne-Marie.

John Miles Foley
Editor, *Oral Tradition*
http://journal.oraltradition.org

This page is intentionally left blank.

"Like Cords Around My Heart":
Sacred Harp Memorial Lessons and the Transmission of Tradition

Kiri Miller

My Christian friends, in bonds of love,
Whose hearts in sweetest union join,
Your friendship's like a drawing band,
Yet we must take the parting hand.
Your company's sweet, your union dear,
Your words delightful to my ear;
Yet when I see that we must part
You draw like cords around my heart.
("Parting Hand," 62)[1]

After spending all day Saturday and most of Sunday morning engaged in full-voiced, energetic singing, the two hundred fifty people gathered for the 2009 Midwest Sacred Harp Convention grew quiet for the memorial lesson. The three members of the memorial committee stepped to the center of the hollow square of singers, carrying two lists of names: the deceased list, representing Sacred Harp singers, friends, and family members who had died in the past year; and the list of "the sick and shut-in," people too infirm to attend the convention. The singing room, an elaborately painted performance hall on the University of Chicago campus, had been ringing with sound all weekend; now even its bright Progressive Era murals seemed momentarily subdued. Bob Meek, a singer from Kentucky, spoke on behalf of the deceased:

I'd like to tell you a story, and it's about Chicago. Many years ago, when I had hair—and it wasn't the Midwest Convention; it was at the Anniversary Singing in January. I came up [from the South], and it was at the Irish-American hall, the heritage hall, and I was singing somewhere in the back row. And I looked up and saw—literally saw—a feathered angel sitting right across over the treble section looking down. Now, before you think I'm nuts: the Polish-American Christmas pageant was next door [*laughter*] in its full regalia with feathered angels, so one of the guys came

---

[1] Text by John Blain (1818), music by William Walker (1935). All *Sacred Harp* song texts are cited as they appear in McGraw 1991, including tune title, page number (with "t" or "b" to indicate top or bottom of the page), author of the text, and composer of the music.

over to see what was going on. All I know is I saw angels. So the only thing that I could think of when I got home, only in Chicago you would have a Polish-American angel looking over Southern-American music in an Irish-American hall.

And it brought to me the first Bible verse I will read, which is, "And after these things, I looked and, behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and people and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cried out with a loud voice." Now, who sings with a loud voice? I don't know. These might be Sacred Harp singers.

A memorial lesson is something that brings back sad memories and something that brings back happy memories. It's something that brings back this idea that one string from this Sacred Harp has been removed, and it's no longer with us. And because that string is gone, we miss them. And we wish they were here, because Sacred Harp has taught me one thing, and that is fellowship. I have listened to a lot of memorial lessons; one from Richard [DeLong] on a tape, and he would rattle off name after name after name of all these people that came and helped him to be where he is today. Everybody that stands here before you has somebody that helped you get here, and we have a tendency to forget. So this memorial lesson is simply an idea that this is our feeble attempt to honor those that have helped us along the way.[2]

The Sacred Harp is a non-denominational American shape-note tunebook first published in 1844 and most recently revised in 1991 (McGraw 1991).[3] It contains over 500 four-part unaccompanied songs set to mostly eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Christian texts. Sacred Harp singers sit in a hollow-square formation with one voice part to a side and take turns standing in the middle to lead songs from the tunebook (see Figure 1 below).
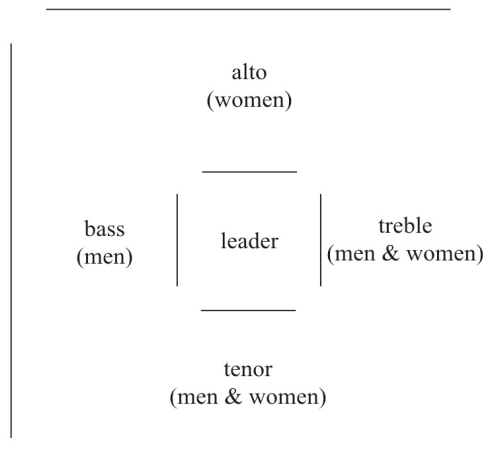

Figure 1: The Hollow Square

---

[2] Recorded May 31, 2009. All cited memorial lessons are transcribed from field recordings.

[3] I refer here to the "Denson book" line of *Sacred Harp* revisions; some Sacred Harp singers use the "Cooper book," which represents a parallel revision line. The split between Denson and Cooper revision lines dates to 1902; see Campbell 1997.

The musical notation in the tunebook employs four shaped noteheads that correspond to the syllables "fa," "sol," "la," and "mi," a system designed at the turn of the nineteenth century as an aid to sight-singing (see Figure 2 below).

Figure 2: Shape-note notation (rpt. from McGraw 1991:18). As McGraw explains, "The figure illustrates the following principle for the keys of C, F, and G major: *The degrees of a scale have the same shapes, syllables, and relative positions on the staff in every key and under every clef.* . . . This is the principle that allows the shaped notes to be read by their shapes and relative positions" (18).

Participants sing through each leader's chosen song using these syllables before singing the words. Any assembled group of Sacred Harp singers is called a "class," and leading a song is called "giving a lesson" (a legacy of early American singing school terminology; see Marini 1983). Small, local groups of Sacred Harp singers often meet to sing together informally on a weekly or monthly basis. Hundreds of singers gather for annual Sacred Harp conventions, which take place around the country on virtually every weekend of the year.[4]

The musical repertoire in *The Sacred Harp* and the participatory tradition that grew up around it have long been identified as fundamentally American, associated with discourses of rugged individualism, egalitarian democracy, and American exceptionalism (Miller 2008). Over the past four decades, folk revivalists have increasingly joined rural Southern lifelong singers in singing from *The Sacred Harp* and self-consciously preserving and perpetuating its associated performance practices and social values. Some Southern singing conventions date to the mid-nineteenth century; more recently, new local groups and annual conventions have sprung up all over the U.S., with outposts in Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia. Sacred Harp now comprises a network of regional singing communities linked by reciprocal travel and connections to lifelong Southern singers (often termed "traditional singers"). The national singing community today is quite diverse in terms of age, class, religious affiliation, political stance, sexual orientation, and musical experience. I call this dispersed community the Sacred Harp diaspora,

_____

[4] See http://www.fasola.org (Sacred Harp 2009) for a list of annual singings and conventions. The term "convention" refers to an annual singing lasting more than one day.

because of singers' reliance on kinship metaphors and their treatment of the rural South as Sacred Harp's "homeland."[5]

Sacred Harp singing engenders alliances among disparate groups in part because it offers assurance that the local, the particular, and the traditional still live on in hidden corners of American life. In this context, knowledge derived from face-to-face transmission is a crucial form of cultural capital: vocal timbre, melodic ornamentation, song tempos, travel stories, and recipes for dinner-on-the-grounds are all freighted with meaning as emblems of personal experience at singings and personal relationships with singers. It might seem odd that oral transmission would be so prized in a musical tradition that revolves around a printed, mass-produced tunebook and a distinctive musical notation system, but oral and written tradition are deeply interdependent in Sacred Harp practice. Singers negotiate a delicate balance between celebration of Sacred Harp's openness and egalitarianism—"anyone can do it" as long as s/he has a tunebook—and veneration of the tradition's historical particularity and depth of community sentiment, comprehensible only through long experience. Sacred Harp singing thus presents a case where the prestige of orality tends to prevent a printed text from "assum[ing] authority over the utterance" (Goody 2000:56).[6]

Elsewhere I have addressed the interplay of oral and written transmission in Sacred Harp musical practice (Miller 2004). In this article I focus on a moment in Sacred Harp conventions when the assembled "class" closes their tunebooks: the commemorative ritual called the "memorial lesson." There is no set text for these memorial speeches. No examples are printed in the tunebook, and memorial lessons are only rarely included on published or informally circulating recordings of Sacred Harp singings; one learns how to give a memorial lesson by witnessing other memorial lessons. Anyone can sign up to lead a song at a convention, but participation on a memorial committee is by invitation only; the chair of the convention selects the speakers. Like other lament genres, memorial lessons are characterized by "the dynamic interplay of individual expression and collective forms and sentiments" (Feld 1990:241, following Propp 1984:32). All memorial lessons tell the same basic story—in this case, a story about grief, memory, history, tradition, family, responsibility, and community—but the details of each version are painfully unique, since they deal with particular deaths.

Many lament traditions explore "the boundaries of speech and song" through texted wailing or musically patterned grief-stricken speech (Feld 1990; cf. Urban 1988, Tolbert 1990, Briggs 1993). Sacred Harp memorial lessons instead emphatically mark this boundary, with distinct spoken and sung portions: each member of the committee makes a short speech and then leads a song from the tunebook. Hours of group singing suddenly give way to solo speech. In that moment of emotional utterance, "the very failure of representation is recognized and brings an emotional response itself" (Reddy 1997:332)—that is, speech draws attention to its own inadequacy. The juxtaposition of speech and song in the memorial lesson serves to demonstrate the efficacy of music as a "particularly affective and direct way of knowing" (Turino 1999:221), providing a ritualized confirmation of the power and purpose of the singing tradition.

---

[5] See Miller 2008:28-36 for further discussion of the Sacred Harp diaspora.

[6] Cf. Thérèse de Vet's work on Balinese traditions that contradict the "general supposition in Western scholarship that the advent or presence of literacy will, over time, supersede orality" (2008:160).

Because of their reliance on oral tradition, their emphasis on memory and personal relationships, and their explicitly didactic function, memorial lessons are among the key markers of a traditional Sacred Harp convention (along with the hollow-square seating formation, rotation of song leaders, singing the shape-note solfege syllables before the words of each song, and opening/closing a convention with prayer). As more and more participants fall into the category of "diaspora singers"—those who feel a strong connection to lifelong Southern singers but were not born into "traditional singer" status themselves—memorial lessons play an increasingly important role in transmitting community values and history to newer participants. Like the Kaluli laments analyzed by Steven Feld (1990:242), they are "central to the evocation and symbolization of transition" and play a key role in "the social construction of emotionality, and in the collective responsibility for its display and interpretation." But because many singers at a convention may not even know the names of the people on the memorial lists, memorial lessons often include appeals to *imagined* emotion or promises of future emotional experience. For example, when lifelong Alabama singer Elene Stovall gave a memorial lesson at a 2008 singing in Brooklyn, New York, she vividly described the experience of growing up hearing the names of an older generation of beloved singers read out during memorial lessons. Then she called out the names of several well-traveled singers who were present in the room, turning around the square to look at each of them, and asked the group to imagine hearing *their* names on a memorial list. For the newest singers, the names of the living were scarcely more meaningful than the names of the dead. But for those who had begun to know those living singers, it was a chilling moment, and an injunction to get to know them better.

The memorial lesson is the only moment at a Sacred Harp convention when individuals are encouraged to speak at any length in the hollow square, rather than simply calling out a page number and leading a song. Talking in the square is explicitly discouraged during the rest of the convention—in part because it takes up time that could be used by another song leader, but also because the religious and political beliefs of Sacred Harp singers vary so widely that any opportunity for preaching, grandstanding, or linking a song to current events might threaten the atmosphere of pluralist tolerance.[7] Appointed chaplains offer prayers for opening, closing, and dinner-on-the-grounds, but these are generally brief, ecumenical, and non-proselytizing; only in the memorial lesson are certain singers singled out to speak from personal experience and offer instruction to the "class."

Framed as exceptional and essential, memorial lessons are positioned to confirm, define, and perpetuate "traditional singing." As in the Balinese performances analyzed by Thérèse de Vet (2008:164), "saying the environment, or context, shapes a performance is not telling the entire story; at the same time, the performance aims to influence the audience. . . . The performance is not only *de*scriptive, but also *pre*scriptive." Nearly every memorial lesson includes an explanation of why memorial lessons are necessary and what they are meant to accomplish (as in

---

[7] One might assume that this religious and political diversity is a post-folk-revival phenomenon, but in fact Sacred Harp singing has never been linked to any particular church or sect, and the texts in the book are not doctrinally consistent. While singers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries shared common experiences as Southerners, Christians, and (mostly) rural people, they worshiped in a wide variety of Protestant churches with conflicting stances on key doctrinal issues such as predestination and baptism (see Bealle 1997, Campbell 1997, Miller 2008, and Vinson 2006).

the example that opened this article). Such incursions of explicit, public explanation into a domain of insider experience and unspoken mutual knowledge are common in lament traditions; as Elizabeth Tolbert writes, laments act "simultaneously as a commentary on the intricate ritual complexes and as a necessary efficacious force" (1990:80).

In a memorial lesson at the 2004 Midwest Convention, Jesse Roberts, a preacher from Georgia and northern Florida, explained the practice this way: "Sacred Harp singers voice their experiences, their trials, their hopes in song. That's what makes their message resonate so strongly with those who are not familiar with Sacred Harp. The memorial lesson is the climax of those experiences, trials, and hopes."[8] Roberts claimed for Sacred Harp singing what the hymnodist Isaac Watts (1674-1748) claimed for his psalm paraphrases, which provide the texts for many of the tunes in *The Sacred Harp*: the ability to express "the most frequent tempers and changes of our spirit, and conditions of our life . . . our passions, our love, our fear, our hope, our desire, our sorrow, our wonder, our joy, as they are refin'd into devotion, and act under the influence and conduct of the blessed Spirit" (cited in Marini 2003:76). As Roberts noted, singers constantly infuse particular songs with their "experiences, trials, and hopes"; in memorial lessons, they perform explicit exegesis of that process. Memorial speakers draw on a wide range of texts and prior experiences, including Bible verses, sermons, and funeral speeches. Many make reference to Sacred Harp song titles or texts, some of which may be closely associated with people on the memorial lists. They often directly address the uncertainties, injunctions, and requests that saturate Sacred Harp texts. For example, consider the texts for the songs "Jackson" and "Granville":

> I am a stranger here below,
> And what I am is hard to know,
> I am so vile, so prone to sin,
> I fear that I'm not born again. . . .
>
> I find myself out of the way,
> My thoughts are often gone astray,
> Like one alone I seem to be,
> Oh, is there anyone like me?
> ("Jackson," 317b)[9]
>
> Remember, Lord, our mortal state;
> How frail our lives! how short the date!
> Where is the man that draws his breath,
> Safe from disease, secure from death?
>
> Lord, while we see whole nations die,
> Our flesh and sense repine and cry;

---

[8] Recorded May 30, 2004.

[9] Text from Mercer's *Cluster* (1810), music by M. F. McWhorter (1908).

Must death forever rage and reign?
Or hast Thou made mankind in vain?
("Granville," 547)[10]

Songs like these constitute a shared repertoire of rich metaphors and collective experiences, while previous memorial lessons afford a model for narrative structure and key themes.

Because memorial lessons address common human experiences—sickness, old age, bereavement, and death—their narratives are accessible, even for those who do not know the names on the lists. At the same time, not knowing the names makes listeners aware of constraints on their empathy. The memorial lesson can be a lonely moment for inexperienced singers—a fact acknowledged by speakers like Elene Stovall, who invited people to imagine their future grief if they couldn't grieve in the present. Memorial lessons directly address the accumulation of singing experience; they mediate between living and dead, present and absent, new and lifelong singers, placing them all within the bounds of the tradition. In this respect the memorial lesson closely resembles some performance traditions of ethnic diaspora communities. For example, like the *pizmon* song tradition of diasporic Syrian Jews, memorial lessons "provide a cultural space in which individual and collective memories may both be mediated and juxtaposed" (Shelemay 1998:10). Like the New York and New Jersey *sonidero bailes* (Mexican deejay dances) described by Cathy Ragland (2003), memorial lessons "accommodate, dramatize, and legitimize" the singing community's experience of loss and absence. Ragland's *baile* attendees "imagine the presence of those who are physically absent" by having the deejay read dedications and salutations aloud during the dance; in this way "they can speak to [the absent] and bring them into the local public space, while also addressing those that are at the dance who overhear the dialogue" (351). Sacred Harp memorial lessons serve much the same purpose for singers, creating a line of communication with the absent in a public, formal social space. For newer singers, they also have the potential to generate "nostalgia without memory," a phenomenon Sunaina Maira has explored in her work on second-generation Indian American youth culture (1999:51, following Appadurai 1996:30).

As a public lament, the memorial lesson has several straightforward functions: to praise the dead, comfort the living, pray for the sick, and provide a formal outlet for grief. Memorial lessons teach strategies for approaching the idea of death, one's own or that of loved ones. The "narrative defeat of oblivion" (Caraveli-Chaves 1980:150) accomplished by Sacred Harp memorial narratives sometimes relies on Christian concepts of the afterlife, but regardless of their religious content, all memorial lessons assert the continued life of the dead in the memory of the living. In Hayden White's terms (1980:15), these narratives "put an image of continuity, coherency, and meaning in place of the fantasies of emptiness, need, and frustrated desire that inhabit our nightmares about the destructive power of time." They hold out the promise that a newcomer will be accepted by the community and remembered after her own death, providing some relief from the anxiety of anomie.

Memorial lessons also explicitly assert the continued life of the singing tradition itself. Publicly acknowledging the illness and death of singers serves to remind the grieving class that

---

[10] Text by Isaac Watts (1719), music by Judy Hauff (1986).

new singers must be brought into the tradition; meanwhile the "discourse of the vanishing" typical of memorial lessons engages the sympathies of newcomers (Ivy 1995). Many speakers urge the class to come to every singing with a "last chance" attitude, since the future is uncertain for everyone. Memorial speakers often invoke the grief and fear associated with sickness, aging, death, and degenerative conceptions of modernity (for example, the conviction that new technologies and pervasive mass media are destroying local, particular, and traditional cultural practices; cf. Giddens 1991). They press those powerful emotions into service for commemoration, community-building, and perpetuation of the singing tradition.

The lessons I will discuss here, given by singers with widely varying backgrounds and levels of experience in the Sacred Harp community, show why this commemorative practice is so often cited as a key marker of traditional conventions and how it creates, perpetuates, and references quasi-familial affiliations among singers. I draw on twelve years of experience at Sacred Harp singings around the country, including participation at over one hundred annual conventions in nineteen states. My analysis has its own memorial aspects; these lessons deeply influenced my understanding of the Sacred Harp community and my place in it. Thus this article memorializes and documents an oral tradition that is itself concerned with commemoration.

"More a Tradition Than Anything Real"

The University of Chicago Anniversary Singing was founded in 1998; today it is called the Hyde Park Anniversary Singing, in recognition of the participation of neighborhood singers who are not affiliated with the university. Many of the singing's early supporters belonged to the well-established Sacred Harp community on Chicago's North Side. The annual one-day singing on the South Side was initially organized by University of Chicago students (including myself), but it was influenced by more experienced singers who gave us explicit advice on how to run the singing and select committee members. They recommended that we choose mostly local people in order to make the group more coherent and avoid burdening visiting singers with assignments; pair experienced singers with newer ones to help foster mentorship and the transmission of traditional practice; and select well-respected and well-spoken singers for the memorial committee.

The 1999 session met in a Quaker meeting house near the University of Chicago campus. I served as chair and therefore selected the committee members. Memorial committee members are chosen according to an array of overlapping criteria, including life experience, singing experience, rhetorical skill, place of origin, and personal connections to the sick or the dead. Suzanne Flandreau, who began singing in the late 1960s and had strong ties to lifelong singers in Mississippi, was an obvious choice; she lived in the university neighborhood and was among the most experienced singers in Chicago.[11] I paired her with Jim Swanson, a middle-aged university

---

[11] Most of the experienced singers in Chicago live on the North Side and began singing together in the early 1980s. Flandreau's Sacred Harp experience also emerged from a Northern folk music background but soon turned to total immersion in a rural Mississippi singing community, where she lived for several years. Flandreau now heads the library and archives of the Center for Black Music Research at Columbia College in Chicago.

librarian who had been singing for three years and had made his first trip South for the United Convention in Alabama the previous month.

Jim Swanson spoke for the deceased; he began, as many memorial speakers do, by establishing the special nature of the time at hand:

> A number of years ago now I heard a rabbi speak at Rockefeller Chapel [where the University of Chicago holds ecumenical Christian services]. And for the first part of the service he sat and gazed around that magnificent room, as people will. And when he came to speak he paid gracious recognition of the Christian tradition of sanctifying great and often magnificent spaces for worship and meditation, and went on to point out that in the Jewish tradition virtually the first thing God does after Creation itself is to sanctify not space, but *time*, with the Sabbath. And that in effect is what we do here with the memorial lesson—we would be perfectly happy to sing our hearts out during this time, but we very deliberately have always set aside this time to think about sickness and death. Which is something that we in late twentieth-century America do not do very well.[12]

As a relative newcomer, Swanson relied on personal experience rather than an invocation of shared Sacred Harp experience in introducing his lesson. However, within a few sentences he drew a circle around those present, by shifting into the first person plural and explicitly separating his anecdote—what *they* do in worship—from "what we do here with the memorial lesson." Then he placed the day's singing in its broader cultural context, "late twentieth-century America," and began to suggest a function of the memorial lesson specific to that context: to aid in a difficult task made more difficult by modern habits. He continued:

> Back in the early days of AIDS, a good friend of mine sickened and ultimately died. And my generation had had no experience with death, or serious illness to speak of, and did not know how to handle it. We were scared, we were bitter, we were angry, we were grieving, bereft, but we didn't have the means to face the reality of death. And at Jan's memorial service someone very aptly pointed out that one of the last legacies he left us was to allow himself to be a test subject, a laboratory animal in effect, for our halting and awkward and painful, and I'm sure hurtful attempts to console him or ourselves or each other, to deal somehow with this terrible, new reality that was at that time in the form of his impending departure from us. And the Sacred Harp tradition allows us to do that as well, to gain experience in facing this reality that must not be denied. It's present in the grim words of the songs that we often smile at, but even at that level death becomes a little more familiar and a little less difficult to deal with, aside from the promise implied in the words of the songs themselves.

Swanson's idea of the function of the memorial lesson became much plainer here, as he drew attention to a problem described as specific to his generation and community of friends. This idea, that today we lack "the means to face the reality of death," comes up very often both in memorial lessons and in my discussions with singers about why they value their Sacred Harp practice.

---

[12] Recorded October 30, 1999.

In describing the social construction of death in late modernity, Clive Seale writes, "Life, in a sense, can be understood as a deliberate, continual turning away from death" (1998:11). Sacred Harp singers point out the rarity of hymns or sermons about death in modern church services; many use this as part of an explanation of why church "doesn't speak to me." As Minnesota singer Martha Henderson wrote of one service she encountered, "No sadness was allowed in this church. The songs were so saccharine and so relentlessly cheerful that they were cloying. There were no minor keys, no mournful songs about death, suffering, or sin. The pastor was an ecclesiastical cheerleader, walking up and down the aisles with a microphone, exhorting people to feel good." This church experience not only failed to meet Henderson's spiritual needs but actively inspired a kind of homesickness for Sacred Harp singing; as she explained, "All of this encouragement to be happy and praise Jesus in nursery-school style songs had an unexpected effect on me. Suddenly, I was overwhelmed by an incredible feeling of loss. I missed my singing friends desperately."[13]

Swanson's memorial lesson and Henderson's post to a Sacred Harp listserv both express concern about a lack of genuine engagement with death and suffering in contemporary American culture. In the Sacred Harp community, they find some of the same characteristics that Stephen Warner attributes to modern American religious institutions: "In a system where religious institutions comprehend not the whole society but subcultures, modernity, migration, and mobility make it possible for people to found religious associations that are at once self-selected and adapted to present circumstances" (Warner 1993:1060, cf. Olson 1993). Sacred Harp associations function in much the same way, sometimes for people who have found religious institutions unwelcoming or constricting. More loosely organized than a religious denomination, with no fixed credo but many ritual aspects, Sacred Harp presents an alternative to existing institutional options.

Reframing problems that plague modern American life within the extended history of Sacred Harp practice creates a coherent temporal trajectory for the tradition and its participants. Such rhetorical gestures assert a connection to singing "forebears" without reference to the actual ancestry of singers, providing a means of entry into the community for those not born into the tradition. Singers acknowledge change—referring to teen suicide rates, drugs, new forms of violence, and AIDS, for example—but simultaneously valorize traditional coping strategies. As singer Bob Todd of Pennsylvania wrote to the Sacred Harp listserv *discussions@fasola.org*:

> Americans are not faced with death and many of us grow into mature adulthood without having a close family member die. As a result we do not learn how to mourn and how to discover our spirituality until later in life.
>
>   The row of children's graves [encountered in a church cemetery at a Southern singing] reminds us that a hundred forty years ago, when our ancestors faced death every day of their lives and the frailty of the human condition compared with the power of the environment around them, spirituality was a force used to accept the happenings of each day. . . .   Shape note singing has an

---

[13] Posted to *singings@fasola.org* on August 9, 1999.

immediacy and an opportunity to discover and get with our spirituality that was a necessity a hundred forty years ago and I believe it represents a source of what makes our society great.[14]

Like the words of the songs, many of which were already archaic when they were first printed in *The Sacred Harp*, the singing tradition has proved able to accommodate modern anxieties and griefs. Singers constantly call on the tradition and community to meet new challenges, from individual deaths to the AIDS epidemic and the events of September 11th, 2001 (Noren 2002).

Jim Swanson continued his memorial lesson by turning from his personal experience pre-Sacred Harp to his relatively brief experience within the singing community:

> Music binds us, and it doesn't have to be with those who have died. I can look around this room, and I think of music with people. [*pointing to various singers as he mentions songs titles*] "Kingwood." And "Boylston." And "Primrose," you know? "Babylon Is Fallen." It goes on and on. We can *all* do this.

Because he had been singing for only a few years and had seldom traveled to singings outside Chicago, Swanson knew few of the names he was about to read from the list of those who had died in the past year, names written by more experienced singers. Unable to assert a personal connection with the dead, and aware that many of the young singers in the room were equally inexperienced, he chose to emphasize connections among the living by pointing out the tunes that he associated with individual singers.

Swanson concluded:

> But however we react and relate and respond to this time we've set apart, whether it's through associations with music and people, or kinds of music and people, or the power of this music that we love, or with the prayer and promise in the words of the music; whether it's the friendship in this room, or the ritual of reading names, which is about to be repeated throughout the world now, this is a time we set apart for ourselves, to reconnect with those who have at least temporarily left us, for this brief time of the memorial, or for the time it takes to sing a favorite hymn. I don't know if Jan was familiar with Sacred Harp. I know there is a hymn in here he did love. Let's sing 159. These people have died. [*reads names*]

In demonstrating several ways to approach the memorial lesson, Swanson recognized the multiplicity of experiences within the united community he constructed in his own lesson. He chose the well-known hymn on page 159, "Wondrous Love," to make Sacred Harp both accessible to and appropriate as a memorial for his friend Jan. In so doing, he also rendered Sacred Harp and his own memorial lesson more accessible for the new participants at this particular singing, who were probably more likely to know this tune than any in the book besides "New Britain" ("Amazing Grace").

When Swanson finished leading, he sat down and Suzanne Flandreau moved to the center of the square to speak for the "sick and shut-in." Flandreau was distraught as she began, and the

---

[14] Posted September 13, 1999.

catch in her voice had a visible impact on the group; several people teared up as she spoke. Here her brief talk stands as an example of the kind of lesson given by a singer who was not born into a singing family but has "become traditional" over time.

> When I first started singing in the '60s, more than thirty years ago, the memorial lesson was more a tradition than anything real. Because I didn't know any of those names. And today I put five names on this list. It becomes more and more important as the years go on. I'm going to be reading my own father's name today. I'm going to be reading the names of the people who can't be here, the people we want to think about, the people that we care about. And these people are for the most part faithful people. They're not necessarily singers, but they're people that we love and cherish. Now my father *is* a singer and if he were here he'd be booming away on the bass. He'd lead Lenox, which is his absolutely favorite song, and he would appreciate the day enormously. But he's not well now. And I don't know if he'll ever be in Chicago again. Jim read the name of a woman who was my second mother, in Mississippi. I'm going to be reading the name of my former mother-in-law today. This happens. It happens to all of us, that this lesson, every time we read it, becomes more and more important to us. Thirty years ago it was a tradition. Now it's something that really, really, really means something. I want to read the names of these faithful people, and we'll think about them as we sing 68 on the bottom [*reads names*].[15]

Flandreau used the word "tradition" in an unusual way for a Sacred Harp singer—setting it apart from something "real" that "means something." She alluded to the idea that the memorial lesson might be considered "just a tradition," in the sense of something outmoded but inoffensive, a vestige of the past. There are singers who treat some elements of Sacred Harp practice this way: one ought to tolerate the prayers, the memorial lesson, or the explicitly Christian texts to the tunes for the sake of historicity or respect for others' beliefs, but one need not engage with them on a personal level. Others have questioned whether these elements even need to be tolerated— why not eliminate prayers when hardly any local singers are believers, or rewrite texts with gender-neutral pronouns and lines about joy instead of judgment?[16] In an interview a few months after this memorial lesson, Flandreau (2000) described how

> I flamed some poor guy on the harp [Internet discussion] list once, kind of inadvertently, for saying "Why do we have to sing all these religious songs?" Well, go elsewhere. You *don't* have to, that's the whole point, you know? And I feel pretty strongly about that.

Folklorist John Bealle has observed that in the early days of Sacred Harp's spread to Northern regions, "veteran singers were alert to the various motives newcomers brought to the experience"; he cites lifelong Alabama singer Sheila Wootten, who was careful to tell a video documentarian that Sacred Harp is "not just a type of folk music" (Bealle 2001:19). Flandreau's memorial lesson conveyed this same message, drawing on the rhetorical tropes learned from three decades of memorial lessons.

---

[15] Recorded October 30, 1999.

[16] See Miller 2008:188-200 for further discussion of controversial texts and the issue of tolerance.

When I asked Flandreau if she felt there were any standard elements in a memorial lesson, she replied (2000):

> It may be like a preaching tradition. Nobody gets up and reads a memorial lesson. People who preach know what has to be in a sermon, and they get around to it all sooner or later. I think that it's that kind of thing—you know what's important in a memorial lesson. You talk about remembering the people, and you have to say something about keeping the tradition going. . . . I sort of got up and talked about the tradition itself, and I sort of did that on purpose because of the number of new singers who were there. About, you know, this may not mean anything to you now, but just wait . . . . So it's two things: remembering people, either in the aggregate or one or two exemplary people that can point to something—usually, how devoted they were to the tradition. And then you sort of sneak in the devotion to the tradition and keeping it going. So it's inspirational, too.

Here Flandreau used "tradition" in the more typical way: as a stand-in for appropriate Sacred Harp practice, informed by personal and collective history, filled with meaning, rather than the empty shell of "just a tradition." At the start of her lesson, Flandreau placed herself in the position of many members of her audience: college students who were enthusiastic about folk music, and about this music in particular, but might not understand the point of the memorial lesson, prayer, or other practices beyond knowing that they are considered "traditional." By identifying with the experience of her listeners, Flandreau drew them into her narrative and made a preemptive strike at the idea that the memorial lesson is "more a tradition than anything real." If the new singers could not fully understand the import of the memorial lesson for themselves, they might at least be able to get a sense of the meaning it held for others.

Flandreau's visible tears and the catch in her voice, the physical manifestations of her emotion, might have been as important as her words. Most memorial lessons present and inspire "a patterned display of the icons of emotion" (Tolbert 1990:102), including tears and hoarse voices. When Flandreau described her own first impressions of a Southern memorial lesson, at the first National Convention in 1980, she focused on the public weeping there (2000):

> I remember a lot of people openly crying, and so it made an impression that way, although I didn't know anybody they were talking about. . . . I'd been singing for about ten years, but only in Ann Arbor. I'd been South once before for a singing. . . . Other people were so clearly moved. Now I don't think they're *upset*. Crying isn't upset in this case. There's a lot more overt emotional response to anything religious and spiritual down South. I remember one elderly gentleman who used to cry when he prayed. . . . It's just something that, you know, anybody can do that. And even grown men can cry . . . .
>
> > I think it's a group dynamic. I think it's a group psychology thing. It's sort of the reverse of a mob mentality. If there are enough people that are moved, and sort of emotionally vibrating, then other people pick up on the vibrations. It resonates, that's it exactly. Because I know that's what happened to me at those first few Nationals, when there actually was a memorial lesson. . . . I remember it's sort of embarrassing if you're sitting there with tears running down your face, and you don't know why. I mean, why are you just crying like an idiot, you know?. . . Just because,

> you know, what's going on and why am I doing this? And then I figured out it was a sort of
> everybody in this frame of mind thing.

Tears, both those of others and one's own, are an index of emotional involvement at a singing. Singers cite tears as a mark of the power of a memorial lesson or a particular tune: "There wasn't a dry eye in the house." After giving a memorial lesson at the Midwest Convention in 2000, Georgia singer David Lee joked with me that memorial speakers could judge their success by the number of women who left the room to fix their mascara. Flandreau's observation that "even grown men can cry" is a common one.

But as in Flandreau's early experience, many new singers who find themselves in tears during a memorial lesson experience guilt or embarrassment: "Why are you just crying like an idiot?" Because she did not know the names on the memorial list and was too young to have much personal experience with death, Flandreau could not justify her tears to herself until she "figured out it was a sort of everybody in this frame of mind thing." A singer who had not reached this level of equanimity told me that she felt like she was taking inappropriate advantage of an opportunity to cry about her own troubles. When I outlined these concerns to Flandreau, she replied (2000):

> No, I think that doesn't matter. . . . I mean, lots of times I have felt as though I was not exactly
> leaving my troubles at the door. But it helps. . . . We're there as individuals, and contributing to
> something bigger than all of us.

Flandreau's use of the trope of "leaving _____ at the door," often used by singers with reference to divisive political or religious issues, provides insight into what an individual brings to the hollow square. Certain things aren't left at the door, even though they aren't publicly aired; private comfort transpires in the midst of a public ritual (Bealle 1997). Meanwhile, the cumulative experience of shared emotion during memorials and of knowing more and more of the names on memorial lists both contribute to the process of "becoming traditional."

"There'll Come A Time When You'll Know"

Some newer singers suggest that for lifelong participants—the people who are universally recognized as "traditional singers" and often considered to hold "standard Christian beliefs," as one singer put it—the memorial lesson must be a straightforward expression of grief and remembrance, without these reflexive trappings. They naturalize the grieving process of these singers and contrast it with their own self-conscious struggles. But many lifelong or longtime singers are cognizant of the complexities of the memorial lesson's functions, challenges, and potential, especially in the context of their interactions with new singers. Richard DeLong, a Georgia high-school teacher and lifelong singer who currently serves as executive secretary of the Sacred Harp Publishing Company, has often spoken about his mixed feelings as he watches seats once filled by members of Southern singing families become occupied by new singers from all over the country. For DeLong and others, it is crucial that these new singers

develop respect for traditional practices and pass them on to their home singing groups and eventually their children. Because the memorial lesson is the only time when singers may speak at any length to the class, it offers an opportunity for lifelong singers to make these points to those who will eventually succeed them.

At the 2000 All-California Convention in San Francisco, DeLong was not formally a member of the memorial committee but was specially invited to speak about his grandmother, Dollie Hudgins, who died in 1999. Most of the assembled singers were familiar with DeLong, since he had taught many singing schools in conjunction with this convention over the years, but few of them traveled to distant conventions or knew much about Southern singing families. DeLong began:

> I wish that my grandmother could have had the opportunity to come out here and sing with you, because it would have just thrilled her to death to know that Sacred Harp was being carried on way over on the West Coast. And not just carried on—it was being carried on *in the tradition*. There're some fine singers here. But more importantly, you're carrying it on, and you're trying really hard to uphold the traditions that my grandmother lived for all of her life. She went to singings when she was a little girl. And she died at 81. Last year at this convention I sang for my great-uncle Horace, who was her brother-in-law, who was 93 and started leading when he was five. Those people knew what it was about. Some of you are still trying to figure out what it's about. But keep trying. And there'll come a time when you'll know just about all of the names on the memorial list.[17]

In a few sentences, DeLong evoked the long history of Sacred Harp in his own family, acknowledged the changes in the transmission process that brought Sacred Harp to the West Coast, and suggested that all of those present could "figure out what it's about" with enough time and effort. By praising local singers for "carrying it on," DeLong subtly enjoined his listeners "to uphold the traditions that my grandmother lived for all of her life," as though this were the only legitimate option. Because he had attended the All-California Convention for years and had taught nearly all of the singing schools held in conjunction with it, DeLong was well aware that many of the singers present did not in fact regularly observe traditional Southern practice at their local singings; indeed, as Janet Herman has shown (1997), the California Sacred Harp scene was one where regional differences had been particularly resistant to outside influence. Thus DeLong needed to establish his authority as a traditional singer without alienating his listeners. His lesson offered an invitation while withholding full approval: "Some of you are still trying to figure out what it's about."

The memorial lesson is an especially good moment to reinforce traditional practice and values because its very presence at a convention already indicates respect for those values—even though its inclusion and format might be the work of a few convention officers rather than something desired by all in attendance. Including a memorial lesson in a newly established convention is one way of letting Southern traditional practices get a foot in the door. It provides a formally sanctioned opportunity for a pre-selected representative of the tradition to talk to the

---

[17] Recorded January 16, 2000.

class about traditional norms while commanding the respectful attention due to someone in mourning. At the 2000 All-California Convention, a local singer, Mary Rose O'Leary, spoke before DeLong and prepared the ground for his memorial for his grandmother, explaining to the California singers why it was their duty to remember someone who had sung on the other side of the country:

> Yesterday in the singing school Richard talked about his grandmother, who took him to Sacred Harp singings when he was four years old, and I never met Dollie Hudgins, but I'm connected to Dollie Hudgins, because she passed on a gift to Richard that Richard was generous enough to pass on to us. And I think it's our job also to pass this on.[18]

O'Leary's remarks conform to the style Suzanne Flandreau described, "remembering . . . one or two exemplary people that can point to something—usually, how devoted they were to the tradition. And then you sort of sneak in the devotion to the tradition and keeping it going." Because of her extensive connections to lifelong Southern singers and those directly influenced by them, O'Leary had an investment in DeLong's cause. The nature of the group assembled at the All-California Convention made reinforcing the value of traditional Southern practice a priority for its organizers; the memorial lesson was the perfect conduit for that message. O'Leary sketched a line of transmission that established DeLong as a keeper of the tradition and someone to whom California singers should feel indebted.

Subsequently, DeLong's obvious emotional distress during his talk helped convey his devotion to traditional practice and its transmission. His words matched the tightness in his voice at the end of his lesson, when he described how many memorial lessons his grandmother had heard for family members and said, "So when all of that starts happening, you get a little closer to Sacred Harp. And these sentiments and people, they wrap just a little tighter around your heart. And when you start knowing most of the people on the memorial list you'll know what I'm talking about." The emotion displayed in DeLong's voice, along with his expressed validation of the singing community in California, encouraged his listeners to empathize with his desire to see the tradition continue in the way his grandmother would have wished. There was no arguing with his grief.

Singers often evaluate and analyze individual renditions of songs and memorial lessons, drawing on their knowledge of the conventional elements that cue certain responses from participants. At the moment of the song or the memorial, however, each is "*framed* to be taken literally as emotional expression" (Turino 1999:239). Like crying in the square, speaking with a ravaged voice can powerfully gather the emotions of the class. Many observers have commented on how *loud* Sacred Harp singing is, and some have suggested this volume is a form of self-indulgence or self-aggrandizement (Marian-Bălaşa 2003); indeed, singers occasionally criticize over-loud singing on these grounds. But the felt impact of loud singing on the body also serves as a reminder of personal vulnerability, and of the smallness of one's own voice outside of the hollow square. In memorial lessons, a worn-out or cracking voice replicates the physical sensations of grief or illness while confirming the depth and intensity of one's Sacred Harp

---

[18] Recorded January 16, 2000.

commitments. As in Feld's Kaluli laments, the embodied performance of grief serves to "centrally display and focus the aesthetics of emotionality, and to positively value these social articulations as organized, thoughtful expressions of personal and social identities as deeply felt" (1990:257).[19]

In their lessons, O'Leary and DeLong enjoined new singers (and experienced singers who did not adhere to traditional standards) to recognize an obligation, to realize that traditional singing needed and deserved their support. DeLong's lesson placed himself and his family's tradition in a vulnerable position, and suggested that he knew something that the other singers might come to know in time if they did the right thing. Like Flandreau, DeLong preempted the idea that the memorial lesson is "just a tradition" by demonstrating its intense importance to him —borne out by the cracking voice and held-back tears of authentic feeling—and suggesting that those who did not fully share his feelings simply had to wait until their experience matched his.

"Let's Sing Them Some Traveling Music"

The United Convention met for its 96th annual session in 1999. This convention has been held in various locations in the South, mostly in Alabama; in 1990 it took place in Chicago (a watershed moment for diaspora singing). The 1999 session took place at Liberty Baptist Church in Henagar, Alabama, a beautiful rural area with powerful associations for many singers. This session marked the 40th anniversary of the seminal 1959 Alan Lomax recording of the United at Fyffe, Alabama; a recording team was present to commemorate the occasion. During one of the breaks everyone who had been present at the 1959 session gathered on the steps of the church to be photographed, and several singers made brief references to the 1959 convention before leading.[20]

When his turn came to lead, Richard DeLong—who was born some years after the 1959 convention—described the changes he had witnessed since first attending the United:

> Mr. Bowen, Don's daddy, brought me here in 1979, it was the first time I came to the United. And we got to Henagar out here, where the crossroads is, and they had a sawhorse in the middle of the road with a sign on it, and I thought "This is a *big* deal, they just put a sawhorse in the middle of the road!" [*laughter*] . . . . But the house was just as full, like it is now, there wasn't a place to sit down both Saturday and Sunday. But there wasn't a *soul* here from outside the South. And I don't mean that in any sort of negative way, I'd just like for you to know, all you visitors, what we used to have. And we are so thankful that you're here, because if you weren't, we couldn't have it. We

---

[19] See also discussions of hoarseness as an index of authentic feeling in Feld 1982, Briggs 1993, Tolbert 1990, and Urban 1988.

[20] Selections from the 1959 recording were released on *All Day Singing from "The Sacred Harp"* (Lomax 1960) and several other albums. California Sacred Harp ethnographer Janet Herman organized the 1999 recording, called *In Sweetest Union Join* (Community Music School 2000).

couldn't have it. And I wish they could all be here to see *you*. Because every one of 'em would be so proud.[21]

As in his memorial lesson in California, at the United Convention DeLong walked a line between asserting ownership of the tradition and thanking and encouraging relative newcomers in their efforts. Despite the demographic shift he observed, however, there were few inexperienced singers at the United. At urban singings like the two I have just described, passers-by often wander in, drawn by the sound. Regular singers bring friends, and people may turn up who come to a Sacred Harp singing once a year or so, when it's convenient. The location of the United precluded much casual attendance of this kind, since making the trip required a degree of commitment from most participants. Singers came from all over the country, including sizeable groups from Minnesota, Illinois, and the Northeast, but for the most part they already knew each other from other singings or previous sessions of the United.

The three members of the memorial committee were Elene Stovall of Birmingham, Marcia Johnson of Chicago, and Kelly House of Rhode Island. In addition, Mark Brown of Dutton, Alabama, was invited to lead the singing of "Beulah Land," a call-and-response hymn that is not printed in *The Sacred Harp*, and Tony Ivey of Henagar was asked to provide a prayer.[22] The choice of memorial personnel was inclusive, almost to the point of providing proportional representation for the major groups of singers present. Stovall is a lifelong Southern singer; Johnson represented the core group of Chicago singers who traveled South frequently and had been singing Sacred Harp together for about fifteen years; House was among the organizers of the Western Massachusetts Convention, an important new singing founded earlier that year. Mark Brown's rendition of "Beulah Land," with responsive harmony from the class, was an assertion of specifically local tradition; indeed, it violated the original constitution of the United Sacred Harp Musical Association, which specifies that only music printed in *The Sacred Harp* (the 1911 James revision and its descendants) should be sung at the convention.

Kelly House read the names of the dead but did not make any remarks, as is typical for the least experienced member of a memorial committee with more than two people. Then Marcia Johnson spoke:

> Ted and Melanie and I, and Judy, travel all the time together.[23] We just get in the big old car and hit the road to come down here, and on those long trips it's a good time to spend a lot of time thinking, and a lot of times I just look out the window, and something reminds me of I don't know how many trips I took in cars with my aunt, my uncle, my granddaddy, my mother, my father. And you all were raised in this kind of music, I was just raised in music. We sang on those trips, we sang by the hour, my cousins, my sister, my brother. And I remember being here, and I believe it

---

[21] Transcribed from *In Sweetest Union Join* (Community Music School 2000), recorded September 12, 1999.

[22] "Beulah Land" is a favorite of the Wootten family, a prominent singing family from the surrounding Sand Mountain area of Alabama and the subject of the documentary *Sweet is the Day: A Sacred Harp Family Portrait* (Carnes 2001).

[23] Ted Johnson is Marcia's husband; Judy and Melanie Hauff are sisters.

must have been Noah Lacy who was talking about coming here by horse and wagon, and I bet you there are people out here who remember taking trips with their family, in a horse and wagon, and then maybe in a car. I bet you that there's nobody here who hasn't made a long car trip with their family.

And you look around, and if you think when you look out the window: this one's gone, that one's gone, this one's gone, they're *gone*. Your children, some of them gone; my mama gone now; my daddy; our son; Mr. DeLong—those of you who've had what I'd call a *hard year*. Now we take these few minutes just to put that ache back in our hearts. Because we need that. Because we need to draw them back to us just for this little while. We need them. We need that comfort of them. We would not call them back to suffer. But we call them back to memory, because of the— because we need 'em. Because we need that—*hug*—And now, all of those people they just—took off on the wings of a dove, and they've taken another kind of trip, and they just kind of left us here, and we love them with all of our hearts and we miss them—intensely. And so what I'd like to do today is just sing a beautiful song. Let's sing them some traveling music. We'll sing them songs from us. I know that they can hear us. I *know* that. I want to sing page 547 ["Granville," composed by Chicago singer Judy Hauff in 1986 with a 1719 text by Isaac Watts]. This is a beautiful song. And the poetry of this song—it's just some of my favorite. I appreciate your caring enough.[24]

Johnson's lesson focused on traveling, a theme as common in Sacred Harp memorial lessons as it is in song texts. In both rhetorical traditions, mortal life is often characterized as a journey, usually a difficult one. This journey may be framed as solitary or shared with fellow strugglers. Illness and death are also identified with traveling, as part of the trip "over Jordan," the river that separates the dead from the living. The text to "Wayfaring Stranger" (457) is typical in its description of life's troubles juxtaposed with the rest, safety, and comfort of "home" after death:

> I am a poor, wayfaring stranger,
> While journ'ying through this world of woe,
> Yet there's no sickness, toil nor danger,
> In that bright world to which I go.
> I'm going there to see my Father,
> I'm going there no more to roam;
> I'm only going over Jordan,
> I'm only going over home.[25]

Other songs follow this convention but refer to travel in a group rather than as a solitary stranger:

> What poor, despised company
> Of travelers are these,

---

[24] Transcribed from *In Sweetest Union Join* (Community Music School 2000), recorded September 12, 1999.

[25] Text from Bever's *Christian Songster* (1858), music arranged by John M. Dye (1935).

> That walk in yonder narrow way,
> Along the rugged maze?[26]

> Come on, my fellow pilgrims come,
> And let us all be hast'ning home.[27]

Another kind of traveling song invokes bereavement, linking the solitary traveler and a community of friends in a narrative of departure:

> Farewell, my friends, I'm bound for Canaan,
> I'm trav'ling through the wilderness;
> Your company has been delightful,
> You, who doth leave my mind distressed.[28]

Johnson's lesson invoked all these kinds of travel: the isolation of looking out a window, the comfort derived from shared traveling, and the pain of making a farewell to loved ones who have "just kind of left us here." She made a connection between family and singing companions by juxtaposing her own childhood trips with family, her present-day trips to singings with her husband and friends, and the family trips that lifelong singers have made to singings since childhood. Johnson drew an all-inclusive "circle of the we" (Hollinger 1993) by saying "I bet you that there's nobody here who hasn't made a long car trip with their family." Then she tightened the circle by leading her friend Judy's tune "Granville," added to *The Sacred Harp* in the 1991 revision, reminding the class of how thoroughly she and her fellow Chicago singers had been integrated into the tradition.

Almost anyone can identify with the sense of isolation and loneliness expressed in "Wayfaring Stranger" and similar songs, even total newcomers to the singing community. But cumulative experience promotes identification with the "poor despised company" and "parting friend" along with the "wayfaring stranger." One aspect of this experience is not the singing itself but the real-world traveling that Johnson described: car-pooling or booking flights together is a standard part of contemporary Sacred Harp practice, a continuation of the horse-and-wagon history she cited. Much Sacred Harp "outreach" takes the form of persuading new singers to travel to a distant singing, and conversation on the trip contributes to the establishment of closer relationships among a local group of singers. Participants become bonded by traveling together, the same experience described in so many tunes.

Many singers compare singings to family reunions, and when new singers first engage with Sacred Harp emotionally it is often on these terms. A Chicago friend of mine, an accomplished singer and worldly scholar, made her first Sacred Harp trip South for the United in 1999. She left the room in tears after leading and returned to tell me "I just started thinking 'Why

---

[26] "Irwinton," 229, text anonymous (1774), music arranged by T. W. Carter (1844).

[27] "Sardis," 460, text from *Charles' Hymns and Spiritual Songs* (1803), music by Sarah Lancaster (1869).

[28] "Parting Friends (First)," 267, text uncredited, music arranged by John G. McCurry (1842).

was I always so independent and eager to get away from home? Why couldn't I just have stayed at home with my family?'" When I relate this story to more experienced singers, they identify it as part of a kind of conversion process: recognizing and assenting to the values of the Sacred Harp community while still feeling not entirely a part of that community. Marcia Johnson's memorial lesson posed a response to such feelings, invoking a broad and inclusive Sacred Harp "family."

Lessons like Johnson's show how Sacred Harp "family" relationships blend together blood or marriage ties with voluntary relationships. These Sacred Harp families resemble the "families we choose" described by Kath Weston in her work on gay kinship ideologies (1991, 1995). As Weston writes, "The same gay kinship ideologies that warn of the fragility of 'blood' ties"—owing to rejection by family members—"celebrate friendship as an enduring bond that can assume the status of kinship" (1995:91). A similar ideology deeply informs some predestinarian Christian concepts of family; predestinarians cannot assume they will be reunited with blood relatives in heaven, so "chosen families" of faith are a foretaste of the kind of family reunion they might experience in the afterlife (Patterson 1995). The Sacred Harp kinship ideologies articulated in memorial lessons resonate powerfully for singers from many backgrounds, merging the family-of-faith rhetoric some encountered in childhood with an offer of a welcoming chosen family. To borrow Weston's terms, memorial lessons that focus on an extended Sacred Harp family "recreate an authenticating vision of social ties each time they bring forward evidence to demonstrate enduring solidarity or argue that what perseveres is 'real' (if not everlasting) kinship" (1995:101).

Johnson effectively illustrated this point by talking about her own travels with family (both blood relatives and her Sacred Harp family), the travels of the many singing families represented in the room, and the journey of deceased family members whose passage to the afterlife required "some traveling music." She referred to a family that stretched across boundaries of time, geography, blood kinship, and mortality, brought together by the Sacred Harp tradition. In commemorative narratives like this one, "words are fitted with new histories as utterances become shot through with the full range of ways they have been recontextualized" (Briggs 1993:952). The words "family," "travel," and "tradition" all acquire new layers of meaning for singers.

The lessons I have described begin to demarcate the steps along the way to becoming traditional. Johnson's "traveling music" for the dead is also the music that accompanies this journey. As one singer told me in conversation, "I journeyed from 'Oh is there anyone like me?' to 'Your friendship's like a drawing band'."[29] The latter song continues, "Yet we must take the parting hand"; it is virtually always used as the closing song at Sacred Harp conventions (see the epigraph to this article above).

---

[29] "Jackson," 317b (cited earlier); "Parting Hand," 62, text by John Blain (1818), music arranged by William Walker (1835).

Unspeakable Affect: Grieving for the Failures of Language

The emotion generated by and displayed in memorial lessons raises broader questions about Sacred Harp's affective aspects. Singers attribute much of the tradition's power to the authenticity of the feeling-states it evokes—a sense of lived reality and unmediated knowledge of emotional bonds. As one lifelong singer wrote in a response to a qualitative survey I circulated in 1999, "I sing it because I love it and I love the feeling/connection I feel in my own little space when I'm singing. I generally love the other people who sing also . . . those who understand what I'm talking about here . . . but the beauty is, We, those people, hardly ever talk to one another, verbally, that is, about this feeling" (ellipses original). Thomas Turino's Peirce-based theory of musical semiotics can be productively applied to this kind of Sacred Harp experience; as Turino observes (1999:235-37), musical indices "condense great quantities and varieties of meaning— even contradictory meanings—within a single sign," and the ambiguity of the sign complex may facilitate a "semantic snowballing" of feeling.

"Snowballing" effectively models what a convention's "arranging committee" tries to accomplish as they sort through registration forms and choose the order of song leaders. It also sheds light on the frustration that singers experience when a leader disrupts that cumulative experience by talking in the square or choosing a song that does not build on its predecessors. Such a model is especially effective in accounting for the associations that accrue to individual songs over time. In a musical tradition characterized by cyclic repetition within a relatively stable repertoire, "snowballing" suggests how such accumulations are "experienced as 'real' because they are rooted, often redundantly, in one's own life experiences and, as memory, become the actual mortar of personal and social identity" (Turino 1999:229). Sacred Harp singing is characterized by long stretches of shared emotional intensity punctuated by individual efforts to assess and explain that intensity, and these explanations suggest that many singers think about musical experience in the way Turino describes.

Given singers' celebration of the affective power of collective music-making, it might seem surprising that the memorial lesson—positioned as the emotional climax of a convention— channels shared feeling through individual speech. Yet the analytical and exegetical tendencies of memorial lesson rhetoric wield considerable affective power over listeners. Turino suggests that "propositions and linguistic arguments about identity," being mediated by language, "do not provide the feeling or direct experience *of* belonging; rather they are claims and arguments *about* belonging" (241).[30] Sacred Harp memorial lessons complicate this assessment: they provide a direct experience of belonging by reflexively drawing attention to the *limits* of language, producing an intense sense of loss.

The emotional utterances that characterize memorial lessons are not simply linguistic arguments; following William Reddy (1997:327), we should be attentive to their power as "emotives," utterances that "alter the states of the speakers from whom they derive" and channel the emotional responses of listeners. Reddy's "emotives" are distinct from Austinian constatives and performatives. Like performatives, emotives "actually do things to the world" (331), but they

---

[30] Cf. Greg Urban (1988:397): "Ritual wailing is precisely not talking about feeling. That is what makes it convincing."

are unique in their capacity "to alter what they 'refer' to or what they 'represent'" (327). Emotives are therefore "instruments for directly changing, building, hiding, [and] intensifying emotions" (331). When Elene Stovall asked a group of singers to imagine future loss, calling out the names of still-living community members as though they were on the deceased list, the singers' immediate emotional response supported Reddy's suggestion that we should "attribute extensive power to the conventional emotives authorized in a given community to shape members' sense of identity and self-awareness" (333).

In a memorial lesson at Holly Springs in June of 2000, Richard DeLong provided one of the most explicit definitions of traditional singing that I have heard from a Sacred Harp singer:

> There's been some discussion as to maybe what is traditional singing. Well, just as we have a memorial in which people take time to grieve other losses in their lives, and other sadnesses, sad areas of their lives, so do we take time in a singing to sing about our lives. To sing from the heart. And when you learn to sing from the heart, and not from the voice, that's maybe when you're a traditional singer.[31]

DeLong juxtaposed talking about death with singing about life as parallel aspects of the emotional experience of traditional singing. His account of "singing from the heart" represents a common trope of memorial lessons: things can be sung that can't be said. Yet these word-based arguments, grounded in oral tradition and spoken with a grief-cracked voice, do provide "the feeling or direct experience *of* belonging." They index shared emotional intensity even as they deny the possibility of expressing that intensity in words.

Turino makes special claims for music over language, as Sacred Harp singers often do; he proposes that semantic snowballing sheds light on "why we need music" (1999:250). Without disclaiming music's affective power, I would argue that speech can also have snowballing potential, particularly when it occurs in emotionally charged ritual contexts. Memorial lessons do not simply persuade: they actually transform speakers' and listeners' feeling-states. Their orally transmitted conventional tropes, including phrases drawn from song texts and the Bible, are "vectors of alteration" (Reddy 1997:327) that account for emotional change in individuals and communities. Memorial lessons demonstrate that spoken words also have the power to condense multiple, contradictory meanings and to function as "fluid, multileveled, and highly context-dependent" (Turino 1999:236). Singers' deep understanding of song texts' multivalence helps make it possible for memorial lessons to work this way; everyone knows that diverse religious beliefs, political convictions, and cumulative singing experiences shape a given song's potential meanings, and singers are primed to locate the same multivalence in memorial lessons. Like hymn texts, particular songs, or particular styles of song-leading, memorial lessons "continually take on new layers of meaning while potentially also carrying along former associations," as Turino glosses the idea of semantic snowballing (235).

It is plain that Sacred Harp singers do "need music" to generate a felt experience of social synchrony, but singers' insistence on the importance of memorial lessons suggests that music alone is not enough, especially when the transmission of individual and collective memory is at

---

[31] Recorded June 4, 2000.

stake. Rather than postponing language-mediated thought so that "emotional and direct energetic effects can be prolonged" (Turino 1999:233), memorial lessons generate and sustain intense emotion by closely juxtaposing speech and song. Memorial speakers use spoken language to ask questions and create needs that only singing together can answer. They channel collective emotion, transmit history among members of a dispersed community, and deliberately assert the grievous inadequacy of speaking in direct contrast to the efficacy of singing. Memorial lessons open up an expressive chasm that has to be filled; standing together on the edge of that chasm provides as direct an experience of belonging as singing itself.

Refrain: Cords Around the Heart

In January of 2000, Suzanne Flandreau asked me to serve on the memorial committee for the Chicago Anniversary Singing. I initially demurred, pointing to my youth and inexperience. I had served on the memorial committee for the Young People's Singing the previous year, but had been responsible only for reading a list of names; besides, at that singing all the officers had to be under age thirty. Suzanne reminded me that I had been singing for as long as many of the people who would be present for the Chicago singing. Furthermore, she said, it might give me extra insight for my research. Ten years later, I realize this moment was an extraordinary opportunity to engage in what Della Pollock (2003:263-64) has called "a performative epistemology: a mode of knowing by doing and feeling the sensuous, concrete, vital, risky, relational, and highly contingent claims of live performance." After some thought, I agreed to be on the committee, but I asked to speak for the sick and shut-in rather than for the dead.

With the conservatism of the zealous young ethnographer who thinks she has learned the rules of her chosen tradition, I felt strongly that I was too young to give a memorial lesson. This was a sign of trouble in the transmission process, I thought—imagine someone like me being put in a position to expound to new singers on the ideals of the Sacred Harp community! I was embarrassed by the whole idea. And so I determined that at the beginning of my lesson I would emphasize my youth, so that at least people would see that I knew myself to be an inappropriate choice for the memorial committee. I decided to lead the tune "The Gospel Pool" (34t), because the text was about healing and because Richard DeLong—who was present—had once led it as part of a very moving memorial lesson.[32] Beyond that, I didn't know what I would say. This is the lesson that I gave:

> I've been asked to read the names of the sick and the shut-in. [*Reads list of names.*] I want to say
> quickly that—sometimes it's a little hard to be young at a singing. [*laughter*] It's hard because I'm
> twenty, I'm twenty years old, and a lot of you started learning Sacred Harp when you were a little
> bit older, and you have your cohort of peers around you. But I know that I'm going to have to hear
> a lot of memorial lessons. And I want to live to be an old lady, and keep singing Sacred Harp until
> I'm an old lady. But I know that during that time I'm probably going to have to see a lot of the

---

[32] John Newton's 1779 text reads, "Beside the gospel pool, / Appointed for the poor, / From time to time my helpless soul / Has waited for a cure. // But whither can I go? / There is no other pool, / Where streams of sov'reign virtue flow / To make a sinner whole." Music by Edmund Dumas (1869).

people who taught me to sing—and even some of the people that I taught to sing—go. And that's a really hard thing to think about.

This summer I gave my first memorial lesson, at the Young People's Convention, and it broke my heart there to read John Bailey's name on the list of the sick and the shut-in. And it's such a pleasure to see him back here today. And I hope we can all remember that—that the names on this list, these are people we might see again. So keep them in your hearts.

I wrote John a letter when he was sick, and he wrote back to me—I don't know if you remember what you wrote, John—he wrote "How could I tell you how precious that you could know me at all and give a hoot." And I hope that— [*laughter*; *John Bailey jokes*, "I didn't mean it."] I hope you'll remember that. It's amazing that I know all of you. I never would have known you if we weren't here singing together. I don't know where I would have run across you. So. Please sing with me on page 34, on the top.[33]

As I began my lesson, I looked around the hollow square at the people who taught me how to sing Sacred Harp, who drove me to singings, who gossiped with me and encouraged me, who gave me their sick to speak for. I saw John Bailey in particular, who had fallen ill with cancer very suddenly in 1999 and had not been expected to survive long. It was at John's home singing, the Illinois State Convention in 1997, that I had first cried at a memorial lesson, finding myself terribly moved by the song we sang: "I'm a long time traveling here below, I'm a long time traveling away from home."[34] In John's house, filled with eccentric collections and musical instruments, he and D.J. Hatfield and I had softened the sting of that song by playing it on kazoos. John's joke brought back that moment of intensely mingled humor, grief, and affection—the same feeling conveyed by his letter, which I found in the back of my book while giving my lesson.[35]

Most of the singers around the square were in their forties and fifties, and as I looked around it struck me that I would probably live to hear almost all of their names on memorial lists. When I told them "You have your cohort of peers around you," what I was thinking was that they would die together and I would still be twenty or thirty years behind. Then my eyes fell on Richard DeLong. He may have been the only lifelong singer in the room; in any case he was one of very few. He was still in his thirties and had already begun to see the deaths of the generation of singers who taught him to sing Sacred Harp. Richard knows what I'm talking about, I thought, and it made me know him better. I realized why he traveled to so many singings, why he was in Chicago that day and would be in California the next weekend: to carry out a family obligation, certainly, but also so that in twenty years he wouldn't be left alone. He and I would continue to give and listen to memorial lessons, and we would know more and more of the names that spent their prescribed year on the lists and then dropped off. But the dead would remain with us, and new singers would learn.

---

[33] Recorded January 9, 2000.

[34] "White," 288, text from *Dobell's New Selection* (1810), music by Edmund Dumas (1856).

[35] John Bailey, a long time traveling, died in 2002.

I knew then that I was not an inappropriate choice for the memorial committee, that Suzanne Flandreau had neither bent nor broken the rules of authority and transmission to put me in the center of the square. I had already begun to feel that I belonged to the tradition, that its promises, injunctions, exhortations, and questions were webbing me in and prefiguring my understanding, making me complicit with its demands. During my memorial lesson I realized that the tradition had conspired to belong to me. At the center of the square, a place where time is transformed and the song leader is transfigured, "I am a stranger here below" becomes "I belong to this band," always joined poignantly with "Farewell, vain world, I'm going home."[36] The square is the homecoming and the point of farewell, the destination for a stranger and the place to prepare for a journey back out into the world and eventually into death. Memorial lessons are displays of loss and of determination not to lose; each one demonstrates the extent of the tradition's gift and the singers' responsibilities.

Brown University

References

Appadurai 1996   Arjun Appadurai. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Bealle 1997   John Bealle. *Public Worship, Private Faith*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

Bealle 2001   _____. *Sweet is the Day: A Guide To the Film.* Liner notes for Carnes 2001.

Briggs 1993   Charles Briggs. "Personal Sentiments and Polyphonic Voices in Warao Women's Ritual Wailing: Music and Poetics in a Critical and Collective Discourse." *American Anthropologist*, 95:929-57.

Campbell 1997   Gavin James Campbell. "'Old Can Be Used Instead of New': Shape-Note Singing and the Crisis of Modernity in the New South, 1880-1920." *Journal of American Folklore*, 110:169-88.

Caraveli-Chaves 1980   Anna Caraveli-Chaves. "Bridge Between Worlds: The Greek Women's Lament as Communicative Event." *Journal of American Folklore*, 93:129-57.

Carnes 2001   *Sweet is the Day: A Sacred Harp Family Portrait.* Dir. by Jim Carnes. Alabama Folklife Association.

Community Music School 2000   Community Music School of Santa Cruz 2000. *In Sweetest Union Join: 96th Session of the United Sacred Harp Musical Association, Liberty Church,*

---

[36] These lines come from "Jackson" (317b, cited earlier) and "Ragan," 176t, text uncredited, music by W. F. Moore (1869).

Henagar, Alabama, September 11-12, 1999. CM102, distributed by CD Baby at http://cdbaby.com/cd/ushma

de Vet 2008   Thérèse de Vet. "Context and the Emerging Story: Improvised Performance in Oral and Literate Societies." *Oral Tradition*, 23:159-79. http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/23i/devet

discussions@fasola.org   To join this listserv, visit http://fasola.org/community/lists

Feld 1982   Steven Feld. *Sound and Sentiment*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Feld 1990   _____. "Wept Thoughts: The Voicing of Kaluli Memories." *Oral Tradition*, 5:241-66. http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/5ii-iii/feld

Flandreau 2000   Suzanne Flandreau. Interview with the author, January, Chicago, IL.

Giddens 1991   Anthony Giddens. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Goody 2000   Jack Goody. *The Power of the Written Tradition*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Herman 1997   Janet Lyn Herman. "Sacred Harp Singing in California: Genre, Performance, Feeling." Unpubl. Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles.

Hollinger 1993   David A. Hollinger. "How Wide the Circle of the 'We'? American Intellectuals and the Problem of the Ethnos Since World War II." *American Historical Review*, 98:317-37.

Ivy 1995   Marilyn Ivy. *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lomax 1960   Alan Lomax. *All Day Singing from "The Sacred Harp."* Prestige/International Records, 25007.

Maira 1999   Sunaina Maira. "Identity Dub: The Paradoxes of an Indian American Youth Culture." *Cultural Anthropology*, 14:29-60.

Marian-Bălaşa 2003   Marin Marian-Bălaşa. "Performing Religiousness through Joyful Noise and Playful Order: Notes on Shapenote Singing." *European Meetings in Ethnomusicology*, 10:117-76.

Marini 1983   Stephen A. Marini. "Rehearsal for Revival: Sacred Singing and the Great Awakening in America." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 50:71-91.

Marini 2003   _____. *Sacred Song in America: Religion, Music, and Public Culture*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

McGraw 1991   Hugh McGraw, ed. *The Sacred Harp, 1991 Revision*. Bremen, GA: Sacred Harp Publishing Company.

Miller 2004   Kiri Miller. "'First Sing the Notes': Oral and Written Traditions in Sacred Harp Transmission." *American Music*, 22:475-501.

Miller 2008   _____. *Traveling Home: Sacred Harp Singing and American Pluralism*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Noren 2002   Christopher Noren, ed. *September Psalms: Being a Choice Collection of the Finest Hymn-tunes, Anthems and Fuging-tunes Newly-Composed by Eminent Authors from the United States and Abroad, Together with a Selection of Historical Patriotic and Revival Songs Presented in Memory of the Victims of September 11, 2001*. Beverly, MA: self-published.

Olson 1993   Daniel V. A. Olson. "Fellowship Ties and the Transmission of Religious Identity." In *Beyond Establishment: Protestant Identity in a Post-Protestant Age*. Ed. by Jackson W. Carroll and Wade Clark Roof. Louisville, KY: Westminster/ John Knox Press. pp. 32-53.

Patterson 1995   Beverly Bush Patterson. *The Sound of the Dove: Singing in Appalachian Primitive Baptist Churches*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Pollock 2003   Della Pollock. "Oral Traditions in Performance." *Oral Tradition*, 18:263-65. http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/18ii/pollock

Propp 1984   Vladimir Propp. *Theory and History of Folklore*. Trans. by Ariadna Y. Martin and Richard P. Martin. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Ragland 2003   Cathy Ragland. "Mexican Deejays and the Transnational Space of Youth Dances in New York and New Jersey." *Ethnomusicology*, 47:338-54.

Reddy 1997   William M. Reddy. "Against Constructionism: The Historical Ethnography of Emotions." *Current Anthropology*, 38:327-51.

Sacred Harp 2009   Sacred Harp Musical Heritage Association 2009. "Sacred Harp and Shape Note Singing." http://fasola.org

Seale 1998   Clive Seale. *Constructing Death*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shelemay 1998   Kay Kaufman Shelemay. *Let Jasmine Rain Down: Song and Remembrance Among Syrian Jews*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

singings@fasola.org   To join this listserv, visit http://fasola.org/community/lists

Tolbert 1990   Elizabeth Tolbert. "Women Cry with Words: Symbolization of Affect in the Karelian Lament." *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 22:80-105.

Turino 1999   Thomas Turino. "Signs of Imagination, Identity, and Experience: A Peircean Semiotic Theory for Music." *Ethnomusicology*, 43:221-55.

Urban 1988   Greg Urban. "Ritual Wailing in Amerindian Brazil." *American Anthropologist*, 90:385-400.

Vinson 2006   Duncan Vinson. "'As Far From Secular, Operatic, Rag-Time, and Jig Melodies As Is Possible': Religion and the Resurgence of Interest in *The Sacred Harp*, 1895-1911." *Journal of American Folklore*, 119:413-43.

Warner 1993   R. Stephen Warner. "Work in Progress Toward a New Paradigm for the Sociological Study of Religion in the United States." *American Journal of Sociology*, 98:1044-93.

Weston 1991   Kath Weston. *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Weston 1995   _____. "Forever Is a Long Time: Romancing the Real in Gay Kinship Ideologies." In *Naturalizing Power: Essays in Feminist Cultural Analysis*. Ed. by Sylvia Yanagisako and Carol Delaney. New York: Routledge. pp. 87-110.

White 1980   Hayden White. "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality." *Critical Inquiry*, 7:5-27.

This page is intentionally left blank.

"Writing" and "Reference" in Ifá Divination Chants

Adélékè Adéèkó

In July 1897, Bishop C. Phillips, a leading member of the Yorùbá-speaking clergy of the Anglican Church in Nigeria, praised Rev. E. M. Lijadu's commentaries on Ifá divination stories as a bold first step towards understanding the basis of the disappointing result of evangelization in the Yorùbá missionary field. Thinking of conversion work in warfare terms, Bishop Phillips believed Lijadu's collection and commentary to be a brilliant reconnaissance (Lijadu 1898:4):

> Bí a kò bá rí ìdí ibi tí agbára òtá gbé wà, a kò lè şegun wọn. Bí àwa Kristian kò bá mọ ìdí ìsìn àwọn Kèfèrí àti àwọn Ìmàle, a kì yóò lè gbé ìhìnrere Kristi síwájú wọn lí ònà tí yóò fi ká wọn lára.

> If we do not locate the source of our enemies' strength, we cannot defeat them. If we Christians do not fathom the foundation of pagan and Islamic devotion, we will not be able to present Christ's gospel to them in its most appealing form.

The bishop also decried the unfortunate attitude that misled Christian missionaries in Yorùbá-speaking regions to forget how the mastery of pre-Christian practices helped conversion in biblical places and times.[1] For not acting early enough on pre-Christian Yorùbá religion, Bishop Phillips rebukes fellow soldiers for their intellectual arrogance and judges unconscionable their belief that they could effectively preach and convert without understanding the thought basis among the people whom they are charged with persuading about *the* Gospel (*idem*):

> Şùgbón àwa ńja ogun àti-fi ìhìnrere Kristi múlè ni ilè wa láì wá ìdí ìsìn àtọwódówó àwọn bàbá wa tí ó ní agbára tóbéè lórí àwọn Kèfèrí. Nítorí náà ni iwàásù wa kò ní agbára tó béè lórí wọn. Òmíràn nínú wọn rò pé àìmò ni ó jé kí àwa máa sọ ìsọkúsọ sí ìsìn wọn.

> We strive to plant Christ's gospel in our country without researching the very strong, albeit pagan, ancient beliefs of our fathers. For that reason our preaching produces little impact. Unknown numbers among them believe that we deride their religions because we know nothing about them.

---

[1] His examples include Paul's learning Jewish traditions under Gamaliel and his studying Greek idolatry at Tarsus. Bishop Phillips also attributes Moses' success in the Exodus to his intimate knowledge of Egyptian religions.

Perhaps the most important observation Bishop Phillips made in that short preface concerns the effect that publishing Ifá divination stories in book form would have on unbelievers (*idem*):

> Nígbà tí àwọn tí ó ńkọ́ Ifá sórí bá mọ̀ pé wọ́n lè ka Odù Ifá nínú ìwé, mo rò pé yóò ṣí wọn lórí láti
> kọ́ ìwé kíkà, àti láti fi ọ̀rọ̀ inú Bíbélì wé ti Odù Ifá. Wọn yóò sì rí èyí tí ó sàn jù fún ara wọn.

> I believe that when rote learners of Ifá stories discover that they can read the Odù in a book, they
> will seek literacy eagerly, gain the capacity to compare the Bible with Ifá stories, and discover on
> their own the merit of the superior text.

By casting Ifá stories in a relatively permanent medium, Christian missionaries would be creating a self-reflection apparatus for the literate nonbeliever with which to critically examine the spheres of thought hitherto controlled by the guild of divination priests, the *babaláwo*. Taking divination stories to be Ifá's main tool of mind control, Bishop Phillips recommended print dissemination of these narratives as a means of freeing the critical faculty of non-Christians from the shroud of secrecy (*awo*) with which Ifá priests deceived Yorùbá people through the ages. Print technology, he thought, would separate mystery (*awo*) from its curators (*babaláwo*). For Bishop Phillips, the deep secret of pre-Christian Yorùbá worship lay not in sculptured icons but in the reasoning that inspired divination stories. If the stories were converted to portable packages comparable to the Bible, the only book authored by the true God, then the theological errors of Yorùbá religion could be easily pointed out. In a palpable, scripted shape, indigenous religious thought could be quoted, disputed, and exposed.

Within Bishop Phillips' manifest desire to accelerate conversion through a literacy campaign sits a noticeable "nationalist" displeasure at the condescension of fellow missionaries who mistook the historical lack of printed scriptures among the Yorùbá as a sign of backwardness (*idem*):

> àwá fi ojú kékeré wo àwọn kèfèrí ilẹ̀ wa nítorí pé wọn kò ní ìwé. Bẹ̀ẹ̀ ni àwa mọ̀ pé ó ní iye ẹ̀kọ́ tí
> ènìyàn ńkọ́ kí a tó gbàá bí babaláwo. Èdè Ifá jinlẹ̀ gidigidi.

> We belittle the intelligence of the pagans of our country because they do not have written
> scriptures, when the situation shows that *babaláwo* training involves truly extended and rigorous
> training. Ifá discourse is very profound.

Bishop Phillips seems to insinuate that if the situation were to be considered without prejudice, the unbelievers of "our land" have authored "books" waiting to be transcribed and analyzed. Although his essay stops short of saying that Ifá stories constitute a book, my characterization in this paper of Ifá discourse as devolving around writing shares Bishop Phillips' representation of the storytelling elements of Ifá divination infrastructure as an instituted, durable signification system.[2]

---

[2] Those are the terms Jacques Derrida uses to describe general writing in *Of Grammatology* (1976).

Bishop Phillips isolated two questions that persist in academic studies of Ifá: (1) Does the divination system, especially the contents of the stories, elaborate a unified Yorùbá theological or philosophical viewpoint? and, (2) Are Ifá divination stories oracular utterances or fancy-driven poetic inventions? These questions reflect the concerns of two tendencies in Ifá studies: from the inside, professional custodians of Ifá divination stories, leaning heavily on literal assertions of the stories, claim divine origins for the narratives to warrant proclamations on the nature of all things and ideas—including ideas and thoughts about things and ideas—across time and space; from the outside, the radical polytheism of religious identification in traditional Yorùbárùbá societies encourages skeptics to suspect Ifá's exclusive arrogation of theological centrality to itself.

As Karin Barber's recent study (1990) implies, scholars make Ifá the central divinity in Yorùbá religion because they too easily accept Ifá's own elaborate self-justifications, particularly its stories about itself. Scholars and diviners speak as if the illustrative stories used in Ifá consultation are patently guileless and therefore their divine authorship ascertained. Wánde Abímbọ́lá's (1977:1) report of his informants' belief that the first-hand knowledge the divination God, Ọ̀rúnmìlà, gained by virtue of his presence at creation is the source of the disclosure system he supervises during divination, illustrates Barber's point very well. In Abímbọ́lá's accounts, Ifá's divination procedures are retrieval mechanisms that access the corpus of primordial knowledge stored in (and as) divination stories. He asserts, for example, that "Ifá was put in charge of divination because of his great wisdom which he acquired as a result of his presence by the side of the Almighty when the latter created the universe. Ifá therefore knew all the hidden secrets of the universe. Hence, his praise-name Akéréfinúṣọgbón (the small one who is full of wisdom)" (1977:1). Although he does not trust the truth claims of Ifá's self-justifying narratives, Rev. Lijadu, like Abímbọ́lá, does not question Ifá's centrality, even in the largely antagonistic first volume of his studies. Lijadu contests the theological basis of many stories, but accepts the placement of Ọ̀rúnmìlà next to the Almighty (1898:17-18):

> àwọn bàbá wa mọ̀, wọ́n sí ní ìmọ̀ náà lí èrò nígbà gbogbo, wọn kò sì ṣe tàbítàbí kí wọ́n tó jéwọ́ ìmọ̀ yìí pé Ẹni kan ńbẹ tí í ṣe Ẹlẹ́dàá ohun gbogbo, tí í ṣe Olúwa ohun gbogbo, tí ó sì ní ipa, ọlá àti agbára gbogbo, Olúwa rẹ̀ náà ni wọ́n ńpè lí Ọlọ́run Olódùmarè tàbí Ọba ọrun [. . .] Olódùmarè ti fi Ẹni kan ṣe ibìkejì ara Rẹ̀, Òun à sì máa pe Olúwa rẹ̀ sí ìmọ̀ nínú ohun gbogbo, Òun á sì máa fi ohun gbogbo hàn án, Òun sì fí i ṣe ẹlẹ́rìí ara Rẹ̀ ninu ohun gbogbo, tóbẹ́ẹ̀ tí kò sí ohun tí Olódùmarè mọ̀ tí Olúwa rẹ̀ náà kò mọ̀, kò sì sí ohun tí Olódùmarè rí tí Òun kò rí. Ẹni náà ni wọ́n ńpè ní "Ọ̀rúnmìlà, Ẹlẹ́rìí ìpín, ibìkejì Olódùmarè." Lọ́dọ̀ eni yìí nìkan ni wọ́n sì gbàgbọ́ pé ènìyàn lè gbọ́ òdodo ohùn ẹnu àti ìfẹ́ inú Olódùmarè.

> Our forefathers knew, always had the knowledge in them, and did not waiver in witnessing that there is a Being by whom all things were made, the Lord whose might, glory, and power surpass all. That Being they named as God Almighty or Heavenly King [. . .] God has by his side a second entity to whom he discloses the knowledge of all things and in whom he reposes all confidence such that everything the Almighty knows this person knows, and everything the Almighty sees, he too sees. This person is the one called "Ọ̀rúnmìlà, the witness to the allotment of destiny, second to the Almighty." This person is the only true source of Almighty God's plans.

Although professional interests could have caused the preferment of Abímbọlá's informants, the admiration of indigenous Christian missionaries like Phillips and Lijadu for the promise that Ifá stories hold for systematizing Yorùbá theology suggests that more than selfish goals are involved in the way Ifá is understood.[3]

While I do not share the prosecutorial inclination of Barber's essay, I am sympathetic to her materialist, text-oriented analysis of the incorporation mechanisms with which Ifá discourse presents—definitely not disguises—its operations as unquestionably pantheistic. I propose in this paper that Ifá divination discourse holds the attention of its purveyors because it emphasizes an objective, graphematic approach to constituting intellectual problems, methods of analysis, and means of teasing out solutions. I begin with a brief explication of the divination processes, the underlying reasoning, and the general problems of inquiry that the system raises. My ensuing analysis of the relationship of storytelling to inscriptions shows that the referential relationship between these two main elements of the Ifá divination system is the location from which practitioners derive their authority for creating narrative motifs and commentary-making. The article concludes with a discussion of how the same referential gap enables a view of time that allows divination clients to manage a coherent relationship to the past, the ostensible source of the solutions to their contemporary problems.

Writing in Ifá
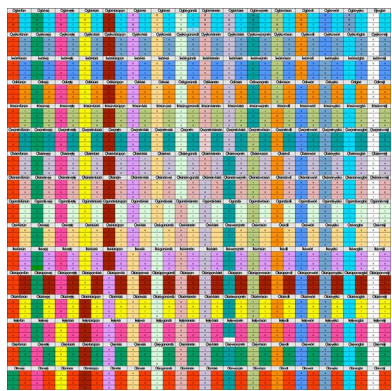
IFÁ Divination "Writing" chart (click image above for full-resolution version)

The foundation of analysis in Ifá is a systematized graphic translation of the results of the random presentation of the divination objects, among which the chain (òpèlè) and palm nuts (ikin) are the most prestigious. To divine with nuts, the priest holds sixteen ritually sanctified palm nuts in his or her palms, shakes them well, and takes out a bunch with the right hand. If two nuts remain in the left palm, the diviner makes one short vertical fingertip imprint on the fine sand spread out on the divination tray. If one nut remains, two imprints are made. If more than two or none remain, no sign is imprinted. When a chain of eight, hollowed, half divination nut shells, attached four each to two sides of a string is the preferred instrument, the divination process is a little different. The diviner holds up the string and then drops it on the small divination space in front of him or her. The presentation of each throw is transcribed on the tray. A nut that falls with its "concave inner surface upward" indicates two imprints; one that falls with the convex side up indicates one imprint. Producing readable inscriptions is obviously faster with the chain method. In either method the priest reads the imprints, top down, right side first, to identify which of the sixteen basic units of Ifá graphemes (odù ifá) is presented. Identifying the units clues the diviner as to which stories to tell to illustrate the problems revealed by the divination God, and to

---

[3] Rev. James Johnson (1899:19) declares Ifá to be "the great Oracle of the Yorùbá country."

decipher what ritual sacrifices or behavioral changes to prescribe. The casting, imprinting, and narrating process typically starts after the client has whispered his or her purpose into some tokens, which could be money, mixed up with the divination objects. The sign revealed and the illustrative stories told must bear some allegorical semblance to the problems the client wants to solve.

Virtually all Ifá scholars agree on the names, visible appearance, and order of the characters that make up the basic notation system (the graphemes): Ogbè is in the first position, Ọ̀yẹ̀kú in the second, and Òfún in the sixteenth. In practical counseling, the basic units must double to produce a diagnosis and/or prognosis. A pattern that signals Ọ̀yẹ̀kú on the right and Ogbè on the left is named Ọ̀yẹ̀kúlógbè—it is Ogbèyẹ̀kú, if the other way round—and one that shows Òfún on both sides is Òfún Méjì (Doubled Òfún).[4] The inscriptions issue from a grid that is systematically structured so that naming errors can be fixed with little effort.[5]

The foundational role of the inscription system in Ifá divination distinguishes it as a "literate" learned means of inquiry—Ifá is commonly called *alákọ̀wé*, the scribe or literate one—and not a seance or other kind of intuitive, magical, or "gifted" fortune telling. The practitioners' lengthy and rigorous training further enhances Ifá's image of honest dedication and discipline. References to the profession in everyday speech extol honesty and straightforwardness. The saying "a kìí ṣawo ká puró" ("the person sworn to the divination profession cannot lie") attests axiomatically to the diviner's truthfulness. Of course, professional practices and rituals lend the inscription system an air of mystery, if not mysticism. To the untrained observer, the link between palm nut manipulation (or string casting) and readable, visible imprints is thoroughly occultic. Nonetheless, the credit for that aura belongs largely to the consistent association of named, visibly embodied signs with oracular revelations in the discourse. Diviners gain respect and command attention because they operate as disinterested agents of a disclosure system anchored in an inscription sign system whose production is outwardly indifferent to the "writer's" time- and space-bound will. The mute sign's lack of passion, one way or the other, about the case presented and its theoretical ability to repeat consistently the same signification for all clients cannot but induce trust. The notation system, in theory and perception, removes the individual priest's influence and will from the intercourse between the client and the witness to creation, Ọ̀rúnmìlà, who inspirits Ọ̀rúnmìlà's knowledge in the presentation of the material divination instrument. The notation system, not the human diviner, arbitrates the most important steps in the discovery and disclosure processes. When diviners, including the most accomplished, attribute their acumen for making correct findings to Ifá—the formula is "Ifá ló wí béẹ̀" ("Ifá renders it thus")—I do not believe humility motivates them; they are touting the superiority of their instruments of discovery.

---

[4] For details of the inscription of process, see Bascom 1969:13-12 and 49-59; Abímbọ́lá 1977:9-11. Afolabi Epega's practitioner manual (1987:7-38) lists by name and visual illustrations all the 256 possible units in the system, from Ejiogbé to Ofúns èé.

[5] For example, an obvious typographical mistake in Abímbọ́lá 1977 records similar graphic marks for both Ìròsùn (the fifth basic unit) and Ọbàrà (the seventh). An attentive reader, without being a trained *babaláwo*, can correct the mistake simply by following the order of twos and ones. See also Bascom 1961 for a discussion of the principles that can be used to correct variations.

Lijadu's work offers evidence of the importance of "writing" to Ifá's prestige. Although his Christian calling demands that he reject Ifá as idolatry—which he does—Lijadu initiates his Ifá studies because the discourse involves a large body of etiological stories. The stories are tied to an inscription system presumed to have originated with a deity believed to have been physically present at the formation of all recognizable things. In Ifá discourse, the genealogy of human problems, after passing through the Divination God and the system of honest inscriptions instituted in his name, goes directly to the Almighty. In the second chapter of *Ifá* (1898:30), Lijadu asks, "Kínni a lè pè ní Ìfihàn-Òrò Olórun? Kí sì ni èrí tí a lè fi mò ó yàtò sí òrò míràn?" ("What is a divine revelation? And what proof distinguishes it from others?") He answers the question thus: "Òrò Olórun ni èyí tí a bá lè jérìí pé Olórun tìkára rè li ó so ó fún gbígbó tàbí tí ó ko ó sílè fún kíkà àwa ènìyàn. Léhìn èyí—Òrò Olórun ni èyí tí enikéni so, tàbí tí ó ko sílè, ìbá à se nípa àse tàbí nípa ìmísí Olórun tìkárarè" ("God's genuine revelations are the ones for which we can testify truly that he either spoke directly to us or wrote them down for us to read. God's genuine revelations could also be those spoken or written down by those directly ordered or inspired by the Almighty to do so.")

The Godhead is the original writer and speaker who directly delivers his wishes in inscribed or spoken words. He could speak to favored listeners and dictate to chosen scribes who would then send forth the words. Either way, the medium—words, writing surfaces, or the inspired individual—must be touched directly by God in order for the message it bears to be valid.

Ifá divination protocols are the closest an "oral" society could devise to fulfill the requirement of genuinely divine writing and speaking, as Lijadu conceived them. Òrúnmìlà was co-present with the Almighty at the beginning of things. The divination God, skilled in inscriptions, reduces everything the Almighty has done to 256 symbols. Òrúnmìlà does not create things. He only transcribes the Almighty's creations and designs. People trained to access Òrúnmìlà's writing and speech portray him as capable of correcting ill-fated life directions ("atórí eni tí kò sunwòn se"), not because he has possesses some mechanical re-engineering powers but because his exclusive knowledge of the transcriptions of the Godhead's intentions can offer clues to the right path. I would like to speculate that Lijadu's very close studying of Ifá as a specimen of pre-Christian Yorùbá theology is based on the prominent role of direct writing in the disclosure system. Lijadu does not condemn Ifá as a system of direct divine revelation, probably because of its close ties to a minimally mediated writing system. He rejects Ifá because its stories—and not its graphic encoding—about God's true nature, true worship, true human nature, relationship to humans—do not quite agree with Biblical tenets. Lijadu is dissatisfied with Ifá teachings on human

Divination tray. Photo by Henry Drewal, University of Wisconsin, Madison.

nature, especially regarding divine truth, the love of God and of fellow men and women, holiness, and the disinterested search for divine grace that are too lax and therefore unmeritorious in comparison to Christianity.

Reference in Ifá

Divination continues when the priest, having completed the transcription of the revealed sign and followed the set structure of the Ifá story unit (*e̩ se̩*), recites a narrative whose central motif addresses a situation similar in some respect to the predicament that the client seeks to resolve. All the stories pose a problem and a protagonist, usually in the form of an original client believed to be the person for whom the indicated story and inscription were first devised. The stories also construct at least one antagonist, a set of resolutions or an escalation, and the reaction of the entity who first addressed the problem (Abímbó̩lá 1976:43-62; Bascom 1969:120-37; O̩latunji 1984:127-34). Death (*ikú*), disease (*àrùn*), loss (*òfo̩*), curse (*èpè*), paralysis (*è̩gbà*), general misfortune (*òràn*), incarceration (*è̩wò̩n*), accidents (*è̩s̩e*), and witchcraft (*àje̩* and *os̩ó*) are the most common antagonists. These problems can afflict a person at will. One's enemies can also cause them through some diabolical machinations. Opposed to the antagonists are the dearly sought general blessings (*ire*) of wealth (*owó*), childbearing (*o̩mo̩*), good health (*àlàáfìà*), and longevity (*àìkú*). The antagonists represent forces of sickness or disease and protagonists those of health or well being. Control of the client's body and/or social existence triggers fighting between the two groups. The story unit (*e̩s̩e̩*) has no independently verifiable embodiment in that it does not attach directly to one graphematic sign. In effect, the divined inscriptions generate stories, not phonemes. Ifá writing is mythographic rather than phonocentric. To quote Derrida (1976:85), it "spells its symbols pluri-dimensionally," and its referents are "not subject to successivity, to the order of a logical time, or to the irreversible temporality of sound."

T. M. Ilesanmi's schematic analysis of Ifá inscriptions and narratives reveals a deep-seated binarism—"agbára méjì tó so ayé ró" ("the two poles on which existence subtends") (2004:132)—that Ifá diviners use to manage the "pluridimensional" significations of their writing method. According to Ilesanmi,[6] Ifá priests ascribe positive, *ire* (good, desirable, well sought), values to some elements and negative, *aburú* (bad, undesirable, abhorred), values to others. They tie these values to the temporal order of appearance: the first to appear is the most positive and the next one less so; one notation is positive and two notations infer a negative. The sixteen primary figures of the *odù* are valued according to how the imprinted signs (ones and twos) and the ordinal rank of the presented *odù* (first, second, etc.) add up. Thus Ogbè, signed with all ones (and no two), is relentlessly positive (*bé̩è̩ ni*) and Òfún, all twos (and no ones), is frighteningly negative (*bé̩è̩ kó̩*). Although these two signs are ranked first and second in the ordinal system, they are actually polar opposites in the ideational scheme (134-35):

---

6   Ilesanmi is an ordained Catholic priest and professor of Yorùbá studies at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. Three pioneering indigenous Ifá scholars, Phillips, Lijadu, and Johnson, were Anglican Church priests.

Àwọn odù méjì yìí ló ta ko ara wọn jù nínú àbùdá oníbejì bẹ́ẹ̀-ni-bẹ́ẹ̀-kó. Ọ̀kan kò ní bẹ́ẹ̀-kó rárá; èkejì kò sì ní bẹ́ẹ̀-ni olóókan. Kò sí ìgbà tí àwọn méjèèjì jọ wí ohun kan náà. Gbogbo àwọn odù yòókù ló ní bẹ́ẹ̀-ni díẹ̀, bẹ́ẹ̀-kó díẹ̀ nínú. Nínú ọ̀kan, ire le pọ̀ ju ibi lọ, nínú òmíràn, ibi le pọ̀ ju ire lọ. Wàyí o, ipò tí ibi àti ire wà ta ko ara wọn. Iye ire àti ibi kan náà ni Èdí àti Ìwòrì ní ṣùgbọ́n wọ́n fi ipò ta ko ara wọn.

These two *odù* are polar opposites in the positive and negative binary structure. One has no negative at all; the other has not one positive. At no point do the two *odù* express the same attributes. All the other *odù* signs express a little of positive and negative values. In some, positives outnumber negatives; in others, negatives outnumber positives. The positioning of the attributes might oppose each other. Èdí and Ìwòrì express equal number of positives and negatives but in different positions.

Ilesanmi constructs two very useful charts of the signs, the first of which, reproduced below, depicts the ordinal sequence. In this table, "+" represents a positive value, while "-" stands for a negative.

++++	Ogbè	1
----	Ọyẹ̀kú	2
-++-	Ìwòrì	3
+--+	Èdí	4
---+	Ọ̀bàrà	5
+---	Ọ̀kànràn	6
--++	Ìrosùn	7
++--	Ọ̀wónrín	8
-+++	Ògúndá	9
+++-	Ọ̀sá	10
+-++	Ìrẹtẹ̀	11
++-+	Òtúrá	12
-+--	Òtúrúpòn	13
--+-	Ìká	14
-+-+	Ọ̀sẹ́	15
+-+-	Ọ̀fún	16

Adapted from Ilesanmi 2004:135.

In this table, Ọ̀sẹ́ (15th) and Ọ̀fún (16th) have the same number of positive and negative attributes, but they are placed in opposite positions. Ọ̀sẹ́ opens with a negative, followed by positive, negative, positive in that order. Ọ̀fún unfolds in the inverse.

Ilesanmi argues that the assignment of values controls references in the *odù* inscriptions. He represents the "inner" oppositions of the *odù* system as adapted to the following tables:

++++	Ogbè	1
-+++	Ògúndá	3
+-++	Ìrẹtè	5
++-+	Òtúrá	7
--++	Ìrosùn	9
-+-+	Ọsẹ́	11
+--+	Èdí	13
---+	Òbàrà	15
+++-	Òsá	16
-++-	Ìwòrì	14
+-+-	Òfún	12
++--	Òwọ́nrín	10
--+-	Ìká	8
-+--	Òtúrúpọ̀n	6
+---	Òkànràn	4
----	Òyẹkú	2

Adapted from Ilesanmi 2004:136.

Ilesanmi offers no speculation on why the public, outer, ordinal ranking differs from the inner order. Nor does he say why Ifá priests do not usually speak of the underlying binary with which they operate their system. The language of his conclusion suggests, however, that they might have been protecting their guild's secret: "méjì, méjì ni Ifá ṣe ìgbékalẹ̀ èrò rẹ̀ lórí ayé; tibi-tire ló jọ ńrìn pọ̀ nínú ètò Ifá. Ìmọ̀ àbùdá oníbejì ló lè ṣí aṣọ lójú eégun Ifá" ("Ifá's central structure rests on a binary design in which positives and negatives walk hand in glove. Only the knowledge of how binary structures work can unmask Ifá") (146).

We should not forget that even the outer order that the priests present to the uninitiated is not universal. William Bascom recorded ten variations in Nigeria alone, eight in Benin and Togo, and two in Cuba. Moreover, the primary *odù* units do not carry any readable significance in practical, problem-solving divination until doubled or paired with another. This means that each consultation would involve ordering and decoding a minimum of thirty-two negative and positive values. A double Òfún, for example, would have to be arranged thus in the priest's mind; to the client, only the ordinal appearance—the two columns of ones and twos—is visible:

Òfún Meji (Doubled Òfún)			
Ordinal Appearance Based on Ones and Twos		Inner Attributes Based on Negative and Positive Values	
I (+)	I (+)	+-+-	+-+-
II (-)	II (-)	+-+-	+-+-
I (+)	I (+)	+-+-	+-+-
II (-)	II (-)	+-+-	+-+-

Ilesanmi's sketch of the foundation of reference in Ifá's mythography is stimulating and absorbing. However, there is no evidence that the temporal order implied in the sequence of positives and negatives is repeated in the narrative plots of the illustrative stories (ẹsẹ). That is, the imprinted signs do not appear to govern the story units. In order for Ilesanmi's "revelations" to work for practical criticism, we need to have an idea of how the values affect narrative sequence, the relation of plot details to the ordering of values, and so forth.

The only evidence I have seen for the possible plotting of thematic coordination with the imprinted signs in the stories occurs in the Epega and Neimark collection (1995). Stories in this volume demonstrate an inscription-governed thematic unity that one does not find in earlier published collections such as Bascom's (1969) or Abímbọ́lá's (1969, 1977). Stories gathered under the Ògúndá sign, for example, reveal judicious adjudication to be Ògún's forte. In the narratives, Ògún, the God of iron, creates (dá) the path to being (ònà ìwà), and acts as the guarantor of biological reproduction and progeny (ìṣèdá). In the same manner, the resolution of Òsá stories generally upholds the literal glossing of the root word, sá, as having to do with fleeing for refuge. Ìká narratives also support the etymology of ká in multiple references to encircling, circumscription, circumspection, reaping, bending, limiting, and so on. It is not clear to me whether the thematic unity of the Epega/Neimark stories reflects regional (Ìjèbú) variations or whether the coordination is a result of editorial selections guided by a more "literary" sensibility.

While future studies may reveal a closer relationship between the inscription details and the illustrative stories, such discovery will not diminish the importance of inscription for Ifá divination. Arriving at the right sign opens up channels of meaning-generation to diviners and clients. The client's whispering of his or her desires and concerns into the divination object brings the past of the client to the presence of the priest and the attention of the divination God's representative, the kernel or the chain, these being the main two divination instruments through which Ọ̀rúnmìlà's wishes are accessed. The inscriptions revealed by the objects present traces of the emblematic primordial events to which the divination God was a witness. The signs also instigate deliberations on what future actions the client should take. In this order of events, the generated inscriptions regulate the relation of the past, the present, and the future. The client's concerns and problems belong, like the divination God's archetypal knowledge, in the past; the priest's verbal articulation of such knowledge belongs in the present; realization of the agreed-upon solutions derivable from the present interpretation of the divine codes belongs in the future.

The sample solutions modeled in the narrative have the chance to work if the client's disposition helps the process. Actionable reference, as the story unit or as the directive resulting from it, comes after the inscription; it belongs in the future of the "letter." Things could not be otherwise because the past (the "historical" referent) of the entity I am calling the letter, that is, the imprinted sign, belongs in the experience of the deity who witnessed creation at a moment that now lies permanently outside of immediate human cognition. This process reveals that Ifá practice distinguishes voice from graph without separating them; the "letter" does not correspond to a sound but to a stand-alone problem unit. Ọ̀rúnmìlà, the original writer, does not read his text verbally; the transcribing diviner (the deity's "writesperson") who can verbalize the contents of the inscriptions does not "write." He or she invents solutions, but these are not original to the diviner.

The space and time left empty by a discontinuity between the systematic notations and the free-floating themes that they generate in stories invites commentary. In that location, "implicit significations" are teased out, "silent determinations" are made, and "obscured contents" are made manifest (Foucault 1979:145). The considerable time and intellectual expense that pioneer Yorùbá Christian missionaries devoted to that location is instructive. Believing that Ifá stories are theological as mentioned above, Lijadu found in the narratives evidence of admirable Godliness comparable with Christianity, but was exasperated by the sheer humanity of the Godhead—an entity who would not command a simple kola nut at will for his personal use and who fails to detect that one presented to him by a sacrifice carrier was picked up from a crossroads offering. Lijadu (1898:32) exclaims, "eléyà ni gbogbo ìtàn yìí" ("These stories are utterly contemptuous") because the Almighty they portray is not that mighty. "Irú Olódùmarè wo ni eyi e   jàre!" ("What a puny God this is!"), he declaims. Karin Barber, a contemporary scholar, finds, for nontheological reasons, something untoward in how "Westernized members of the Yorùbá elite," including Lijadu, monumentalized Ifá by collecting, transcribing, and annotating the narratives recited by chosen priests, and then misrepresented the texts, perhaps unwittingly, "as a fixed body of knowledge" (1990:197). The elite allow themselves to be seduced by the built-in incorporation strategies of the Ifá discourse that cast its priest as someone who espouses a storied "body of wisdom conceived of as anterior and external to his own existence" (202), independent of his or her will. The only divination element that either Lijadu (the Christian, elite monument maker) or Barber comments on critically is the Ifá story's relationship to the inscription it supports. The written notations' anteriority to the priest's will, the client's wishes, and the story structure are never questioned. I would like to think that both Lijadu's project and Barber's critique are possible because the site of commentary-making is deliberately constructed and preserved in Ifá discourse so that the initiated and the uninitiated can interact over the meaning of the fundamental inscriptions of being.

A Story of Origin

A story that one of Wándé Abímbólá's informants associated with Ìwòrì Méjì, the sign that balances ones and twos on each side of the readable inscriptions, deals with the origin of the Ifá divination system (1969:34-40). (Ìwòrì pairs twos and ones symmetrically: two each on top and at the bottom and two ones between them. To use Ilesanmi's language, polar negatives are separated by two middle positives.) This story calls attention to itself as an autobiography of its own devices.

The story begins with the names of the four priests who coordinated the original consultation, two of whom are "Apá Níí Gbókoó Tan Iná Os ó" ("The mahogany bean tree takes to the bush to kindle its wizard red fire") and "Orúrù Níí Wèwù Èjè Kalè" ("The orúrù tree dons the blood red garment from top to bottom"). The third is named "Ilé Ni Mo Tè Tèè Tè Kí Ntóó Topón" ("For a long while did I cut ordinary earth before I began to cut divination tray sand"). The fourth is "Òpè Tééré Erékè Níí Yà sí Ya Búkà Mérìndínlógún" ("The slender uphill palm tree divides into sixteen branches"). To reflect the tonal counterpoint principles that

governed the poetic performance, Abímbọ́lá breaks the names of the third and fourth diviners into two lines each:

Ilẹ̀ ni mo tẹ̀ tẹ̀ẹ̀ tẹ̀	I cut the earth for a long while
Kí ntóó tọpón;	Before cutting the divination tray sand;
Ò̀pẹ̀ tẹ́ẹ́rẹ́ erékè	The uphill slender palm tree
Níí yà sí ya búkà mẹ́rìndínlógún.	The one that divides into sixteen branches.

The four cast their objects and disclosed to Ò̀rúnmìlà that he will be barren in Ifẹ̀. But their findings were mocked.

The ensuing narrative does not specify the *odú* inscription that indicates it, and the only authority we have that this is a story fitted for Ìwòrì is the priest who narrated it to the scholar. Abímbọ́lá does not identify which of Pópóo lá Àyìnlá (of Ìkòyí, near Ògbómọ̀ṣọ́), Oyèédélé Ìṣọ̀lá (of Be e s in compound, Pààkòyí quarters, Ò̀yọ́), and Adéjàre (of Pààkòyí quarters, Ò̀yọ́) recited the story. But this cannot delay analysis. In practical terms, Ò̀rúnmìlà's four diviners completed their brief after they relatred their findings. They could not have participated in the details contained in the rest of the story: logic dictates that its collation be attributed to succeeding observers and other diviners, including Abímbọ́lá's informants.

The story of the original diviners is not a simple one. According to Abímbọ́lá, the named diviners led the first consultation session recounted in the story. He also adds that the names are either fragments of praise epithets (*oríkì*) or pseudonyms (1977:19). The names, as such, historicize the narratives and make them accounts of something that actually happened.[7] It is not hard to disagree with Abímbọ́lá: if the priests existed in time and place, succeeding diviners who acknowledge their predecessors' activities do not seem interested in identifying them as historical figures. In a less literalistic viewpoint, diviners' names that are recited formulaically at the beginning of Ifá divination stories are tale-specific and are never repeated, even when the motif of events addressed in one story appears in another. Most often, the names summarize the topic of the events, which are represented in the consultation scenario. Abímbọ́lá admits that the names could be personifications of animals or plants devised for narrative unity. This implies that the names are a story element, precisely a characterization strategy, and that they do not identify people whose lineage chants a listener can recite, or whose compound or hometown one can always locate precisely. From the beginning of the narrative, the names both hold together the activities of the coordinator(s) of an Ifá consultation and serve as a textual resource for brokering attribution. Invoking antecedence with the original priests' names helps to place the contemporary performer in a discursive line of descent.

The motif of the importance of patience for overcoming barrenness, the central theme of the Ìwòrì narrative under discussion here, permeates every facet of the story, including the names of the original diviners. The first diviner's name insinuates a paradox: the beautiful efflorescence of the hardy mahogany bean tree draws the attention of malevolent forces. Although the tough *apá* wood is very useful for building construction, its hardiness also attracts witches and wizards,

---

[7] Bascom (1969) says that the only autochthonous sections of divination stories are the names of the diviners. Other parts could be sourced from folktales, myths, legends, and so on.

who gather around it for their nightly deliberations (Abraham 1958). Ifá priests also use *apá* seeds as active ingredients in protective amulets. To name the second diviner, Abímbọ́lá's informant pairs the scarlet flowers of the formidably tall *orúrù* tree with that of the *apá* to juxtapose threat and ultimate victory. The witches' malevolence has no effect on the trees' florescence. The victory theme is also present in the colorless, but forbearing, nature given to the other diviners. In time, it seems, the person who begins cutting divination signs on noticeably coarse soil will graduate to professional-grade fine sand on the divination tray; given time, the slender palm tree located in the tough uphill landscape shall bloom into sixteen full branches.

Events narrated in the next section of the story, lines 11-34, contradict the four wise diviners' prognostication, a development that shows divination's fallibility. Ọ̀rúnmìlà, contrary to predictions, has children who became kings all over, mainly in the provinces: Alárá, Ajerò, Ọlóyẹ́, Ońtagi, and Ọlọ́wọ̀. Alákégi and Ẹlẹ́jẹ̀lúmọ̀pé assumed the thrones of two territories that are not identifiable on a contemporary map. Ọ wáràngún-àga became the leader of a diviners' guild. Further analysis of these names reveals more about the circumstances of their birth and the feelings of the parent who named them: Alárá (Companionship) colloquially translates as "I would make a companion of my child"; Ajerò (Communality) translates as "Children's causes warrant collective deliberations"; Ọlóyẹ́ (Harmattan) implies that having a child weathers the body. Others are identified by their father's professional activity at the time of the child's birth: woodcutting, wood-selling, and dye-making. According to their birth order, the older children represent the parents' youthful ambition, the middle four denote phases of material strivings for the sustenance of life, and the youngest two—Ọ wáràngún and Ọlọ́wọ̀—commemorate the accomplishments of old age. The children's names signify different stages of the life span, from the search for companionship to respectful regard. Reproduction incurs more than procreation; it entails companionship, confronting the elements, physical work, participation in the exchange of goods and services, and rest.

The next section, consisting of thirty-five lines, further expands the meaning of reproduction to include the need for creating instruments for managing contacts and sustaining relationships. These lines describe how the father of the far-flung kings and master professionals maintains his extended family under central influence by instituting an annual pilgrimage to Ifẹ̀ during the Ifá festival. On one such occasion, Ọlọ́wọ̀, the child imagined at birth as the symbol of respectful regard, shows up determined to publicly topple his authority. This person dresses up in a replica of the official outfit of Ifẹ̀'s chief diviner—then Ọ̀rúnmìlà—and refuses to pay proper homage. When asked to pay due respect, Ọlọ́wọ̀ remains adamant. The confrontation is dramatized thus:

Ó ní òun ò lè pábọrúbọyè bọ ṣíṣẹ.	He said he cannot wish him good tidings.
Ọ̀rúnmìlà ní èé ti jé?	Ọ̀rúnmìlà asked why?
Ọlọ́wọ̀ ní ìwọ Ọ̀rúnmìlà sòdùn kọ́, o sòdùn kọ́;	Ọlọ́wọ̀ said you, Ọ̀rúnmìlà, are in raffia garments;
Òun Ọlọ́wọ naa sòdùn kọ́, òun sòdùn kọ́	He the Ọlọ́wọ̀ too dons raffia garments
Ìwọ Ọ̀rúnmìlà fòsùn idẹ lọ́wọ́;	You, Ọ̀rúnmìlà, carry a brass staff of office;
Òun Ọlọ́wọ náà fòsùn idẹ lọ́wọ́	He the Ọlọ́wọ̀ too carries a brass staff of office
Ìwọ Ọ̀rúnmìlà bọ sálúbàtà idẹ;	You, Ọ̀rúnmìlà, wear brass slippers;

Òun Qlówọ náà bọ sálúbàtà idẹ	He, Qlówọ, wears brass slippers
Ìwọ Òrúnmìlà dádé,	You, Òrúnmìlà, wear a crown,
Òun Qlówọ náà dádé.	He, Qlówọ, has a crown on.
Bẹ́ẹ̀ ni wọ́n sì ní	And it is known that
Ènìkan kìí forí adé balẹ̀ fénìkan.	One crowned head does not prostrate to another.

A rival chief diviner exists now, the determined Qlówọ̀ wants to say. The angry father, probably realizing the redundancy of his presence in the reflection mounted in Qlówọ̀'s appearance, exiles himself into a tall, sixteen-branch palm tree.

It seems that Òrúnmìlà holds the key to some reproduction essentials because all motion on the cycle of life stopped after his departure: the pregnant could not deliver, the barren continued fruitless, the infirm remained bedridden, semen dried up in men, women ceased to menstruate, yams refused to grow, peas did not flower, chickens pecked at the few raindrops that fell, and goats mistook sharpened blades for yam peels and munched on them. The community sought divination help from unnamed diviners who prescribed for them what sacrifices to make and counseled them to assemble at the foot of the palm tree into which Òrúnmìlà had disappeared. As instructed, the people gathered around the tree and chanted the self-exiled priest's praise epithets, believing that they could coax him to return "home." But Òrúnmìla stayed in exile and offered sixteen palm nuts as his proxy:

Òrúnmìlà ní òun ò tún relé mọ́	Òrúnmìlà says he will never return home
Ó ní kí wọn ó tẹ́wọ́,	He asked them to open their palms,
Ó wáá fún wọn ní ikin mẹ́rìndínlógún.	And handed to them 16 palm nuts.
Ó ní bẹ́ ẹ bá délé,	He said, when you get home,
Bẹ́ ẹ bá fówóó ní,	If you desire wealth,
Ẹni tẹ́ẹ́ mọọ bi nù un.	That is the person to ask.
Bẹ́ ẹ bá délé	When you get home,
Bẹ́ ẹ bá fáyaá ní,	If you desire a wife,
Ẹni tẹ́ẹ́ mọọ bi nù un.	That is the person to ask.
Bẹ́ ẹ bá délé	When you get home,
Bẹ́ ẹ bá fọ́mọọ́ bí	If you desire children,
Ẹni tẹ́ẹ́ mọọ bi nù un.	That is the person to ask.
Ilé lẹ bá fẹ́ẹ́ kọ́ láyé,	Should you want to build a home,
Aṣọ lẹ bá fẹ́ẹ́ ní láyé,	In case you want clothes,
Ẹni tẹ́ẹ́ mọọ bi nù un.	That is the person to ask.
Ire gbogbo tẹ́ ẹ bá fẹ́ẹ́ ní láyé,	Any other comfort you might seek,
Ẹni tẹ́ẹ́ mọọ bi nù un.	That is the person to ask.
Ìgbà tí wọ́n délé,	When they got home,
Gbogbo ire náà ni wọ́n ńrí.	All the blessings became theirs.
Òrúnmìlà afèdèfèyọ̀,	Òrúnmìlà, the polyglot,

Èlààsòdè	The redeeming deity of Ìsòdè
Ifá relé Olókun kò dé mọ́.	Ifá left for Olókun's abode.
Ó léni tẹ́ ẹ bá rí,	He said whoever you see,
Ẹ ṣá mọọ pè ni baba.	Call upon him.

The presentation of one divination as a function of an antecedent divination in this story reveals a characteristic of Ifá processes to which scholars do not usually pay attention: Ifá divination sessions are a consultation of a consultation. The first divination session in the foundational divination story concerns Òrúnmìlà's engagement with the four diviners and the details of the client's success in spite of contrary oracular predictions; the second divination session describes Ìfẹ̀ people's failed attempt to bring Òrúnmìlà back from exile, a situation that arose because he could not manage his children; the third story, the one that presents the other two, is told by Abimbola's informants, probably as it was handed down to them from other diviners. The third story supplements the other two, one of which involves the birth of the discursive practice that governs all of the stories. All divination sessions involve the use of at least the first and the third types of stories, but only the first type is marked as a story because the diviner in charge of the present moment has to efface the importance of his or her own active material input. The *babaláwo*, as it were, has to spirit away his or her own presence by not marking the story of his storytelling.[8]

Ethnographic studies of Ifá will not suffice for analyzing this narrative of presence, absence, doubling, writing, appellating, conjuring, and responsiveness. The story describes the irremediably "occultic" nature of signification: the bare meaning that is embodied in what Òrúnmìlà knows—details of the allotment of destiny—has permanently disappeared. Òrúnmìlà is never coming home with us! However, life continues in the exchange of traces of the instituted codes that bear fragments of Òrúnmìlà's record. Òrúnmìlà's permanent disappearance signifies that meaning, in itself, is gone. The search for recovery launched by the Ìfẹ̀ left behind in the material world shows that continued existence revolves around the anxiety of contingency. According to this narrative, the structure of the meaning production identified with Òrúnmìlà construes being as the continuous coaxing from tokens of the unrecoverable past some useful means for approaching the present, which is in the future of that past.

That the story categorizes the reference of divination writing as material wellbeing in all its aspects (*ire gbogbo*), and more concretely as money (*owó*), spouse (*aya*), childbearing (*ọmọ*), shelter (*ilé*), and clothing (*aṣọ*) is significant. The authority (or spirit) that controls the knowledge of the distribution, use, and acquisition of these blessings, none other than the eyewitness to creation, cannot be accessed directly, but rather through its occult proxies, which in practice exist as a structure of appellation; "ẹni tẹ́ mọọ bi nù un" ("that is the person to ask"), the oracle instructs. The permanently absent Òrúnmìlà offers the palm nuts (and the inscriptions generated through them) as his principle of "being-there." Operators of the divination

---

[8] Òrúnmìlà here institutes a system of iteration: "the possibility for every mark to be repeated and still to function as a meaning mark in new contexts that are cut off entirely from the original context, the 'intention to communicate' of the original maker of the mark. That originator may be absent or dead, but the mark still functions, just as it goes on functioning after the death of its intended recipient" (Miller 2001:78).

infrastructure endeavor to ensure that the palm nuts accurately transmit the spirit's reply to their labors of inquiry.

In the calculus of material existence worked out in this story, the spirit is in permanent exile; it cannot return home. This spirit's irreversible alienation, as well as the trace forms in which it partially appears when properly invoked, a good part of which is the story unit, are essential for the procreation of life in general. The palm nuts, the remainders, constitute the "masque" of the spirit that has become un-present-able.[9] The spirit mitigates the effect of its absence with the mute palm nuts, the signs of its absent-presence. The inscripted signs transcribe patterns of the knowledge Òrúnmìlà gained as a result of his one-time presence at the time of destiny. The divination narrative connects and translates the significance of the traced-out presence (which is a sign of an irremediable absence) as stories to be interpreted for the present moment, with the collaboration of the client who is seeking insights, into a fragment of general existential difficulty.

In theory, reference in Ifá discourse approximates what Òrúnmìlà witnessed at the distribution of destiny.[10] Divination therefore involves probing into the inner reaches of essential occultation (*awo*) for the main purpose of making it yield fundamental knowledge (*ìmò*) about life. Divination hermeneutics as instituted in Ifá practices requires effort to draw plain knowledge out of the hidden or occulted. Stories are used to translate inscripted codes of Òrúnmìlà because the record of the events witnessed at the distribution of destiny cannot travel as events any more. Those events happened only once; even if Òrúnmìlà did not disappear into the palm tree, he can only relate narrativized versions of what he witnessed. Events survive beyond happenstance only in stories, or *ìtàn*.

The Ìwòrì Méjì story shows that several translations occur between the priest's transcription of the signs indicated by the nuts and the client's response to counseling. Òrúnmìlà's four priests probably recited a narrative whose contents Abímbólá's informants summarized in one line about barrenness. Òrúnmìlà's curt reaction to the diviners' conclusion indicates that while clients can follow their own will, priests are not free to do as they wish and must be guided by the inscription-story. After interpretation, priests can conclude their brief and depart, while the clients begin to exercise their intelligence and will. Òrúnmìlà laughs off his counselors and ends up inside a palm tree!

The Past and Present in Ifá Writing

Early Yorùbá Christian clergymen believed that divination priests led an "oracular cult" that made "hegemonic claims to a special relationship with the Supreme Being, with a key theme

---

[9] It should not be forgotten that the *odù* writing practice is literally operated by remainders; in the palm nut divination system, for example, only remainders express portentous inscription. I have borrowed the idea of the spectral relationship of "masque" to "spirit" from Derrida 1994.

[10] *Ipín* (literally, "allotment" or "destiny" in colloquial Yorùbá) is what Òrúnmìlà reveals through (and in) the divination process. But in practical divination terms, *ipín* is what recurs in narrativity. The divination story contains what has happened at least once in the past.

—the powerful precedent—that presents a highly refracted memory of the vanished greatness of its sacred centre" (Peel 1990:344). The pastors invested much interest in the diviners, as I observed earlier, because the latter held sway over the non-Christian population mainly through the mystique of their graphematic practice. Befriending and converting powerful local divination priests netted for the Christians not an individual pagan but a "truth regime" leader, as it were. Converting a divination priest brings the pagan mythography under the authority of a phoneticized and allegedly more democratic writing system. At least, that is what Bishop Phillips believed. The missionaries did not attack the mythography. Instead, they exploited the commentary-making space, the space between inscription and action, to discredit the divination priests as selfish charlatans who used the mystical basis of their technique to do just as they wished and mislead their clients. In the words of Rev. Lijadu (1898:66):

> Lára jíjẹ àti mímu ni olóri aájò àwọn babaláwo kulè sí; níbẹ̀ kan náà ni ti àwọn olùsìn tìkárawọn náà mọ pẹ̀lú. Síbẹ̀síbẹ̀ a wá òpòlopò ìtan asán jọ láti já àwọn ọgbẹ̀rì lí àyà tàbí láti yá wọn lórí, tàbí láti fo àwọn adéjàá lí ẹyẹ, kí wọ́n má ṣe lè ṣe ọrùn líle, ṣùgbọ́n kí wọ́n fi ohùn sí ibi tí àwọn babalawó bá fí i sí.

> Subsistence interest is the be-all and end-all of divination priests; the same goes for their followers, too. Jejune tales are gathered to either scare or enthuse the uninitiated or to mislead the inquisitive so that they will cease asking questions and agree with the priests' self-serving conclusions.

Lijadu addresses more than theological facts here. He construes the use of narratives in Ifá divination as a barefaced "presentism," that is, a system by which divination priests construct the past to suit only today's needs. The divination priest's claims for the past cannot be verified.

Karin Barber works only with post-inscription elements of the divination process, showing how Ifá discourse incorporates other discourses into its processes in order to position itself strategically as the governor of the Yorùbá intellectual universe. As noted above, Barber also does not question the consistency of the inscriptions. Her concern is with how the priests' stories use verifiable "techniques of argument" to place Ifá above all else. The strategies include "narrative positioning," that is, the unrestrained thematic range of the contents of divination stories authorizes diviners to appropriate tales from all sources, all domains, and about any topic, consign them to the past, and then retrieve the same as ideas activated by the revealed imprinted sign. Barber characterizes Ifá's "narrative positioning" in words similar to Lijadu's: "The 'moral' is always the same, whatever the origin of the story: 'Ifá knows best . . . . Do what Ifá tells you and you will prosper; disobey Ifá and disaster will ensue'" (1990:208). Another incorporation strategy that Ifá uses is "preempting time": the problems addressed in each story report an event as having taken place in the distant past, and the diviner comments on the events as if Ọ̀rúnmìlà constructed and handed down a model of future action from patterns observed in the past. The cleverest part of the presentation of Ifá's all-encompassing model, Barber says, is that the divination God himself appears as a bewildered client in many of the stories: "Ifá the deity himself appeals to a body of wisdom, encoded in precedents, which must be seen as outside his consciousness and antecedent to him. Nothing can go behind this paradox: the argument of

the precedent is arrested at that point in a permanent and unresolvable deadlock. This has the effect of enhancing the authority both of Ifá as system and as spiritual being" (209). Ifá's third main discourse-making technique is "lexical layering," or the invention "of strange names" for familiar acts and objects. For example, Ifá stories commonly refer to the mouth as "olúbóbótiribó baba ẹbọ" ("the insatiable devourer of all sacrificial offerings").

Barber evaluates Ifá stories in the way we currently think of histories as reports of past events in proportions narratively scaled to reflect how persons interacted among themselves and with their environment in verifiable, specified spaces and time. But this model of the past would apply to Ifá divination stories only if the graphic notation stage of the divination process were treated as an extraneous element with no significance at all. To refer back to the reading proposed above, Barber neglects the significance of the mythographic inscriptions that stand for the permanent barrier to our capturing past events in their "true" proportions. The commentary space in Ifá divination protocols would also have to be completely disregarded in order for the "presentism" criticism to be fully accepted. But we cannot speak about Ifá discourse or extract significance from its practices without considering "writing" and "commentary." The central axiom of Ifá practice that enjoins critical listening and acting on the client was recorded by Lijadu himself: "Bí o bá tẹ'fá tań, kí o tún 'yè rẹ tẹ̀" ("When you're done consulting Ifá, be sure to re-consult your gumption") (1898:37). A person counseled in Ifá is duty-bound to re-counsel him or herself and decide to what extent instructions and prescriptions should be followed—Òrúnmìlà mocked his diviners in the story discussed above. The self-re-counseling injunction means that every story unit gives an allegorical account of how things were and how similar they might be in the present, although not in mimetic proportions. The priest's retelling must generate a directive, evince a pledge, articulate a feeling, or change the status quo (Searle 1979), all gestures of *àtúntẹ̀* (re-imprinting, re-counseling). In other words, the divination client is not expected to make the present as it was. Even Òrúnmìlà could not perform such a feat. As records of divination sessions show, the priest and the client, voluble readers of Ifá's mute signs in the commentary space, are not absolved from the responsibility of contemplation and self-reflection. Although the solutions to the problems presented by Ifá divination clients might have been "authored" by precedence, stories told to articulate antecedent transactions are not therefore exempted from answering to genuinely new responsibilities.

Ifá narratives are not like simple, constative, or descriptive charters whose primary referential relationship is to an event, a moral goal, or the performer's other vested interests. In the divination story, convention-bound as it is, the narrator-priest, in theory, is obliged not to pursue a detectable personal interest—except that of proving to be a competent, honest broker of the revelations of destiny—in the problem addressed by the story. For this reason, I would suggest, the referential antecedence of the Ifá story is the inscription and not the event of the story, which, in theory, only the disappeared Òrúnmìlà experienced. The "letters" that signify the story do not proceed from the priest's will but from the divination instrument, that is, the palm nuts (or the chain). Ifá clients do not just seek a reading; they are best served only when the "writing" is done correctly.

How does Ifá practice actualize a theory of time and history and elaborate how the past influences (or does not influence) the present and the future? In *Ifa Divination Poetry* (1977:20),

Abímbọ́lá asserts that the divination story "is a type of 'historical' poetry." J. D. Y. Peel offers a more nuanced explanation (1984:113):

> Every poem of Ifa is an attempt to narrate, through the peculiar structure of Ifa divination poetry, things which the Ifa priest has been taught to believe actually happened in the past. By narrating these stories of the past, the Ifa priest believes that his client can then pick situations similar to his own and advise himself of the best thing to do in the light of the precedent which has been cited for him.

The Ifá system liberates clients from the tyranny of the past by giving them the chance to negotiate a change they can live with: "present practice is governed by the model of past practice and, where change *does* occur, there is a tendency to rework the past so as to make it appear that past practice has governed present practice" (113). I would emend Peel and say that the expectation that the client should act willfully upon the reports of the events presented by the diviner demonstrates that the stories constitute—and not just report—the events. The client can forestall the portentous past from repeating itself or allow it to fulfill its propitious potential. In Ifá, the fact that the past is in exile does not mean that the present stands alone. The past is not the present of the living client, who still has to make the labor of sacrifice. That sacrifices and offertories (ẹbo) made in the past do not offer protections against present and future peril represents a clear notion of how the past differs from the present. Living clients are responsible for their ẹbo , which are made not to the past but in the present for the smoothing of yet to be trodden paths. Were Ifá stories merely constatives of past events, no new narratives would be possible. But Ifá stories recount the basis of belief in Islam, explain the peculiarities of Christian beliefs, and even divine the significance of the coming of railways, all of which are historical developments that came about after the disappearance of Ọ̀rúnmìlà into the palm tree. That is why I conclude that in Ifá practice the inscription system physically marks what Peel calls the "otherness of the past" and authorizes the relative autonomy of commentary in the form of storytelling (1984:127).

Ohio State University

References

Abímbọ́lá 1969	Wánde Abímbọ́lá. *Ìjìnlẹ̀ Ohùn Ẹnu Ifa — Ápá Kejì: Àwọn Ifá Ǹláńlá*. Glasgow: William Collins.
Abímbọ́lá 1976	_____. *Ifá: An Exposition of Ifá Literary Corpus*. Ibadan: Oxford University Press.
Abímbọ́lá 1977	_____. *Ifa Divination Poetry*. New York: Nok.

Abraham 1958   R. C. Abraham. *Dictionary of Modern Yoruba*. London: University of London Press.

Austin 1962   J. L. Austin. *How to Do Things with Words*. Ed. by J. O. Urmson and Marian Sbisà. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Barber 1990   Karin Barber. "Discursive Strategies in the Texts of Ifá and in the 'Holy Book of Odù' of the African Church of Òrúnmìlà." In *Self Assertion and Brokerage: Early Cultural Nationalism in West Africa*. Ed. by P. F. De Moraes and Karin Barber. Birmingham: Center for West African Studies, University of Birmingham. pp. 196-224.

Bascom 1961   William Bascom. "Odu Ifa: The Order of the Figures of Ifa." *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Afrique Noire,* 23:676-82.

Bascom 1969   _____. *Ifa Divination: Communication Between Gods and Men in West Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Derrida 1976   Jacques Derrida. *Of Grammatology*. Trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Derrida 1994   _____. *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. Trans. by Peggy Kamuf. New York: Routledge.

Epega 1987   Afolabi A. Epega. *Ifa: The Ancient Wisdom*. New York: Imole Oluwa Institute.

Epega and Neimark 1995   _____ and Philip J. Neimark. *The Sacred Ifa Oracle*. San Francisco: Harper.

Foucault 1979   Michel Foucault. "What is an Author?" In *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*. Ed. by Josué V. Harari. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. pp. 141-60.

Ilesanmi 2004   T. M. Ilesanmi. *Yorùbá Orature and Literature: A Cultural Analysis*. Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press.

Johnson 1899   James Johnson. *Yoruba Heathenism*. Exeter: James Townsend and Son.

Lijadu 1898   E. M. Lijadu. *Ifá: Imọle Rẹ ti i Ṣe Ipilẹ Isin ni Ilẹ Yoruba*. Rpt. 1972. Ado-Ekiti: Omolayo Standard Press.

Lijadu 1908   _____. *Òrúnmìlà Nipa*. Rpt. 1972. Ado-Ekiti: Omolayo Standard Press.

Miller 2001   J. Hillis Miller. *Speech Acts in Literature*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Ọlatunji 1984   Ọlatunde Ọlatunji. *Features of Yorùbá Oral Poetry*. Ibadan: University Press.

Peel 1984   J. D. Y. Peel. "The Past in the Ijesha Present." *Man*, n.s. 19:111-32.

Peel 1990   _____. "The Pastor and the Babalawo: The Interaction of Religions in Nineteenth Century Yorubaland." *Africa*, 60:338-69.

Searle 1979   John R. Searle. *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

This page is intentionally left blank.

Orality, Literacy, Popular Culture:
An Eighteenth-Century Case Study

L. I. Davies

Although distinctive and groundbreaking in many respects, Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) is typical of eighteenth-century lexicons in its definition of "oral" as "delivered by mouth; not written" and "orally" as "by mouth; without writing." Nathan Bailey, who compiled his *Dictionarium Britannicum* in 1730 and John Ash, whose *New and Complete Dictionary of the English Language* was published in 1775, draw the same attention to the physical production of sound by the body, and to the opposition of the oral to the literate arts: "delivered by the mouth or voice," they assert, "not committed to writing." The clarity and confidence of these definitions suggests that there was, from the early part of the eighteenth century, an awareness of a conceptual difference between spoken and written language.[1] Indeed, Nicholas Hudson (1996) has argued that extended and conscious differentiation of this kind arises for the first time in this period, as the work of the numerous lexicographers, grammarians, and conjectural historians who began to investigate the origins of languages, alphabetic script, and the development of modern civilizations drew new attention to the oral dimension of language. Prior to this, although it was acknowledged that the oral and literate differed as modes of transmission, accounts of linguistic structure and development were constructed primarily with reference to written modes.

On the basis of this understanding, a series of narratives that seek to chart the contours of eighteenth-century attitudes towards these two communicative modes has been commonly accepted. The first posits that the work of enlightenment historians and antiquarians situates the relationship between oral and literate practices within a strongly progressivist account of the development of modern civilized society from primitive and barbarous origins. A series of related oppositions structures this account, cementing a connection between the character of a given culture and its primary mode of communication: orality and literacy, savagery and politeness, passion and reason, ignorance and knowledge, superstition and skepticism. The second narrative adds the coda that for a significant number of eighteenth-century thinkers, Jean Jacques Rousseau being the prime example, this trajectory was not one of progress but of decline, entailing the loss of an ideal state of natural genius, unfettered humanity, and pure

---

[1] The definitions of "oral" identified by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) as current during the eighteenth century echo this attention to the physical activity of the mouth and confirm through quotations dating from 1767 and 1775 that "oral tradition" was understood as a characteristic of "ancient" and pre-literate cultures.

orality. The third, meanwhile, observes that the bias towards the present implicit within the narrative of progress also finds expression in eighteenth-century attitudes towards so-called "popular" culture. The conflation of genuinely ancient as well as comparatively late ballads and songs within the developing vogue for antiquarian salvage and publication encourages a mapping of the progression from orality to literacy onto an opposition between what were held to be "popular" and "elite" cultures within contemporary Britain. This overlaying of attitudes is dependent on the fact that the key feature of "popular culture" was held to be its anachronistic reliance upon oral tradition and oral practices. The belief that with writing comes modernity, politeness, and rationality meant that the continued dominance of the oral within this sphere of eighteenth-century society was deemed not only primitive but also inferior, the mark of ignorance, superstition, and vulgarity. In turn, this feeds and is fed by concerns regarding social disorder, education, religious enthusiasm, and the divergent cultures of rural and urban life.

A typical example of this interpretation is offered by David Vincent who argues that "in its forms and in its means of transmission popular culture was essentially illiterate and irrational, the mirror image of the culture of polite society, which now began to look with increasing fascination on the beliefs and modes of behaviour which it assumed it had left behind" (1982:22). This metaphor of the "mirror image" encapsulates the model of direct opposition—between the primitive and civilized, the oral (illiterate) and literate, popular and elite—which, in fact, underpins each of these various but interconnected narratives. It also, however, represents precisely the kind of oversimplification that has been challenged by subsequent scholarship, and it is in this context that I intend here to re-examine it.

Building on Peter Burke's groundbreaking *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (1978), Tim Harris (1995:18) has argued that while the "popular" label has been useful in stimulating new methodological approaches, it has also encouraged the development of a "series of dichotomies: between elite and popular; patrician and plebeian; high and low; rulers and ruled; learned and unlearned; literate and illiterate; godly and ungodly." Under "critical examination," however, he argues that "many of these alleged dichotomies break down." Thus "the once common view, that popular culture was essentially oral and that a fundamental cultural fissure developed in early modern England between the literate and illiterate classes, can no longer readily be held" (18). Barry Reay (1998:55, 63) has made the same case: "Historians have not been sufficiently alert to the myriad ways in which orality suffused the world of print." He has also questioned the validity of a "simple division between elite and popular" in relation to the literature of this period. In a similar vein the historian Adam Fox (2002:5) has developed a model of "feedback" between literacy and orality and elite and popular culture that extends throughout the early modern period and beyond. Here, he says, we find forms of society "in which the three media of speech, script, and print infused and interacted with each other in a myriad of ways . . . . There was no necessary antithesis between oral and literate forms of communication and preservation; the one did not have to destroy or undermine the other."

Recent investigations of eighteenth-century balladry have on the whole been sensitive to this complex picture and have responded positively to the work of scholars such as Dave Harker, whose *Fakesong* (1985) stimulated much debate about what he terms the "manufacture concept of British folksong" during this period and its consequences for our understanding of the relationship between so-called "popular" and "elite" cultures. Steve Newman (2007:9-12), for

example, has sought to "revise recent critiques of the rise of Literature in the eighteenth century, particularly as it bears on the relationship of elite to popular culture," while the careful investigations of Dianne Dugaw (1989), Ruth Perry (2006, 2008), and Nick Groom (2006), into the composition, performance, and textual appropriation of individual ballads and songs has done much to illustrate the limitations of interpretative models that rely on simple polarities.

Though reassessment of this kind has led to a new understanding of the cultural geography of the period, it has not been extended to include the evidence regarding eighteenth-century conceptions of these ideas of oral and literate, popular and elite. We have thus not thought as fully as we might about how they were viewed and represented at the time. In this respect, works such as those of Richard Dorson (1968), Stuart Piggott (1976), Rosemary Sweet (2004), and Craig Ashley Hanson (2009), which examine the rise of antiquarianism within the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, are typical. They are immensely informative about the lives and work of the key antiquaries of the period, and their analysis of both the characteristic features of the antiquarian endeavor and of the immense variety of approaches adopted by different individuals has illuminated the complicated relationships between the antiquary and his evidence: between the standards of accuracy and proof to which he was committed and that were molded by the world of literacy and literature, and the often oral and "traditional" nature of the sources and "relics" that he sought to gather and investigate. They are not, however, always as attentive as they might be to the historical contingency of the conceptual framework that is invoked by the language of such statements as this one by Sweet (2004:339): "the vulgar superstitions and credulity that marked the popular customs and beliefs confirmed the superiority of the elite." Furthermore, the sense of continuity set up by works such as those by Harker or Dorson, which trace the origins of modern folklore studies back to their roots in the eighteenth century, compounds such inattention by discouraging attempts to question the relevance of the nuanced critical vocabulary in use today—particularly the terms "oral," "orality," "literate," and "literacy"—to this earlier historical period. Taking two antiquarian texts that deliberately aim to represent and discuss eighteenth-century "popular culture" and the oral practices and tradition contained within in it, I here aim to begin addressing these questions.

A Mirror Image?

The texts that form the basis of this case study are Henry Bourne's *Antiquitates Vulgares: Antiquities of the Common People* (1725) and a revised and extended version of the same work, compiled by the cleric and antiquary John Brand, as *Observations on Popular Antiquities* (1777). Both works are independently significant; Sweet's magisterial survey, *Antiquaries* (2004:335), argues that Bourne's text is "generally credited as being the starting point for subsequent studies of popular customs" and that Brand's "may be seen as a significant landmark in the evolution of popular customs as a distinct area of enquiry." But their particular relationship—two versions of one text, an original study that is critiqued, expanded, and altered after fifty years of change within the field of antiquarianism and in the nation more broadly—provides an additional and important dimension. Indeed, although Brand's work is both more extensive and sophisticated than that of his predecessor, it remains in many ways indebted to Bourne's initial vision. Brand

went on to be elected as Secretary to the Royal Society of Antiquaries each year from 1784 until his death in 1806, and his text, which he continued to work on throughout his life, was edited and published posthumously but very successfully by Henry Ellis (Brand 1813). In this respect, his analysis in the *Observations* is representative of the discipline as it developed during the latter part of the century. And, although the same cannot accurately be said of Bourne with respect to the start of the period—his tone is too zealous, and his concern too much with the ills of the present and not with the artifacts of the past for this to be quite true—he does, nevertheless, express opinions that others shared, which were by no means unfounded or nonsensical.

In terms of content, both texts describe and comment upon "*a few of that vast Number of* Ceremonies *and* Opinions, *which are held by the Common People*" (Bourne 1725:ix) with Brand's additions comprising further examples and contextual material, as well as new interpretations designed to "correct" Bourne. To varying degrees, both authors seek to describe contemporary "popular" practices and beliefs in relation to their historical origins, to discuss particular examples, to assess their threat to public order, and to pass judgment on their conformance with the principles of the Anglican Church. In this respect their texts can be located within a broader context of fascination with, but also hostility towards, traditional, rural, popular, and oral customs. Fears of enthusiasm and of the "mob" are widespread throughout the century, as are the residual Puritan antagonisms towards unmoderated personal behavior and vice.

During the Interregnum of 1649-60, parliamentary acts had banned the celebration of Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide (Pentecost), and a strict emphasis on the sanctity of the Sunday Sabbath replaced the celebration of Saints days and traditional festivals. Along with the closure of inns and playhouses, any pastimes held to be a threat to religious, moral, and social order, including gambling, drinking, feasting, dancing, ballad-singing, and competitive or bloodthirsty sports such as cock-fighting, were actively repressed. Although those practices were later resumed, and in some cases even embraced with renewed vigor, the vestiges of such Puritan concerns remain and indeed are repropagated in the latter half of the century by the Evangelical and Methodist movements. In Bourne and Brand, this inheritance finds its expression in the substantial attention each devotes to the behavior encouraged by public gatherings, communal activities, and supposedly licentious festivals, such as mumming, harvest celebrations, and the rituals of Christmas, Whitsun, Shrove Tuesday, and May Day.

The two texts are not, however, identical in their aims. Where Bourne's motivation for publication is primarily a desire for reform and regulation, Brand acts largely out of antiquarian curiosity and pedantry. Bourne's writing is an extension of his faith; he celebrates the triumph of English Protestantism over the evils of "popery" and heathenism, but laments the current state of the church: "alas! we are fallen into Times of such Irreligion and Prejudice," of "Indolence" and "Ignorance" and "false" belief (5). His text is intended to improve and defend public morality, order, and true religion. It is dedicated to the Mayor, ten aldermen, Sheriff, and common council of the town, and is infused with a clear sense of shared responsibility and of the need for action. In Brand, writing from a position of increased Church stability, further from both the threat of Catholicism and the legacy of puritan hostility toward it, we find little of this urgency. His antiquarian interests are instead allowed free rein, and are directed both toward the "antiquities" of the common people and the "relic" that is Bourne's extant text. The image that appears on the frontispiece of both editions of the *Observations*—a picturesque scene of a ruined church now

populated with foliage and framed by a watching cherub—captures the nature of his detached gaze. He examines, therefore, not only numerous examples beyond those offered by Bourne, but seeks also to repackage the original text in the light of new advances in antiquarian activity. "Mr Bourne" has not "done justice" to the subject, he writes: "New Lights have arisen since his Time. The English Antique has become a general and fashionable Study" (vi).

Bearing this context in mind let us, as a preliminary, consider the ways in which Bourne and Brand might be said to follow the "mirror image" model described above. Vincent qualifies his use of this metaphor in a comment on Brand. He argues that his work is grounded on "two basic assumptions": that "the popular culture under investigation was fundamentally apart from and antecedent to that which the collectors belonged; and that its central element, the oral tradition, was in decline" (1982:23). But how far does the evidence support this claim? What about Bourne's attitude?

It is certainly the case that both texts are organized around a separation of the cultural sphere of the authors from that which they describe. The education and social standing of each is established by their title pages: "Henry Bourne, M. A. Curate of the Parochial Chapel of All Saints in Newcastle upon Tyne" and "John Brand, A. B. Of Lincoln College, Oxford." Both also emphasize their literacy and wide reading, setting up a contrast between the learned authors and the supposed illiteracy and poor education of the "common people" they document. This contrast echoes the distinction drawn by Bailey, Johnson, and Ash in their dictionary definitions of "literate" and the more usual eighteenth-century form "literature," which confirm that "learning" equates in this period only to "skill in letters." Bourne and Brand of course also produce printed works, collecting customs and beliefs maintained by oral tradition and submitting them to literary and historical analysis. In so doing they rely on textual evidence and literary authorities. Bourne looks to the venerable Bede for proof of his arguments, provides footnotes in Latin, and includes at least one long quotation from Hamlet and many from Plutarch and the Bible. Brand, whose own personal library was vast, boasts of the wide variety of historical and literary texts he has consulted: "I have gleaned Passages that seemed to throw Light upon the Subject, from a great Variety of Volumes, and those written too in several Languages" (vi).[2]

The elision of the historical primitive and the contemporary vulgar is also suggested by the language each author chooses for their title: "Antiquities of the Common People" and "Popular Antiquities." Moreover, each deliberately frames his investigation of living beliefs, customs, and practices in antiquarian terms. They are represented as a set of historical artifacts, as objects fit to fill a cabinet of curiosities or a museum. Bourne describes May Day, among other examples, as "the Relick of an ancient Custom" (201), and he aims to "wipe off therefore the Dust they [popular customs] have contracted, to clear them of Superstition, and make known their End and Design" (x). In this way the beliefs and practices that the texts describe are characterized as those of a rural, impolite, and ill-educated culture, whose vulgarity represents their status as the anachronistic remains of an earlier age of barbarity. Bourne writes: "It is usual, in Country Places and Villages, where the Politeness of the Age hath made no great Conquest, to observe some particular Times with some Ceremonies that were customary in the Days of our Fore-Fathers" (115).

---

[2] The catalogue of Brand's library lists more than 10,000 volumes (Brandiana 1807).

   Within the representation of these "common people," literate prejudice against oral modes, educated prejudice against supposed ignorance, and social prejudice against a lower class are brought together. At the heart of this attitude is a discursive framework that operates far beyond these two texts and is characterized by a hostility towards customs and beliefs that are seen to be unverifiable, irrational, and perpetuated by superstition and incredulity. In their tracing of the roots of these customs and beliefs, both authors point out the logical inconsistencies within these practices, revealing the irrationality of their continued acceptance as a primary weakness of popular culture carried through oral tradition. For example, in the case of fairies, Bourne argues that their existence is just "an old fabulous Story that has been handed down even to our Days from the Times of Heathenism" (83). May Day, similarly, is "the relick of an ancient Custom among the Heathen" that is now upheld by the "British common people" (203-04). He also associates supernatural stories specifically with rural tale-telling: "nothing is commoner in Country Places, than for a whole Family in a Winter's Evening, to sit round the Fire, and tell Stories of Apparitions and Ghosts" (76). "Tales of haunted Houses" abound, he says: "Stories of this kind are infinite, and there are few villages which have not either had such a House in it, or near it" (41).

   This attitude towards "fabulous" stories manifests itself early in the century through John Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1721:205). He articulates in that work an anxiety about the potentially damaging influence of old maids and nurses—conventionally understood not only as incorrigible gossips, but also as the central figures within the oral transmission of popular nursery rhymes, folk tales, and customary proverbs—over their socially superior charges. Locke warns that "the Examples of the Servants" are "the most dangerous of all" and advises that the young should be protected from their influence (*idem*):

> always whilst he is young, be sure to preserve his tender mind from all impressions and notions of spirits and goblins, or any fearful apprehensions in the dark. Thus he will be in danger from the indiscretion of servants, whose usual method is to awe children, and keep them in subjection, by telling them of raw-head and bloody-bones, and such other names as carry with them the ideas of something terrible and hurtful, which they have reason to be afraid of when alone, especially in the dark. This must be carefully prevented.

He also ascribes his own fear of the dark to the tales related to him by his nurse, and this anecdote is then repeated in *The Spectator,* when Joseph Addison discusses "legends and fables, antiquated romances, and the traditions of nurses and old women" (1715:vi, 127). Here he foregrounds their power to "bring up into our memory the stories we have heard in our childhood, and favour those secret terrors and apprehensions to which the mind of man is naturally subject" (*idem*). Bourne directly references both Locke and Addison when he speculates upon the likelihood of lasting damage being caused by this kind of exposure to wild tales: "I am indeed very inclinable to believe, that these legendary Stories of Nurses and old Women, are the occasion of much greater Fears, than People without them, would generally have of these Things" (87). Brand appends a quotation from Horace (*Ep*. 2.2.208-09) to his title page that testifies to the same attitude:

> Somnia, terrores magicos, miracula, sagas
> Nocturnos lemures, portentaque.

Thus for both authors "Dreams, magic terrors, spells of mighty power, / Witches, and ghosts who rove at midnight hour" are emblematic of the dangerous irrationality and heathen superstition at the heart of the popular culture they set out to examine.

As Vincent points out, however, there is another dimension to this fearful fascination with superstition and the oral tales that were believed to encourage and sustain it: "Throughout the eighteenth century, Catholicism remained synonymous with the popular culture of the common person, recalcitrantly immune to the edifying powers of print and depressingly prone to superstition and relic worship" (1982:42). A concatenation of this kind does manifest itself in both texts. The Catholic Church is, in Bourne's opinion, as much to blame for superstitious beliefs as are any heathen ancestors (84): "In the benighted Ages of Popery, when Hobgoblins and Sprights were in every City and Town and Village, by every Water and in every Wood . . . . But when that Cloud was dispell'd, and the Day sprung up, those spirits which wandered in the Night of Ignorance and Error, did really vanish at the Dawn of Truth and the Light of Knowledge." Although Brand is more cautious about tracing absolute origins, he nevertheless adopts a similar stance: the "popular Notions and vulgar Ceremonies in our Nation" found "their first Direction from the Times when Popery was an established Religion," and were "sent over from Rome, with Bills, Indulgences, and other Baubles" (v). He casts superstitions explicitly as the "inventions of indolent Monks" who, out of boredom, devised "silly and wicked Opinions, to keep the World in Awe and Ignorance" (xi-xii). This connection to Catholicism reinforces the association of popular custom, oral practices, and oral tradition with a dark past, with incredulity, and with the absence of enlightenment reason, but does so through a specifically theological interpretation of "oral tradition." The term is first used by Bishop Joseph Hall (1628:167) in a defense of the Anglican Church against Catholicism; where the Protestant position is one of *Sola Scriptura*, the Catholic doctrine of apostolic succession ensures that oral pronouncements from within the church are directly tied to the word of God, and thus are of equal or even superior authority to the written word. By the invocation of this doctrine, therefore, various forms of incredulity and irrationality are brought into alignment: the failure of the Catholic church to interrogate its heathen influences and to understand the potential for corruption and fallibility within the mechanism of oral tradition; the naiveté of faithful believers who accept this oral authority and follow the wider practices of the Catholic Church, all of which are characterized as superstitious; and finally, the foolishness of those "common people" who, although not Catholic, nevertheless maintain and perpetuate a set of customs and beliefs that are oral, antiquated, irrational, and counter to the prevailing culture of Protestantism and print.

There is, therefore, some evidence to support the conclusion that in eighteenth-century thought popular culture and its associated oral dimension were directly opposed to, or a mirror image of, an elite culture held to be urban, polite, educated, rational, and literate. Equally, the suggestion made by Vincent that this popular culture and the oral tradition at its heart were viewed as the relics of a world that had been "left behind" (1982:22) receives some corroboration. As I have suggested, however, these interpretations are by no means beyond challenge.

Beyond Opposition and Reflection?

The first indication of a weakness within these two conclusions arises from their resistance to reconciliation. The spatial equivalence and temporal simultaneity suggested by the metaphor of reflection does not sit comfortably with the linearity and succession implicit in the model of historical progression; they suggest different conceptions both of the individual status of each sphere and of the relationship between them. Furthermore, a consideration of the structure of this mirror image metaphor reveals that although it illustrates more than one relation, none receives corroboration in the texts under examination.

One way to think about a mirror image would be to argue that it describes a relationship of exact symmetry but direct inversion: two cultures that are equal in size and shape but that are comprised of opposite materials. This clearly is not the picture that emerges from these texts. It is true that Brand's approach is subtler than that of Bourne, but neither is free from an essential bias. The culture of the "common people" is not considered in terms equal to that of the elite. Their customs and beliefs are associated with ignorance, superstition, and the primitive, and their orality is commonly depicted as simply the absence of literacy. Of course it is this negative definition that generates the concept of *Antiquitates Vulgares* in the first place, but the representation of popular beliefs and practices as the relics of an earlier stage in the development of polite society unavoidably pushes the reflection (popular culture) out of alignment with the object before the mirror (elite culture). It is not merely that the mirror is small and the reflection is diminutive, but that the reflection is held to have preceded politeness and print both in time and in the progressive stages of man's development. Thus the sense that popular culture is anachronistic, the remnant of an "antecedent" stage out of which modern culture grew, makes it impossible to understand the relation between them as one of direct opposition.

What about reflection? Should the mirror image metaphor instead be understood in terms of a tangible object exerting a genuine presence in front of the mirror and at the same time creating a weaker reflection or illusion, of no real substance or independent existence? Perhaps. The arrangement of Bourne and, to a greater extent, Brand's texts around the activities of salvage and judgment situates popular culture in the past, or as merely a surviving relic from a lost age, and thereby denies it contemporary self-governance. Similarly, the creation of a textual collection asserts the inadequacy of oral tradition as a means to transmit and preserve its customs and beliefs. In this way, one might say that both this popular culture and its central oral mode are tied to the so-called elite culture from whose perspective both men are writing, and indeed that the reflection is the weaker of the two.

But on the other hand, the evidence also suggests that Bourne and Brand do recognize the power held by the "common people" and thus that they attend to something that a mirror image model renders impossible: that the reflection can demonstrably influence the society in front of the mirror. We have seen how Bourne's text responds emphatically to the perceived threat posed by the vulgar and their customary beliefs and practices, and although it is true that this is ameliorated somewhat by Brand's edition, it is a concern of which he remains conscious. Both texts associate threats to public order with the gathering of large groups during popular festivals such as May Day and harvest, and this anxiety is then fanned by their belief in the supposed irrationality and immoderation of the "common people." This attitude is best exemplified in the

accounts each offers of the ancient practice of mumming. Bourne describes it as the "changing of Clothes between Men and Women," followed by a procession "from one Neighbour's House to another," and accompanied by "dancing and singing." He traces it back to an ancient Saturnalia festival, and wishes that it be "laid aside, as it is the Occasion of much Uncleanness and Debauchery" (142-47). Brand, meanwhile, although less concerned about sinfulness, nevertheless appends a long description of a mumming ceremony in 1377 involving one hundred and thirty citizens, and another in which Henry IV himself participated (196-98). In both the anarchic overtones are clear. The exchanging of clothes between the sexes is a conventional symbol of boundary transgression, as is the invocation of the Roman festival of Saturnalia, and in their scale, spontaneity, and composition (even the king himself parades through the streets in costume) these instances of mumming exert a demonstrable threat not only to public order but to the authority that upholds it.

From this perspective the process of inscription undertaken by our two authors appears defensive, as the extension of a literate "public" authority over a culture that threatens the prevailing order. Daniel Woolf (1988:37) identifies oral tradition as a form of "masterless history" and texts such as Bourne's and Brand's can be seen as attempts to gain mastery over this history, to anatomize and to explain it until, laid bare, it becomes innocuous. Thus the collection and judgment of oral practices, and oral tradition itself, within the confines of a printed text can be seen as the removal of the element of live spectacle, and hence of the possibility of threatening disorder. Once inscribed, the tradition is decontextualized and stripped of the authority that arises from performance and transmission, where the audience or participants do not simply peruse a book, but where their listening and activity embodies and perpetuates the tradition that facilitates their entertainment.

Maintaining the mirror image metaphor in the face of these considerations is thus not viable. Neither opposition nor reflection adequately captures what is at work in these texts. Where Bourne's attitude, however, can primarily be characterized by its foregrounding of the threat posed to his Anglican faith, Brand's revisions are more than antiquarian in their motivation. By attending to this difference, to the additional complexity of Brand's attitude towards the culture of the "common people," it becomes possible to see the implications of this reassessment, both for our understanding of the eighteenth century and of our own research practice.

The Popular, the People, the Public?

The distinctive feature of Brand's work is its engagement with contemporary politics. He proclaims in his preface that (vii, ix):

> Pride, which, independent of the Idea arising from the Necessity of civil Polity, has portioned out the human Genus into such a variety of different and subordinate Species, must be compelled to own, that the lowest of these derives itself from an Origin, common to it with the highest of the Kind . . . . Nothing can be foreign to our Enquiry, which concerns the smallest of the Vulgar; of those little ones, who occupy the lowest Place in the political Arrangement of human Beings.

This attention to the "Vulgar" and their "Place" within the political organization of eighteenth-century society not only augments the sense of a cultural hierarchy that has already been observed, but extends the list of characteristics that the "common people" were depicted as *not* possessing to include property and suffrage. In the context of a pressing contemporary debate about the decline in public spirit and national pride, it also signals Brand's engagement with the question of who or what constitutes this "public" and this "nation." By the time of his revised edition many were arguing that political change was necessary to tackle corruption and restore virtue, and the idea that the public spirit had weakened, leaving the nation under threat from foreign attack and its liberty in peril, was a central Country tenet. In addition to an increasing fear of the French, there was moreover a general consciousness of the damage that had been done by the progress of the Pretender's army, and of a national failure to demonstrate a sufficient spirit of pride and resistance.

Luxury, as a form of idleness, selfishness, and effeminacy, was cited as a primary reason for this weakness. It was associated with a corrupt government and an excessive concern for refinement and the pursuit of wealth among the higher classes. But at the same time another manifestation of luxury was believed to lead to the crimes of the common people, the fear of whose criminality and disorder was prevalent among polite society. J. A. W. Gunn (1983:96-130) defines this alternative form—"the luxury of the poor"—as "any consumption or activity of this class not connected to their work." Bob Harris (2002:288) describes the situation as one in which it "was widely believed that the roots of criminal behaviour and activity were idleness or an inappropriate addiction to pleasure amongst the lower orders." This is certainly the opinion of the Parliamentary Committee on Felonies, to whose evidence Harris turns. Appointed in February of 1751, it considers the cause of crime to be the "habit of idleness, in which the lower People have been but bred from their Youth" (*idem*).

A key contribution was made to the luxury debate by the cleric, author, and moralist John Brown's *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of our Time* (1757:93). Here, in the aftermath of the loss of Menorca to the French at the start of the Seven Years War, he asserts that it is because of an obsession with the refinement of manners, that the "Character of our boasted national Bravery" is threatened. The "spirit of Liberty," he argues, is "struggling against the Manners and Principles," as it once did against tyrants. It has become common, he claims, for a gentleman to pay to defend his country against the French but to refuse to fight: "it cannot be amiss to observe, that a *little* of the active *Spirit* of *Courage* would do well, in order to *give Play* to this boasted *Engine*, which otherwise may sink into a *dead* and *unactive Mass*" (18). In his view—one that brought him commercial success but little political advancement—this weakness of the public spirit is the responsibility of the elite because the vulgar are unthinking and incapable of self-determination or action (25):

> [The] Manners and Principles of those who *lead*, not of those who *are led*; of those who *govern*, not of those who *are governed*; of those, in short, who *make* Laws or *execute* them, will ever determine the Strength or Weakness, and therefore the Continuance or Dissolution of a State . . . for the blind Force or Weight of an ungoverned Multitude can have no steady nor rational Effect, unless some *leading Mind* rouse it into Action, and *point* it to it's proper *End*; without this, it is either a *brute* and random *Bolt*, or a *lifeless Ball* sleeping in the *Cannon*: It depends on some superior *Intelligence*, to give it both *Impulse* and *Direction*.

This attitude proves a useful counterpoint to that of our antiquarian author. Whereas Brown dismisses the common people as merely "lifeless" and "brute," a "blind Force or Weight" to be directed, and does not cite their behavior as a source of luxury, Brand includes them in his estimation of the public spirit and national pride (v-vi):

> The Common People, confined by daily Labour, seem to require their proper Intervals of Relaxation; perhaps it is of the highest political Utility to encourage innocent Sports and Games among them. The Revival of many of these, would, I think, be highly pertinent at this particular Season, when the general Spread of Luxury and Dissipation threaten more than at any preceding Period to extinguish the Character of our boasted national Bravery.

He claims that it would be politically astute to encourage, rather than condemn, periods of "Relaxation" involving "Sports and Games" for the "Common People." In contrast to the deleterious effects of "Luxury and Dissipation," it is implied that these interludes of active but simple diversion would bolster "national Bravery."[3]

This proposal, unlike Brown's, seems to afford the "Common People" a degree of humanity, influence, and responsibility, and it does not assume that their lack of property and hence "interest" (62) precludes their contribution to the state of the nation. But while he understands their value to reside in more than mere unthinking force, the scheme is deliberately limited. Its utility, Brand claims, is strictly "political" (62) and the diversions he suggests would be carefully controlled. He does not intend that all popular entertainments should be revived for this purpose, and the "innocent Sports and Games" he does put forward are isolated and disconnected from tradition and history. His role as the author of the *Observations* affords him critical distance, and as a potential savior or abolisher of long-held customs and beliefs this position is one of power. He surveys the scene of popular culture, picking those practices that seem harmless and potentially useful in rectifying the slippage towards the artifice and effeminacy of luxury, and discarding the rest.

An attitude of this kind, which favors "certain genres and contents over others" and deeming some beliefs or activities to be "authentic, genuine, trustworthy, or legitimate" while necessarily rejecting others, has been described by Susan Stewart (1991:105) and Regina Bendix (1997:48) as the "artifactualization of expressive culture." Brand's proposal certainly engages with this process, but it also shares an affinity with the work of other antiquaries such as Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), or later William Motherwell's *Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern* (1827), which encouraged a revival of interest in traditional ballads and songs, yet did so through a careful process of collection, correction, and textualization—what Alfred B. Friedman (1961:9) describes as "the translation of the genre from an active life on the popular level to a 'museum life' on the sophisticated level." It is within this context that James Macpherson's Ossian poems were able to generate such controversy and interest. As the title of his first publication—*Fragments of Ancient Poetry collected in the highlands of Scotland and translated from the Gallic or Erse Language* (1760)—suggests, Macpherson tapped into an

---

[3] Brand is not unique in this respect. Popular entertainments and holidays were promoted during the seventeenth century, and fears of their insurrectionary potential allayed, through the publication of James VI's *Basilikon Doron* (1599) and its later extension and reissue under Charles I as the *Book of Sports* (1618). A similar suggestion is also made contemporaneously by Adam Smith (1776:ii, 384-85).

existing fascination with the oral culture of ancient peoples. What he also traded on, however, was the expectation encouraged by scrupulously edited, "amended," and "purified" publications such as Percy's *Reliques*, namely that ancient songs were not barbarous or rude in the way that might have been expected, but rather were compatible with eighteenth-century taste. The crucial factor in his success, as Fiona Stafford (1994) and Adam Potkay (1992) have so convincingly shown, was the way in which Macpherson managed to both separate Ossian from the present day on account of his antiquity, pure orality, and emotional intensity, and also to connect him to it, not only by the production of a supposedly "genuine" and "original" manuscript that satisfied the antiquarian criterion of verifiable evidence, but also through the poetic description of an invented culture that was miraculously both primitive and entirely in tune with eighteenth-century ideas of sensibility, honorable virtue, and refined manners.[4]

The practical viability of the plan to revive selected "sports and games" is borne out, to a degree, by the deliberate reinstatement after 1660 of the traditional customs and festivities banned by the Puritans, such as the singing of Christmas carols and maypole dancing, and indeed also by the vogue for traditional songs, dancing, and in Scotland bagpipes, which followed the publication of songbooks and collections such as Allan Ramsay's *Tea-Table Miscellany* (1724-47).[5] Brand suggests, however, an even more deliberate process of limited, artificial revival. The "Sports and Games" he recommends would be imposed from above, rather than developing from within the group, and would be carefully policed. His concern is not with aesthetic standards or with ideas of national identity, but rather with balancing the potential usefulness of a contented people against the potential for disorder inherent in communal activities and gatherings. In this respect Brand's view of the role of "sports and games" differs in a significant respect from the festival forms examined by Mikhail Bakhtin (1968:255), who describes a situation in which the value and utility of the festival mode is derived from its location "outside of and contrary to all existing forms of coercive socioeconomic and political activity, which is suspended for the time of the festivity." Brand, by contrast, deliberately seeks to limit the festive element of his "Sports and Games" to only one cultural sub-group, and he intends rather to strengthen prevailing social norms—in particular the "boasted National Character"—than to facilitate even their temporary suspension.

E. P. Thompson (1991:50) has argued that during the course of the eighteenth century "the Church lost command over the "leisure" of the poor, their feasts and festivals," and in this context these proposals would seem to be attempts to regain for the "Public Authority" of the "State" what had previously been under the control of the Church. In Brand's work an authority and power of this kind is attributed first to the Catholic Church but also to the influence of its superstitious legacy. The "Holy Church" is described as "fabricating" and "imposing" on "her servile Devotees" a "Yoke," and the childish rites, pageants, and ceremonies of the "Romish Calendars" are thus "Shackles" (vi-vii). Those who continue to believe in such superstitions are similarly captive. Brand remarks, for example, in reference to an essay on popular customs by Addison in *The Spectator*, that "No Bondage seems so dreadful as that of Superstition: It hath

---

[4] For further details of the Ossian debate, see Gaskill and Stafford 1998 and Moore 2003.

[5] The first *Tea-Table Miscellany* comprised 185 pages and was published in 1724, but by 1794 it had been expanded to 430 pages and had reached its nineteenth edition.

ever imposed the most abject kind of Slavery" (96).[6]

However, as John Mullan and Christopher Reid (2000:13) have pointed out, the relationship between the state, the Anglican Church, its clergy, and the "common" parishioners is in fact more complex. On the one hand, clergymen stood for a church that places its faith in the biblical text, and as respected members of a community and official representatives of a confessional state they possess "Public Authority." Yet on the other hand, and this was particularly true in smaller or more rural communities, "they were also viewed as the custodians of local memory and traditions which still centered on the parish church, a role expressed in their participation in calendar customs and communal festivities" (*idem*). This ambiguous role is significant in itself, testifying as it does to the way in which these individuals bridge the supposed divide between oral and literate as well as between popular and elite cultures. However, it also echoes the wider problem of definition brought into focus by the different attitudes of Brown and Brand: if it is difficult to fully separate these clerical figures from the popular culture of their parishioners, so too is it problematic to identify the point at which their supposed "Public Authority" intersects with the idea of the "people."

Kathleen Wilson (1995:19) describes both what was at stake in these labels ("popular," "people," "public") and the way that they were manipulated between 1715 and 1785: "Since it was the (largely mythical) role of the people in the constitution that in [the minds of] most contemporaries" distinguished English liberty from Continental absolutism, populist beliefs and discourses were a crucial plank in the construction of national identities and consciousness. But "the people," as a phrase, was also used to "delimit the political nation . . . consisting of those deemed respectable or well-affected enough to be included in its boundaries" and excluding others. The "common people" who form the subject of Bourne and Brand's studies would seem at first glance to represent precisely one of these excluded groups. Brand's proposal to foster "public spirit" through the cultivation of their "innocent Sports and Games," however, seems to suggest the opposite. Neither conclusion, I argue, is entirely accurate. Johnson's *Dictionary* (1755) captures the inherent ambiguity in the word "people," revealing a tension in the first of its multiple definitions—"A nation; those who compose a community"—which is then compounded by further contradictions: "the vulgar," "persons of a particular class," "men, or persons in general."[7] In fact, therefore, it is Brand's equivocation over these "people" as members of the "public" and the "political nation" that should hold our attention.

His attitude towards the "intervals of Relaxation" required by the "common people" is inflected by a concern also present in Bourne regarding idleness. But where a legacy of Puritanism is clearly apparent in Bourne's concern for the space this idleness might open up for sin and immorality, Brand's more utilitarian perspective suggests an additional interest in efficiency. In respect of this, E. P. Thompson's argument (1991:51) that "in rural society where small farming and the cottage economy persisted . . . the organization of work was so varied and irregular" makes it false to draw a sharp distinction between "work" and "leisure," and needs to

---

[6] He is referring to *The Spectator*, No. 7, 8th March 1711 (Addison 1715:i, 40.)

[7] A range of meanings is also suggested by the *OED*, including "the general public" and "the people," but the sense of the popular as plebeian or of low birth, which is clearly indicated by Johnson's reference to "the vulgar," is represented as not in use after 1691, a conclusion I would dispute.

be balanced against that of Robert Malcolmson (1973:89-90): "genteel attitudes towards many aspects of popular culture had become increasingly unsympathetic since at least the last quarter of the eighteenth century." The reason for this change of opinion was a "concern for effective labour discipline" and a consequent aversion to practices seen as wasteful and self-indulgent.

Beyond Bourne's and Brand's observations that popular beliefs and customs fill the rare moments when the common people are not working with foolish practices based on erroneous superstition, practices that are hence literally a waste of time and effort, the idea of labor in the debates surrounding luxury and the public spirit characterizes popular culture and oral tradition as inefficient and wasteful. Customary practices serve no rational function and dissipate vital energy, while the transmission of accumulated knowledge, history, stories, or practices, orally from person to person and down the generations, is understood to be flawed because it cannot meet literate standards of control and stability, because it is fluid, involves inevitable loss, and depends on the activity of fallible individuals. Much of the degradation that Brand and other antiquarians report is held to be the consequence of mishearing as well as misunderstanding, and the connection that Ephraim Chambers' *Cyclopaedia* (1728:ii, 856) draws between popular customs and error, and even corruption, was common: "Popular errors" are "such as people who imbibe from one another, by custom, education, and tradition."

Within this context, the "intervals of Relaxation" described by Brand take on an uncertain status. He offers contradictory opinions about the weakness and/or strength of oral tradition. His preface begins with the statement that: "Tradition has in no Instance so clearly evinced her Faithfulness, as in the transmitting of vulgar Rites and popular Opinions." Yet he compares its customs to remnants of statuary, "mutilated . . . Things, composed of such flimsy Materials as the Fancies of a Multitude, [which] do not seem calculated for a long Duration" (iii). And even here, in his second statement, these "Fancies," depicted as inconsequential, merely the froth of vulgar superstition, are judged in material terms (as remnants of statuary) that are more in accordance with the supposed solidity and durability of written records than the vagaries of oral tradition, carried on the breath of the common people. One explanation for this inconsistency would simply be to say that it is an example of an elitist literate authority exerting itself over an inferior cultural sphere. When we observe, though, that the same pattern emerges with regard to his proposal to revive "innocent Sports and Games" for the benefit of "national Bravery," it is clear that there is more at stake.

Brand's distinction between "daily Labour" and "Relaxation" separates the common people from the landed classes, for whom life would not have been punctuated by this cycle, and indicates a degree of respect for their genuine toil and an acknowledgment of its necessity and value for the nation. The characterization of their "Relaxation" (especially when it is self-directed and of organic development) as inefficient and idle subjects leisure to the criteria of labor. The application of these standards of efficiency and productivity to labor and relaxation, more commonly understood in this period as either the absence or the cessation of work, brings into alignment the "common people" who do labor and the elite who conspicuously do not under a common expectation. Thus Brown criticizes those who govern for their laziness, effeminacy, and luxury, and essays a version of the same complaint against the common people. In this way concerns regarding efficiency and wastefulness, as well as labor and leisure, are brought to bear upon one another in such a way as to cut across the division between popular and elite. If the

labor and leisure of the common people are governed by the same standards as those for the elite, and have the potential to influence the "spirit" and "pride" of the nation as a whole, it becomes possible to reconcile the contradiction in the term "people" and incorporate the "vulgar" within the realm of the "public."

A New Perspective

Rather than opposition and reflection, Brand's attitude is built on an awareness of the interpenetration of these cultures, and of a relationship between them that is predicated on more than a narrative of historical progress or of social hierarchy. The potential reciprocity he imagines, and his gestures towards a democratic notion of "the people," are substantial departures from the work of his predecessor and from the narratives with which we began. But although it is now clear that the mirror image metaphor fails to capture the complex representation that these so-called "oral," "literate," "popular," and "elite" cultures receive within the works of Bourne and Brand, the evidence in fact points to more than a weakness of figuration. The tensions and ambiguities that pervade Brand's attempts to consider the place of the vulgar and their oral popular culture within the body politic do indicate an uncertainty within his position; however, they also reveal the bluntness of such labels as critical tools. It is significant that he does not dismiss the "common people" out of hand and that he is able to move beyond an antiquarian perspective in his critique of their beliefs and customs; it is perhaps more significant, though, that he does so in an entirely localized context.

A network of associations, habitual connections, and prejudices surrounding the social hierarchy, oral tradition, superstition, education, and historical progress structures the texts that we have examined. They are embedded within changing discourses of religion and nationhood, and reflect shifts in attitude towards the land brought about by continued enclosures, urbanization, and rural depopulation.[8] As a consequence, it is problematic to disentangle individual strands from the wider complex or to transplant the attitudes and ideas embedded within this context to another. Brand's attention is not directed towards "orality," "literacy," or "popularity" in general or in the abstract, but rather towards the customs and beliefs of a particular group within England at a precise moment in history. While it is entirely possible from the perspective of twenty-first century scholarship to conceive, for example, of an oral thread linking various eighteenth-century practices—polite conversation and bardic song, or the emotive preaching of Wesley and the ideals of secular oratory drawn from Aristotle and Cicero— this is precisely what does not occur to men like Bourne and Brand. "Orality" is not even a term that dictionaries from this period include, and "literate," as John Ash (1775) notes, is "not much used."

---

[8] Roger D. Abrahams' (1993) analysis of the influence of such changes in land use upon the symbolic role of the peasantry, who, he argues, come to be nostalgically reimagined as "the folk," is particularly instructive. The connections he draws between eighteenth-century England and the slave cultures of the American South (1992:54-82) provide further evidence of the significance of attitudes engendered by changes of this kind within the broader context of folklore studies.

Thus this case study demonstrates that narratives that seek to chart eighteenth-century attitudes towards abstract concepts such as the oral and the literate, or the popular and the public, are both limited and limiting. To propose their banishment is clearly impractical, and indeed it is likely that writing and thinking without any recourse to them would prove equally unhelpful. But the example of Bourne and Brand nevertheless illustrates the need for a new attentiveness to the heritage of our critical vocabulary and a willingness to interrogate its assumptions. Attempting to examine the way in which the relationship between orality, literacy, and popular culture was understood and represented in the eighteenth century is to impose on the source material terms that are inappropriate and expectations that are unsuitable. To continue to do so, then, when the alternative could prove more productive, is to run the risk of encouraging connections where there may have been none and of missing valuable material by looking in the wrong place.

University of Cambridge

References

Abrahams 1992	Roger D. Abrahams. *Singing the Master: The Emergence of African-American Culture in the Plantation South.* New York: Pantheon Press.
Abrahams 1993	_____. "Phantoms of Romantic Nationalism in Folkloristics." *Journal of American Folklore,* 106:3-37.
Addison 1715	Joseph Addison. *The Spectator*, 8 vols. London: S. Buckley and J. Tonson.
Ash 1775	John Ash. *The new and complete dictionary of the English language. To which is prefixed, a comprehensive grammar*, 2 vols. London: Edward and Charles Dilly, and R. Baldwin.
Bailey 1730	Nathan Bailey. *Dictionarium Britannicum: or a more compleat universal etymological English dictionary than any extant. Collected by several hands . . . The whole revis'd and improv'd, with many thousand additions*. London. T. Cox.
Basilikon 1599	*Basilikon Doron.* London: Rpt. 1603 and 1616.
Bakhtin 1968	Mikhail Bakhtin. *Rabelais and his World*. Trans. by Helene Iswolsky. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
Bendix 1997	Regina Bendix. *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
Book 1618	*Book of Sports.* London: Rpt. 1633.
Bourne 1725	Henry Bourne. *Antiquitates Vulgares; Or, the Antiquities of the Common People. Giving an Account of several of their Opinions and Ceremonies. With reflections upon each of them; shewing which may be retain'd, and which ought to be laid aside*. Newcastle: J. White.
Brand 1777	John Brand. *Observations on Popular Antiquities: Including the whole of Mr. Bourne's Antiquitates Vulgares, with Addenda to every Chapter of that Work: And also, an Appendix, containing such Articles on the Subject, as have been omitted by that Author*. Newcastle upon Tyne: T. Saint.

Brand 1813   _____. *Observations on popular antiquities: chiefly illustrating the origin of our vulgar customs, ceremonies, and superstitions.* Rev. by Henry Ellis. London: F. C. and D. Rivington.

Brandiana 1807   *Bibliotheca Brandiana: A Catalogue of the Unique, Scarce, Rare, Curious and numerous Collection of Works on the Antiquity, Topography and decayed Intelligence of Great Britain and Ireland . . . being the entire Library of the late Rev. John Brand.* London: P. Da Ponte.

Brown 1757   John Brown. *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times*. 2nd ed. London: L. Davis and C. Reymers.

Burke 1978   Peter Burke. *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*. London: Temple Smith.

Chambers 1728   Ephraim Chambers. *Cyclopædia; or, an Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences. Compiled from the best authors*. 2 vols. London: James and John Knapton.

Dorson 1968   Richard M. Dorson. *The British Folklorists: A History.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Dugaw 1989   Dianne Dugaw. *Warrior Women and Popular Balladry 1650-1850.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fox 2002   Adam Fox. *Oral and Literate Culture in England 1500-1700*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Friedman 1961   Alfred B. Friedman. *The Ballad Revival: Studies in the Influence of Popular on Sophisticated Poetry*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Gaskill and Stafford 1998   Howard Gaskill and Fiona Stafford, eds. *From Gaelic to Romantic: Ossianic Translations.* Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Groom 2006   Nick Groom. "'The Purest English': Ballads and the English Literary Dialect." *The Eighteenth Century,* 47:179-202.

Gunn 1983   J. A. W. Gunn. *Beyond Liberty and Property: The Process of Self-Recognition in Eighteenth-Century Political Thought*. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press.

Hall 1628   Joseph Hall. *The Olde Religion*. London.

Hanson 2009   Craig Ashley Hanson. *The English Virtuoso: Art, Medicine, and Antiquarianism in the Age of Empiricism.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Harker 1985   Dave Harker. *Fakesong: The Manufacture of British Folksong 1700 to the Present Day.* Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

B. Harris 2002   Bob Harris. *Politics and the Nation: Britain in the Mid-Eighteenth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

T. Harris 1995   Tim Harris, ed. *Popular Culture in England c. 1500-1850*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Hudson 1996   Nicholas Hudson. "Oral Tradition: The Evolution of an Eighteenth Century Concept." In *Tradition in Transition: Women Writers, Neglected Texts and the Changing Canon.* Ed. by Alvaro Ribeiro and James G. Basker. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 161-72.

Johnson 1755   Samuel Johnson. *A Dictionary of the English Language: in which the words are deduced from their originals, and illustrated in their different significations by examples from the best writers. To which are prefixed, a history of the language, and an English grammar*, 2 vols. London: J. and P. Knapton.

Locke 1721   John Locke. *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. London: A. Churchill.

Macpherson 1760   James Macpherson. *Fragments of Ancient Poetry collected in the highlands of Scotland and translated from the Gallic or Erse Language*. Edinburgh: G. Hamilton and J. Balfour.

Malcolmson 1973   Robert Malcolmson. *Popular Recreations in English Society 1700-1850*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Moore 2003   Dafydd Moore. *Enlightenment and Romance in James Macpherson's* The Poems of Ossian: *Myth, Genre and Cultural Change*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Motherwell 1827   William Motherwell. *Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern, with an historical introduction and notes*. Glasgow: J. Wylie.

Mullan 2000   John Mullan and Christopher Reid, eds. *Eighteenth-Century Popular Culture: A Selection*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Newman 2007   Steve Newman. *Ballad Collection, Lyric, and the Canon: The Call of the Popular from the Restoration to the New Criticism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Percy 1765   Thomas Percy. *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry consisting of old heroic ballads, songs, and other pieces of our earlier poets, chiefly of the lyric kind*. 3 vols. London: J. Dodsley.

Perry 2006   Ruth Perry, ed. *The Eighteenth Century* [A special edition on ballads and songs]. 47, ii-iii.

Perry 2008   _____. "The Finest Ballads: Women's Oral Traditions in Eighteenth-Century Scotland." *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 32.2:81-97.

Piggott 1976   Stuart Piggott. *Ruins in a Landscape: Essays in Antiquarianism*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Potkay 1992   Adam Potkay. "Virtue and Manners in Macpherson's Poems of Ossian." *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, 107:120-30.

Ramsay 1724   Allan Ramsay. *The Tea-Table Miscellany*. Edinburgh: Thomas Ruddiman.

Ramsay 1794   _____. *The Tea-Table Miscellany: A Collection of Choice Songs, Scots and English*. 19th ed. Dublin: W. Gilbert, P. Wogan, P. Byrne, and W. Jones.

Reay 1998   Barry Reay. *Popular Cultures in England 1550-1750*. London and New York: Longman.

Smith 1776   Adam Smith. *An inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations*. 2 vols. London: W. Strahan and T. Cadell.

Stafford 1994   Fiona Stafford. *The Sublime Savage: A Study of James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Stewart 1991   Susan Stewart. *Crimes of Writing: Problems in the Containment of*

                                        Representation. New York: Oxford University Press.

Sweet 2004   Rosemary Sweet. *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth-Century Britain.* London and New York: Hambledon and London.

Thompson 1991   E. P. Thompson. *Customs in Common*. London: Merlin Press.

Vincent 1982   David Vincent. "The Decline of the Oral Tradition in Popular Culture." In *Popular Culture and Custom in Nineteenth Century England*. Ed. by R. D. Storch. London: Croom Helm. pp. 21-47.

Wilson 1995   Kathleen Wilson. *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Woolf 1988   Daniel R. Woolf. "The Common Voice: History, Folklore and Oral Tradition in Early Modern England." *Past and Present*, 120:26-53.

Woolf 2002   _____. "Constructing Oral Tradition: The Origins of the Concept in Enlightenment Intellectual Culture." In *The Spoken Word: Oral Culture in Britain 1500-1800*. Ed. by Adam Fox and Daniel R. Woolf. Manchester: Manchester University Press. pp. 240-56.

This page is intentionally left blank.

"Secret Language" in Oral and Graphic Form:
Religious-Magic Discourse in Aztec Speeches and Manuscripts

Katarzyna Mikulska Dąbrowska

Introduction

On the eve of the conquest, oral communication dominated Mesoamerican society, with systems similar to those defined by Walter Ong (1992 [1982]), Paul Zumthor (1983), and Albert Lord (1960 [2000]), although a written form did exist. Its limitations were partly due to the fact that it was used only by a limited group of people (Craveri 2004:29), and because the Mixtec and Nahua systems do not totally conform to a linear writing system.[1]

These forms of graphic communication are presented in pictographic manuscripts, commonly known as codices. The analysis of these sources represents an almost independent discipline, as they increasingly become an ever more important source for Mesoamerican history, religion, and anthropology. The methodology used to study them largely depends on how the scholar defines "writing." Some apply the most rigid definition of a system based on the spoken language and reflecting its forms and/or structures (e.g., Coulmas 1996:xxvi), while others accept a broader definition of semasiographic systems that can transmit ideas independent of actual spoken language (yet function at the same logical level) and thus also constitute writing (e.g., Sampson 1985:26-31).

The aim of this study is to analyze the linguistic "magical-religious" register of the Nahua people, designated as such because it was used for communication with the sacred realm. In this respect, it represents one of the "sacred languages," as classified by Zumthor (1983:53). Since such registers are less liable to change, they permit the reconstruction—although always imperfectly—of this type of speech as it existed immediately prior to the arrival of the Europeans and in addition the decipherment of (at least some) of the characteristic elements of Nahua oral

---

[1] As Mercedes Montes de Oca has aptly commented, "the code that appears in the codices does not claim to represent the linearity of a chain of speech, but instead gives structure to a number of speech fragments, which can be reorganized by the reader according to a defined conceptual order" (2000:426). In this work, however, I do not wish to enter into a discussion as to whether the method of graphic communication used by the Aztecs (similar to the one used by the Mixtecs) did or did not constitute writing. It is important to indicate that Mesoamerican researchers hold different opinions concerning this problem and the solutions they accept also determine the methodology that they employ. To the reader who is interested in analyzing the current points of view, I recommend Oudijk 2008 and Batalla Rosado 2008b.

tradition. In the discussion that follows we develop a hypothesis, namely that in the Mesoamerican codices that focus on calendar-religious subjects, in other words on matters strictly linked to the supernatural world, a similar magical-religious register should be evident. Far from considering the information presented in these sources as resulting from the direct transcription of oral language, my idea is that the graphic form represents elements emblematic of orality, although adapted to this particular context for expression.

Magical-Religious Discourse

The magical-religious speech of the Nahua is one of the ceremonial and esoteric languages described by Zumthor as "sacred," "erudite," or "poetic." Referring to the Mesoamerican context in particular, Alfredo López Austin (1967:1) termed these as "magical," whereas Maarten Jansen (1985:3) described them as "divine languages." Jansen demonstrates that this type of language, *iya,* also existed in Mixtec culture and was remarkable for its "metaphors and elegant expressions" (7-10). At the present time these expressions continue to be used in ritual discourse, for example in the Mixtec *sahu* (López García 2007; Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2008:88) and in the *yectlatolli*, "formal speech" of the Nahua from Puebla and the State of Mexico (Peralta Ramírez 2004:175).

Without doubt, there also existed a similar form of ceremonial speech among the Maya. In the colonial-era book entitled *Chilam Balam de Chumayel* (*CHBCH* 2002:78-89, 112-19), a "figurative language" is described, termed "of Suyua Tan," the understanding of which was obligatory for those assuming the position of leader. The candidate's knowledge of it was tested by means of a contest headed by a representative from the supreme authority, the *halach uinic*, and was carried out periodically in certain dominions in post-classical Yucatan. The challenge consisted of interpreting certain riddles, expressed in figurative language, which shrouded "a secret code, even more exclusive than any common metaphor" (Rivera Dorado, in *CHBCH* 2002:78).[2]

One of the most famous riddles included in this Mayan book asks for "an old nurse maid to care for the *milpa* (maize patch), her whole body black, her rear of seven palms"[3] (*ibid.*:89): the answer is a squash. Almost the same riddle appears in Toltec culture, where the only difference is that it asks for a woman with hips four palms wide (*HTCH* 1989:133ff.; Jansen 1985:5). In the Aztec sources, specifically in the *Florentine Codex* by Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, there is also a section dedicated to riddles, proverbs, sayings, and "metaphors" (Sahagún *CF* 1950-82:vi, 217-40). All this evidence confirms that a certain similarity exists among these "divine" or esoteric expressions in different Mesoamerican cultures. This correspondence is all the more logical when one realizes that the riddles are based

---

[2] Some years ago Brian Stross (1983) suggested that this language did not constitute a particular register of Yucatec Maya language, but rather constituted a Mixe-zoque language used by the elite. A similar suggestion was made by Evangelina Arana (cf. Jansen 1985:4) about the Mixtec *iya* register, considering it to be a distinct Otomi language. As research has advanced, it is now known that in these and in other cases we are dealing with a particular register constructed on the basis of a common language (Jansen 1985:5; López Austin 1967:1).

[3] All the translations to English are mine, unless otherwise stated.

on a metaphorical pun (Colli 1991 [1975]:59), and in the Mesoamerican context there undoubtedly exist common conceptual nuclei (Montes de Oca 2000:402-22; Mikulska 2008a: 58-60; cp. Jansen 1985).

It can be deduced from the information in the *Chilam Balam de Chumayel* that the "Zuyua language" was a register exclusive to the Maya intellectual elite or the initiated few. In the Nahua culture, this language was termed *nahuallatolli*, and existed along with other registers found in the Nahuatl language, both *tecpillatolli* or the language of the nobles as well as *macehuallatolli* or popular language (López Austin 1967:1; Jansen 1985:6). *Tecpillatolli*, according to the *Vocabulario* of Fray Alonso de Molina (1950 [1871]), signified "concise and elegant speech or reasoning" and was the exclusive means of expression used by noblemen in ceremonial discourse or even in prayer compositions, which are generally known as *huehuetlatolli*.[4] These sorts of expressions are noteworthy for their very frequent appearance in proverbs (*tlatlatolli*), riddles (*zazanilli*), and metaphors (*machiotlatolli*) (cp. Jansen 1985:6).

The *Nahuallatolli*

Of all the codes described above, the *nahuallatolli* is the most complicated, although as Jansen has pointed out, "*nauallatolli* and *tecpillatolli* are differentiated in terms of context, but not in terms of principles" (1985:6). The precise name *nahuallatolli* (formed from the root words *nahual-* and *tlatolli*) does not appear as such in the sources, but other words whose parts relate to the roots mentioned do appear. Thus Molina explains the verb *naualitoa* (noun *nahual-* and verb *itoa*) as meaning to "cautiously say something, in order to take in or deceive others"; and the *nauallatoa* (noun *nahual-* with indefinite object *-tla-* and verb *itoa*) as "to speak with caution or feign something." Hernando Ruiz de Alarcón, the famous chronicler of and commentator on spells, whose book *Tratado de las supersticiones* includes the most significant record of incantations, observed that "they always attempt to disguise things with metaphorical words, or *nahualtocaitl*, which means the language or terms used by sorcerers" (1953 [1892]:124). The word *nahualtocaitl* is composed from *nahual-* and *tocaitl*, this second noun meaning "name" (Molina 1980 [1571]).

In my opinion, greater clarity concerning the global meaning of all these words, which integrate the root word *nahual-*, will help in the understanding of this term. *Nahualli* is the name given to a "sorcerer" or man with supernatural power,[5] about whom many articles have been

---

[4] The *huehuetlatolli*—"story or ancient tale," "tale of the ancestors," "ancient discourse," and "archaic word" (García Quintana 2000:129, 133-34), or even "words of the old people" or "expressions of the aged ones / of our forebears" (Sullivan 1986:17)—were speeches made by priests, leading ancient noblemen, those who accompany the leader, elders, merchants, craftsmen, doctors, midwives, and spiritual healers (García Quintana 2000:134; Sullivan 1986:10). They were used on certain special occasions, such as religious celebrations, ascendance to the throne, diplomatic missions, choosing a wife, choosing a midwife, and so forth.

[5] Molina (1980 [1571]:fol. 63v) provides only the translation "witch." It is notable that he records this noun in the feminine form, even though the distinction between masculine and feminine genders did not exist in Nahuatl. Without doubt, the explanation lies in the colonial perception of the Mesoamerican sacred realm.

written (yet the subject is not exhausted).[6] However, the principal characteristic of this individual lies in his capacity to transform himself into another being or phenomenon, for example a ball of fire (López Austin 1996 [1980]:i, 422). Jacinto de la Serna, who transcribed the work by Ruiz de Alarcón, adding his own comments (and information from the contemporary State of Mexico), explains that "this Mexican word *Nahualli* is made up of and takes its meaning from the verb *Nahualtia*, which means to hide, by covering, or disguising, or transforming oneself" (1953 [1892]:90), and in another context that "*Nahualtia* [signifies] to disguise oneself" (203). In my opinion, this set of observations helps clarify the basic meaning of the root word *nahual-*, which means to transform, convert, transfigure, disguise, re-clothe, mask oneself, conceal, camouflage, and finally to trick.

  Nahuallatolli was the "language of the sorcerers" (Jansen 1985:6) and the "principal credential for validating a person's entry into the powerful, ethereal realm" (López Austin 1967:1) as he transforms himself into a *tlamacazqui*.[7] In the context of incantations, the word *tlamacazqui* alludes to all the recipients of these chants (for example, water and the goddess of water), but at the same time it also refers to the sorcerer himself. Jacinto de la Serna (1953/1892) translates this word in the seventeenth century into Spanish as *espiritado* ("possessed"), a word that today has more the meaning of "charmed," "bewitched," or "possessed by the divine spirit." In effect, themes presented in the texts included incantations, prayers, prophesies, invocations, chants, entreaties, orations, and expressions of gratitude—all themes related to the sacred/ supernatural context. This language was the sacred word—a bridge for communication with the deities (Craveri 2004:54)—and as such it pertains to the repertoire of oral tradition and possesses its characteristic features. Among those elements commonly found in *nahuallatolli* discourse, various traits stand out, for example parallelisms and communicative redundancy (an abundance of nouns, verbs, deictics, and so on), as well as syntactic coordination and strategies for composing units of meaning (cf. Ong 1992 [1982]:62-77). In Craveri's words, "it is probable that each poet would have a repertoire of formulas, suitable for different communicative contexts" (2004:43).

  As a variation on oral expression, *nahuallatolli* or "disguised language" is formed from a base material consisting of "more diverse metaphoric procedures: as the divine being to whom it is directed is identified through personification, kinship, locality, or the physical characteristics attributed to him, his position in the divine calendar, or his mythological identity, etc." (Jansen 1985:6). Thus the incantations apply the following names to fire:

- As relating to kinship: *in nota*: "my father" (Ruiz de Alarcón 1953 [1892]:150); *yn tihuehue, in tiyllama*: "you elderly man and you elderly woman" (141); *nopilhuan*: "my children" (when referring to flames; cp. López Austin 1967:7)
- Calendar name: *nahui acatl*: "Four Reed" (Ruiz de Alarcón 1953 [1892]:135)

---

[6] Authors who should be mentioned include López Austin (1996:i, 416-30), Aguirre Beltrán (1963:98-114, 223-26), Musgrave-Portilla (1982), and lastly Martínez González (2006:39-63); many other researchers have also treated this subject, making important contributions.

[7] A term for a pre-Hispanic priest; literally, "he who gives/offers something." Taking into account their role as intermediaries between the divine and human world, it seems to be more accurate to regard these priests' function as handing over to men gifts coming from the gods and to the gods, those which men give (cp. Gruzinski 2001:164).

- Metaphors relating to physical features: *tzoncoztli*: "blond/yellow hair" (135); *tzoncoçahuiztica*: "the Yellow-reddish-haired One" (150); *ayauhtli itzon, poctli itzon*: "Hair like Smoke, Hair like Mist" (113); *milintica*: "(that which) is undulating/wavy/swirling" (135, 150); *xiuhtli coçauhqui milintica*: "yellow flames that are swirling" (78; cp. López Austin 1967:6-7).

Given that this is a "secret," "disguised," and "concealed" language, it is polysemic: the same term may refer to a number of different beings (López Austin 1967:4). This is more evident in the case of names—or titles—referring to kinship, but also in other examples; for instance, the name *xoxouhqui cihuatl*, "the green woman," refers both to water and to the wind; *iztac cihuatl*, "the white woman," to copal (resinous incense), to water, to a sown land area, or to a variety of herbal medicines; and, as we have already observed, water may be referred to both by the expression *xoxouhqui cihuatl*, "the green woman," and as *iztac cihuatl*, "the white woman" (cp. López Austin 1967:iv, 7-8). This lack of precision and inherent ambiguity increases secrecy and enhances the possibility of not being understood by all people, a very important quality pertaining to magical language. As Bronisław Malinowski comments when analyzing the magical language of the Trobriand islanders, "this concerns words which are formally devoid of meaning (1987 [1935]:347)" or "at least deformed" in some way (389). In addition, they are "very mysterious words, unrelated to daily speech" (354). Nevertheless, he also specified that "this does not mean that they lack significance" (369), since "they are devoid of meaning only when we are distracted by the superficial deformities, characteristic of the truncated and extraordinary style of magic language" (393), whereas "beneath the esoteric disguise are to be found linguistic connotations and links to everyday language" (371).

This confirms by analogy that *nahuallatolli*, as the "Zuyua language" of the *Chilam Balam de Chumayel*, was a linguistic register used by the chosen few, the "initiated" or intellectual elite. As Malinowski affirms, the magical tone is acquired by applying formulas —"magic language relies on disguising the full meaning of esoteric and mysterious terms" (*ibid.*: 374)—and results from using "certain linguistic devices," such as metaphors ("going from relatively simple modifications . . . to extremely complex alterations and free rhetoric in the use of intermediate and derivative meanings"), oppositions, repetitions, negative comparisons, orders and questions with answers, and words used erroneously in terms of grammar or morphology, "sung according to a specific phonology, rhythm and with the repetition of certain permanent complexes of words" (359, 368, 355, 369). The magical formulas of *nahuallatolli* include diverse figures of speech or rhetorical expressions[8] in terms of their style, among which the following stand out: metaphors ("blond/yellow hair" for "fire"), metonyms ("nine times rubbed in the hands" for "tobacco"), synecdoche ("the *cimates,*[9] the sweet potato" to indicate nutritious plants; Ruiz de Alarcón 1953 [1892]:89), antonyms (the proper name "Four Reed" for "fire"),

---

[8] López Austin argues that "no space is assigned to rhetoric, thus the figure of speech becomes a magical instrument" (1967:4). My opinion is that this is true if considered from a functional perspective (if one accepts that the function of these discourses is magical); however, from a formal perspective we are treating a considerable number of examples of rhetoric.

[9] Michael D. Coe and Gordon Whittaker comment that this "is clearly a leguminous plant with a large, round root" (1982:152-53).

paraphrase ("yellow flames that are swirling"), and diphrasisms,[10] all of these being very common tools in Mesoamerican languages. An example of diphrasisms used with reference to "fire" is *yn tihuehue, in tiyllama*: "you elderly man, you elderly woman," referring to the ancestor(s) (cp. Montes de Oca 2000:157).

Moreover, in regard to previous comments describing the characteristics of oral expression, the *nahuallatolli* is renowned for its multiple repetitions, parallel meanings, and communicative redundancy. As an example of these features, in the following I present invocations to the earth used in different spells, illustrating the continual amplification of the units of meaning (Ruiz de Alarcón 1953 [1892]):

. . . cetochtli aquetztimani (125)	"One Rabbit [calendar name] [that] extends itself with its head upwards"
. . . çe tochtli àquetztimani, tlaximimixtlapachtlaça (162)	"One Rabbit [that] extends itself with its head upwards, *lying face down*"
citlalcueye [...] nonan *cetochtli* *àquetztimani* (120)	"*Star-skirted One, my mother* One Rabbit [who] extends herself with the head facing upwards"
nonan tlalteuctli *aquetzimani,* nota *cetochtli* (105)	"my mother *Ruler of the Earth*, [who] stretches out with her head facing upwards, *my father* One Rabbit"
nonan cetochtli àquetztimani ye *nican* ticyocoyaz xoxouhqui coacihuiztli (134-35)	"my Mother One Rabbit [who] extends her head upwards, *here you will create a blue-green disease* [metaphorical name for gout or palsy]"

---

[10] Diphrasisms are linguistic forms composed from two or more juxtaposed lexemes where the meaning "is not derived from the sum of the parts, but instead indicates a third meaning" (Montes de Oca 1997:31) and "the relationship between these two terms can be viewed as opposition, synonym, or complementarity" (2000:36). The same author also indicates that diphrasisms are formed through a more specific process than that of parallel meanings (2000:22-23), given that the lexemes in the former are syntactically identical (25). She also differentiates between diphrasisms formed on the basis of metaphor and those formed on the basis of metonym (115-28; cp. Craveri 2004:64-65).

nonan tlaltecuintli,	"My mother, *Earth thumper*,
notà cetochtli	my father One Rabbit,
tezcatl, yncan hualpopocatimani,	*mirror emitting smoke*,
nohueltiuh cenmalinalli (77)	*my elder sister One Twisted Grass*"
nonan tlalteuctli,	"My mother Ruler of the Earth,
nota ce tochtli	my father One Rabbit,
tezcatl, çan huel popocatimani.	mirror
	emitting smoke
Ma mixco nonmayauh (80)	*Let me fall upon your face*"[11]
tlalli yxcapaniltzin,	"*Earth, cracked in the face,*
àmo tinechelehuiz,	*do not desire to [injure] me,*
ce tochtli	One Rabbit
àquetztimani,	[who] extends
	its head upwards,
ca nican tzintlapan;	*For here has been broken,*
nican elpachi	*here has been sated*[12]
cètochtli àquetztimani (69)	One Rabbit [who] extends its head upwards"

Each incantation is augmented with a new expression (in the translation this is marked with italics), and the organization of these "groups" of meanings is quite free, depending on the way they are pronounced (one of the important characteristics of oral tradition; cf. Lord 1975:65-68), and in the last example communicative accumulation and redundancy are evident. As Malinowski puts it (1987 [1935]:369), "little by little we progress from a few simple modifications of everyday speech, to ever more complex deviations and the rhetorical liberty to develop intermediates and derivatives."

Graphic Register

The principal objective of this work, as already stated, is to ascertain whether a parallel register—a secret language—also exists in graphic form. In 1985 Maarten Jansen contributed to this subject, providing specific examples of expressions particular to the *iya*, graphically

---

[11] This line is Coe and Whittaker's translation (1982:136).

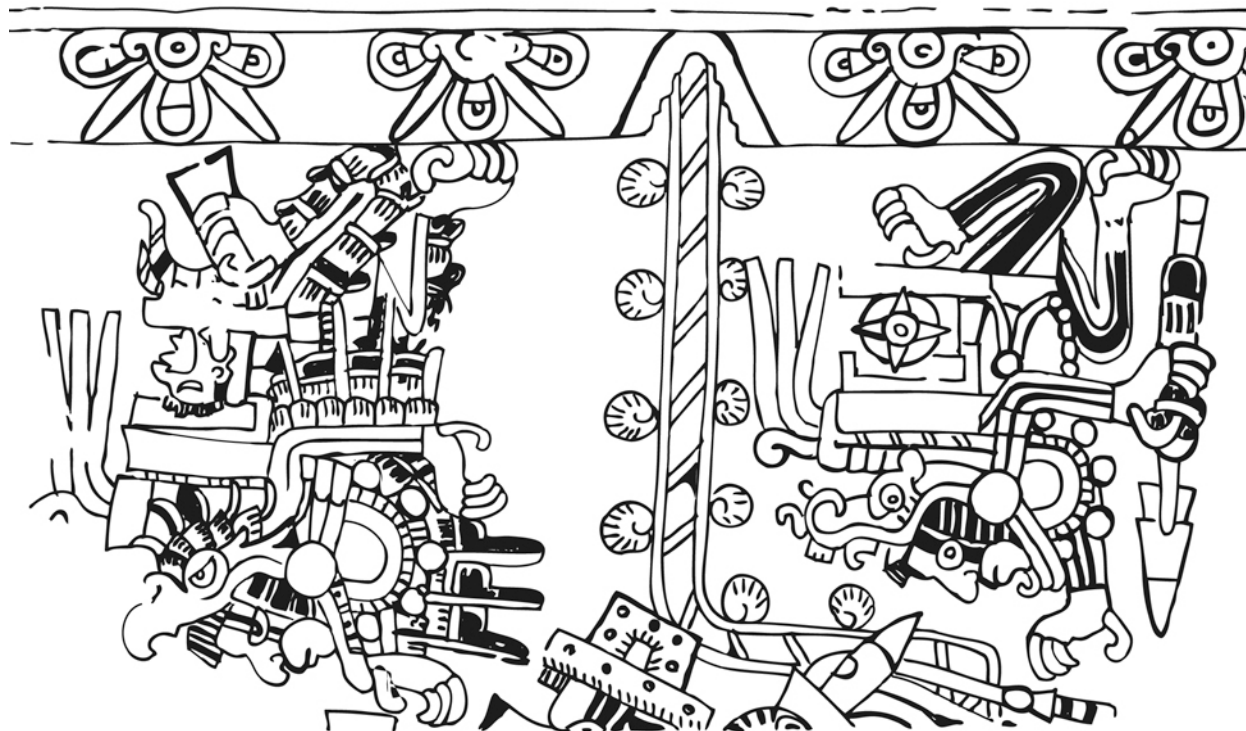[12] These two lines are Coe and Whittaker's translation (1982:118).

Fig. 1. Priests in array of eagle and fire serpent. *Vindobonensis Codex* (lam. 48). Redrawn by Nadezda Kryvda.

represented in the Mixtec codices. Thus the phrase *yocovui huico yuvuiya* in Mixtec normally means "to celebrate the fiesta of the mat," whereas in the *iya* it means "to get married"; and in the *Vindobonensis Codex* (35) the image of the mat with the ground tobacco and a cup of chocolate form part of the representation of marriage. Another example: *yaha yahui* in Mixtec normally means "eagle, fire serpent" but in the *iya* "powerful sorcerer," which is a priestly title using the terms of the colonial era. In the codices *Vindobonensis* (48; **fig. 1**) and *Selden* (12), the eagle and serpent of fire represent precisely this second meaning (Jansen 1985:10).

Referring to the Central Mexican area, Janet Berlo (1989:19, 33-34) has suggested that puns, metaphors, and metonyms are frequently present in the "embedded texts"[13] from Xochicalco. Similarly, Doris Heyden has provided examples of metaphors transmitted in visual form, noting that "every line, form, color, and design in each example of artistic expression related a message" (1986:40) and "one metaphor frequently led to another, forming a chain of references" (37). In 1994 Patrick Johansson observed that in the Nahua codices, apart from the pictorial and phonetic modality, "a wide range of figures of speech exist at a pictographic level, the majority presented involuntarily as they are inherent in the adopted system" (303), providing an example of each rhetorical device: metonym, synecdoche, accumulation, pleonasm, and expletive (303-05). Similarly, Montes de Oca (2000:428-59) has provided examples of metaphors or visual tropes from different types of codices, compiling a considerable sample of diphrasisms represented by images. Some of these are very well known, for example *in atl in tepetl* [water, hill]: "city," *in petlatl in icpalli* [mat, seat]: "authority," *in mitl yn chimalli* [arrow,

---

[13] A term introduced by this researcher (Berlo 1983:11-18) in order to define signs used in glyphic writing (for example the year symbol or *meyotli*) that are perfectly incorporated within the image.

shield]: "war," *in cueitl in huipilli* [skirt, blouse]: "woman," *in maxtlatl in tilmatli* [items of male clothing]: "man" (430-37, 441-43).

These pictorial expressions are so inherent in the adapted system that Johansson affirms that their comprehension becomes unconscious and automatic (1994:303), although the contemporary researcher does note diphrasisms represented in graphic form. Other examples provided by Montes de Oca (438-41, 446-50) are, however, less well known, such as *in ixtli in yollotl* [eye/face,[14] heart]: "human being," *in maitl in icxitl* [hand, foot]: "human being," *in tlemaitl in copalli* [incense burner, copal]: "offering" but also "priest," *in acxoyatl in huiztli* [objects used in self-sacrifice: branches of a tree, maguey spines]: "self-sacrifice." What is notable is that these less frequently used diphrasisms are in some way related to the sacred realm —whether this in the context of calendar-religious codices or in cult objects such as sculptures or ceremonial objects—a fact that in my opinion confirms that the register used here is different from that of "everyday language." In the case of the calendar-religious codices, I believe that it cannot be maintained that the most elaborate visual tropes used in these are unconscious; on the contrary, I think they are employed purposefully to the same end as when the *nahuallatolli* register is used in the spoken context.[15]

Research referring to an "esoteric" or visual code is also being undertaken in the context of Maya writing (cp. Craveri 2004:73-77; Arzápalo Marín 1999). There is a notable difference concerning the method for transmitting graphical information when compared to the Nahua: Maya fulfills the requirements of a writing system more strictly (see Batalla Rosado 2008a:177), in that it comprises a logo-syllabic system written in a linear way[16] that includes verbs, subjects, objects, and other components of the sentence.[17] In its oral form, Maya sacred language is replete

---

[14] The word *ixtli* may refer to either "an eye" or "a face" (López Austin 1991:319-25).

[15] The similarity between "graphic discourse" and the *nahuallatolli* has also been a subject for contemplation, taken up by both Johansson (2004:44) and Elisabeth Hill Boone (2007:4).

[16] Although Martel and López de la Rosa observe that "the Maya writing system is neither predominantly logo-syllabic nor grapheme-phonetic" (2006:99).

[17] As already indicated, a rule of linearity cannot basically be applied to the Nahua-Mixtec system, except in the case of calendar counts and the "reading" *a grosso modo* of the "chapters" of the codices (I refer to the pre-Hispanic ones). In other words, the central thread of information presented in these sources is organized horizontally (from left to right or the reverse), and vertically (frequently from bottom to top) or in boustrophedon form (cp. Batalla Rosado 2008a:179). Nevertheless, when a particular image is presented (cf. *Borgia Codex,* 29, **fig. 13**), this has to be observed in its totality. A good example of this lack of "complete" linearity is found in the toponym glyphs (for example, those appearing in pre-Hispanic monuments such as the Tizoc Stone, in the *Matrícula de Tributos* codex or even in the colonial *Mendoza Codex*). Even if toponyms may be considered examples of "true writing" (according to the narrowest definition, cp. Prem 1979:104-05, 1992:54; Prem and Riese 1983:170), the order for reading the constituent parts is not well defined (a fact stressed a number of times by Prem and Riese); thus the reader is required to make a "global" analysis of this sign. An example of this phenomenon is provided by Batalla Rosado (2008a:180): a toponym formed by the logogram for a shield, *chimalli*, and a phonetic sign, drawn in the form of a flag, *pantli*, which gives the phonetic reading of *pan* (a postposition meaning "place of"). This is annotated (in the European writing system) by interpreting this toponym as *Panchimalco* (in the *Matrícula de Tributos* codex) and as *Chimalco* (in the *Mendoza Codex*), even though a place called Chimalpa existed and is just as likely to be the correct reading for this toponym. It is also worth pointing out that, according to the most recent research carried out by Lacadena (2008) in the Central Mexican region—referring specifically to the Tetzcocan tradition—a "branch" of "true" writing was evolving here (or rather one based totally on the forms and structures of oral language), even if not totally similar to the Maya writing system.

with metabolas, metataxis and other figures of speech, for example hyperbaton (Arzápalo Marín 1989; 1993:439; 1999). Concerning graphics, Charles Hofling has studied the structure of discourse in a fragment of a lunar table from the *Dresden Codex*, showing the parallels that exist between oral poetic chants and the epigraphic texts, where repetition with variation, reiteration of formulas, and a high redundancy rate may be observed (see Craveri 2004:73). Edmundo López de la Rosa and Patricia Martel have demonstrated the use of rhythm, metric verse, metonym, synonym, hyperbole, allegory, personification, and optative mood in the Maya codices (cf. *ibid.*: 75). Alfonso Lacadena analyzes lithic inscriptions (aside from those found in the codices), and Kerry Hull treats those found on certain stelae and vases, both demonstrating the use of metaphorical forms, parallelism, and lexical pairs (these are also present in contemporary poetry, representing an inheritance from the ritual language of the pre-Hispanic elite). These may be added to the examples previously mentioned (*ibid.*:75-77).

As Arzápalo Marín demonstrates (1999:107), "the written records of religious, scientific, and historical texts constitute a sophisticated task in codification and not just a transcription of the speech of priests and scientists." The names for this register are *akab tsʹib* or *balam tsʹib*, in contrast to the single word *tsʹib*, which refers only to the act itself of "painting/writing," and thus must have the same semantic field as *icuiloa* in Nahuatl. The full expressions, *akab tsʹib* or *balam tsʹib*, are translated as an "abbreviation or numeral" (*Vienna Dictionary*, in Arzápalo Marín 1999:107), but it is particularly relevant to observe the significance of these compounds. The word *tsʹib* signifies "to write/to paint" (cp. Arzápalo Marín 1995:215-16; *Diccionario Maya* 2001:882; Stuart 1987), in a way similar to that of the verb *icuiloa* in Nahuatl,[18] a fact that clearly illustrates how this method for transmitting information in the codices was understood, in contrast to our Western tendency to separate writing from image.[19] In addition, the word *aakab* is translated in the *Calepino de Motul* as "night, the night, or of the night; or a dark thing;" the verb *balancunah* as "to hide, to conceal," whereas *baalan* is "a hidden or concealed thing" (Arzápalo Marín 1999:107). Thus a considerable conceptual similarity can be observed between these terms

---

[18] Molina (1980 [1571]:fol. 26v) translates the verb *icuiloa* as "to write or paint something," and the noun *tlacuilolli* as "writing or painting" (fol. 120r). Cp. also the entries *icuiloa* and *tlacuiloa* in the available dictionaries, such as the Great Nahuatl Dictionary (*GND*) by Sybille de Pury and Marc Thouvenot (http://www.sup-infor.com), where translations vary not only between "to write" and "to paint," but also between "to sculpt" and "to carve" (cp. Lockhart 1999 [1992]:594). In fact, the interpretations of *icuiloa* in Nahuatl are very similar to the etymologies for the word "to write" in the Indo-European languages. For example, the Greek γράφειν, "to write," and the English word *graphic* are the equivalent of *kerben*, "to engrave," in German. The Gothic *mēljan*, "to write," must have initially meant "to paint," since in German the word *malen*, "to paint," has survived. The Slavic word *pisati* or the Polish *pisać*, "to write," also initially meant "to paint," as demonstrated by the connection with the Latin *pingere*, "to paint." Finally, the most widespread word—in Latin *scribere*, in Spanish *escribir*, in German *schreiben*, in English *scribe*—originally signified to "incise" in English because of its connection with the Greek σκαριφάσθαι, which also has this meaning (Gelb 1963 [1952]:7).

[19] Moreover, in contemporary indigenous languages the term for "to paint" and "to write" continues to be the same verb, or rather two verbs that are very similar. For example, in Tarahumara the verb *osé* means both "to write" as well as "to paint," whereas among the *popoloca* from Veracruz "to write" is *tɨnja•yp,* and "to paint" is *tunjimp* (Clark 1995).

in Maya and the *nahual-* root in Nahuatl.[20] In fact, in Nahuatl a similar expression also exists, *nahualicuiloa*, that is made up of exactly the same components as *balam ts´ib*, in other words of the *nahual-* root, which refers to something disguised, concealed, transformed, and *icuiloa*, "to paint/to write." The entire word, *nahualicuiloa*, is translated by Molina as "to write in code, or to write something using a code" (1980 [1571]:fol. 63r), and alongside this entry in the same dictionary appears *tlanaualicuiloliztli*: "code," and *tlanaualicuilolli*: "coded" (fol. 35r).[21]
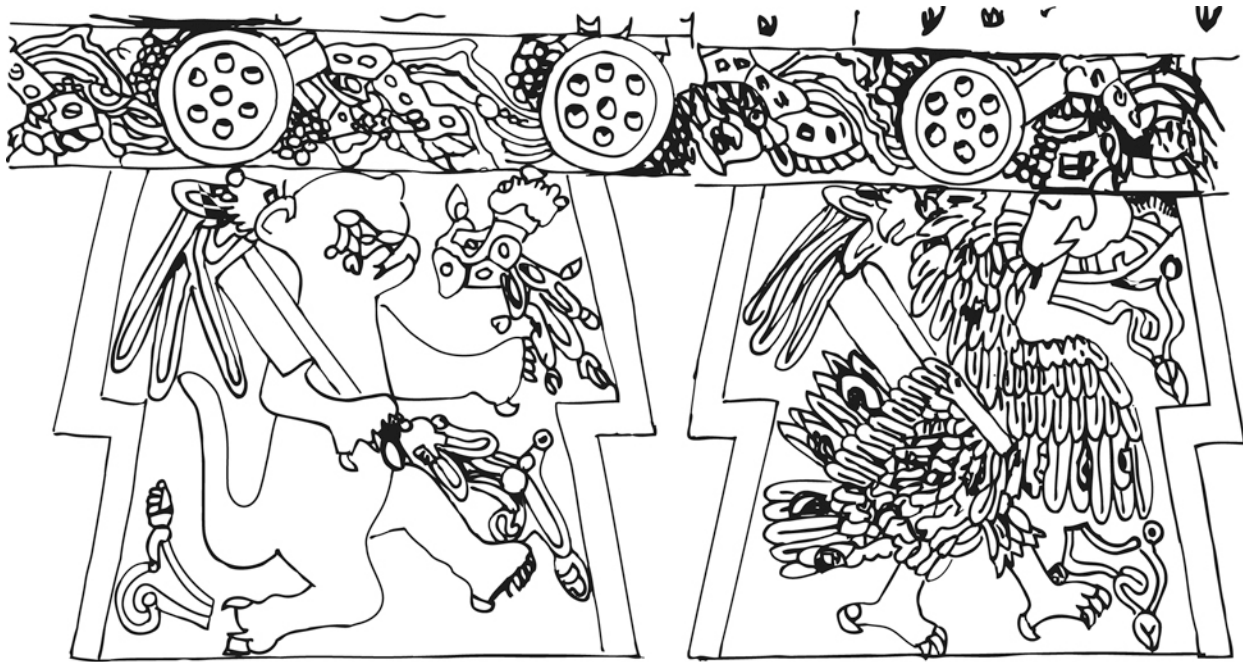
The *Huehuetl de Malinalco*

Fig. 2. Drum called *Huehuetl de Malinalco*. Redrawn from Alcina Franch et al. (1992:fig. LXII) by Nadezda Kryvda.

As already indicated, the use of this particular "pictographic" register for the same purpose as the *nahuallatolli* is always restricted to contexts where the theme is in some way related to the sacred and especially to codices of the calendar-religious type (the *tonalamatl*). Nevertheless, in my opinion it also appears in the cult objects, such as statues, recipients, and so on that were used in religious ceremonies. A perfect example is found on a vertical drum named *Huehuetl de Malinalco* (**fig. 2**), where outstanding abundance (or communicative redundancy) can be observed in terms of the elements conveying meaning. On this object, anthropomorphic

---

[20] It is important to notice that the *nanahualtin*, or supernatural forces, sometimes known by other names, work mostly during the night, undertaking the journey to the supernatural world in dreams (Mikulska 2008a:311-14, 328-34).

[21] Unfortunately, these words have not been found in this context, making it possible that their use was infrequent or that they were in some way "invented" by the friar.

images of eagles and felines undoubtedly represent graphic images of the lexemes in the diphrasism of *in cuauhtli in ocelotl* [eagle, jaguar-ocelot], whose global meaning would be "warrior," and, subsequent to metaphorical and metonymic processing, also refers to "war" (Montes de Oca 2000:146-48, 432-33, 449). In front of the faces of these characters are found images in a double spiral of water and fire, referring to the diphrasism *in atl in tlachinolli* [the water, the burnt], whose meaning is also "war" (254, 256-57).

As if this were insignificant, this same motif appears in the frieze above the marchers, although interspersed with representations of shields, which—thanks to the evident "war" context— undoubtedly are also part of the other diphrasism represented in graphic form. In fact, there may be three diphrasisms here, all signifying "war"; within these three pairs one of the lexemes is *chimalli*, "shield," whereas the second varies. Thus we have *in mitl in chimalli* [the arrow, the shield], *in chimalli in tlahuiztli* [the shield, the arms], *in chimalli in tehuehuelli* [the shield, the shield] (253-56). On the one hand, if we have here a graphic representation of either of the first two diphrasisms, one might question why no image appears referring to the second lexeme, but Montes de Oca (439) also indicated that at times it is sufficient for only one of these terms to appear because the human mind immediately makes the

Fig. 3. Symbol of war. *Codex Mendoza* (fol. 4v). Redrawn by Nadezda Kryvda.

connection with the term that is lacking. It is also feasible in this case, however, that this dynamic concerns the third expression, *in chimalli in tehuehuelli*, in that the second word refers to a type of shield with circles of feathers, possibly five of these (therefore referring to a shield that is characteristic of, but not exclusive to, the deity Huitzilopochtli; cp. Sahagún *PM facs.* 1993: fols. 261r; 262r, 262v, 265r; Sahagún *CF facs.* 1979:i, 1r; iii:3v; Tovar 2001:xix), or even seven (in this case more characteristic of the deity Tezcatlipoca; cp. Sahagún *PM facs.* 1993: fol. 261r; *CF facs.* 1979:i, 1r; these two gods were intimately related to war).[22] In the *Huehuetl de Malinalco* the shields have seven feathers, just as in the representations in the *Mendoza Codex* (fols. 2r, 2v, 3v, 4v, 5v, 7v, 10r, 12r, 13r, 15v), in the part also referring to "war" (**fig. 3**).

---

[22] Another name for this shield is *ihuiteteyo chimalli*, "shield decorated with feathers" (cp. Sahagún *PM* 1997: fols. 80r, 261r, 262v, 265r; Olko 2005:299). By all accounts it appears that the number of feather rings was not completely uniform, or at least in the colonial pictographic sources this same shield appears either with four rings (*CF facs.* 1979, xii: fols. 30v-32r) or with eight (*Codex Magliabechiano*, fol. 43r); also Tezcatlipoca may carry a shield with five rings (compare Tovar 2001:lam. XXI). Cp. this situation with the *tehuehuelli* entry in the *GDN*.

Thus in only one object do the graphical representations of lexemes for three diphrasisms appear, all referring to the same concept of "war" and therefore constituting a very good example of communicative accumulation. This same accumulation may appear in oral discourse. In the work by Cristobal del Castillo, in the fragment where Huitzilopochtli goes to the Underworld and speaks to the Lord of that place, Tetzauhteotl, they must be speaking in the special register because this is a case of communication with the divine world. Note that this second individual predicts that the Mexica will be warriors (Castillo 2001[1908]:96-97):

Inic centlamantli huel yehuatl ic	"First thing: that which you receive in
anquimoyollotitiazque	your soul will be
in quauhyotl, in oceloyotl,	[the character of eagles, the character of ocelots],
in teoatl, tlachinolli,	[the sacred water and the burnt],
mitl chimalli	[the arrow and the circular shield]."[23]

Nahualicuilolli in the Codices

I am even more interested in observing the application of the *nahualicuilolli* register in the codices of the calendar-religious type than in the other tridimensional objects. The function of these codices was to elucidate not only the calendar but also—and above all—the divine forces that oversee particular periods of time,[24] omens, and the corresponding destinies, or rather all that a *tlamatini tlapouhqui* ("sage, accountant [of days]/ fortune teller") discovers on entering the supernatural world. As Jansen explains (2002:285), "the pictographic mode of the religious books" is "prescriptive," implying that it does not consist of an account of what happened as in the historical codices, but rather describes the day and the character of the person born that day, thus indicating his destiny (prognosis) and any prescriptive activity (ritual). The example given by the Dutch researcher here is the graphic representation of a burnt temple. In a historic codex this image signifies "conquest," whereas in a religious codex it indicates the possibility of a conquest (or of being conquered) on a certain day, "with the characteristic ambiguity inherent in ceremonial language"(*idem*).

---

[23] My translation into English is based on that by Navarrete (Castillo 2001 [1908]).

[24] This in fact was the Mesoamerican concept of time: that time was formed or created from the essence of the gods, and should thus be comprehended as "strength-god-time." In other words, the Mesoamerican cosmos functioned thanks to an eternal struggle between opposing elements (or opposing divine essences), through which time and the "divine" powers were created, so that the form of the god associated with each day came to the earth's surface at that precise moment in the calendar (López Austin 1995:438, 1996 [1980]:i, 476-95).

Fig. 4. Graphic representation of the diphrasism *in yohualli in ehecatl* (a), compared with the image of night sky (b), and the face of the wind god Ehecatl (c).

Fig. 4a. *Borgia Codex* (lam. 29). Redrawn by Nadezda Kryvda.

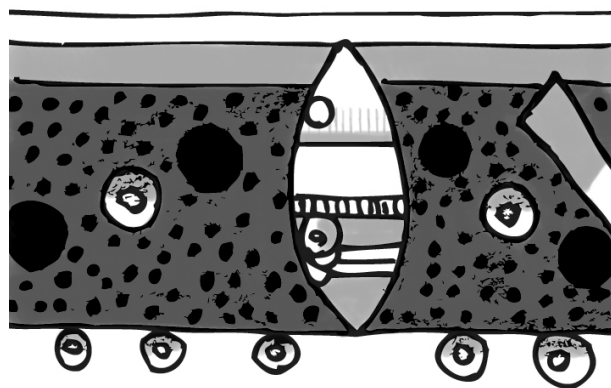Fig. 4c. *Borgia Codex* (lam. 72). Redrawn by Nadezda Kryvda.

Fig. 4b. *Borgia Codex* (lam. 52). Redrawn by Nadezda Kryvda.

As already mentioned, the metaphors and diphrasisms used in *nahuallatolli* and *tecpillatolli* were not for daily use. In the same way, it may be expected that the graphic representations corresponding to these expressions will appear in the calendar-religious codices, and that likewise they will not appear in codices treating mundane subjects. Thus the expression *in yohualli in ehecatl* [night, wind], the title applied to superior deities,[25] was definitely used only in a religious context. And it appears more frequently in the *huehuetlatolli* compiled in the sixth book of the *Florentine Codex*. Correspondingly, the graphic representation of this abstract diphrasism is only found in the *tonalamatl* (**fig. 4a**): represented by the bodies of two animals—serpent or lizard-like, painted in the same way as the night, in black or dark grey decorated with a motif of "rings" or "horseshoes" also in black and covered with so-called "starry eyes," which were signs for stars (cp. **fig. 4b**). Likewise, the mouths of these abstract beings are the same as the pointed mask distinctive of Ehecatl, the god of wind (**fig. 4c**). However, concerning this

---

[25] Above all, this concerned the divinity (or a divine couple) known by the names *Tloque Nahuaque* ("Lord of the Nearby, Lord of the Close by") (Sahagún *CF* 1950-82:vi, 33, 50, 73, 91, 121, 135, 154, 187) or by the title *Totecuio* ("Our Lord") (vi, 54, 95, 141), even though at times these titles were used with reference to a more concrete god, either *Tezcatlipoca* (vi, 7) or *Mixcoatl* (vi, 34). Cp. Olivier 2004:50-54.

particular image, and lacking a Rosetta Stone, it is clear that we are working from very fragile evidence, especially if my analysis is compared with that of Maarten Jansen. Even though Jansen also identifies this image as "night and wind," he considers that symbolically it signifies "the immaterial existence of the gods, which are 'night and wind,' or in other words invisible, impalpable, mysterious" (1997:76-77).

These two different interpretations are not mutually exclusive, since the most important quality of the supreme deities may consist of their being impalpable and invisible, whereas what interests me is whether their graphic representations allude directly to a semantic group of the linguistic kind, and as such are in fact metaphorical in terms of Paul Ricoeur's definition,[26] or visual/plastic expressions of certain metaphorical concepts such as those defined by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson.[27] The "visual diphrasisms" presented throughout this work effectively correspond to linguistic expressions. It cannot be stated definitively, however, that all images of this type in the codices that have semantic shifts correspond to semantic groups of a linguistic type (especially if we accept Lakoff and Johnson's definition of metaphorical concepts). Besides, once this premise is accepted (that "visual diphrasisms" are always graphic representations of oral expression), then there is a risk of not always capturing their significance. This is why it would be appropriate to give the image-structure a different name here, possibly applying the term *digrafism*.[28]

Metonyms and Synecdoche

Fig. 5. Different graphic representations of the diphrasism with the meaning of "authority."

Fig. 5a. Sahagún *Primeros Memoriales facs.* fol. 51r). Redrawn by Nadezda Kryvda.
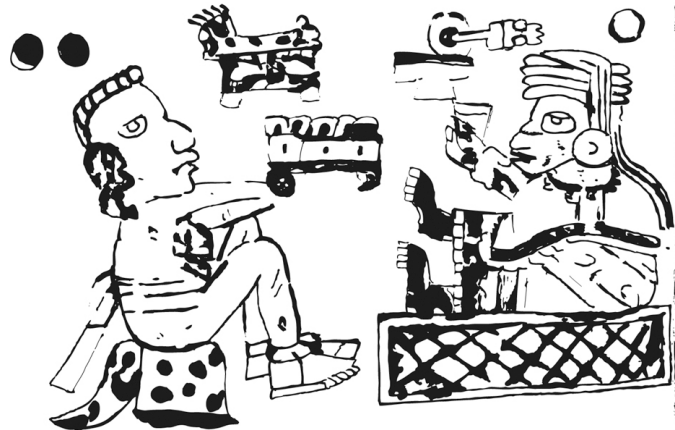
Fig. 5b. *Vaticanus B Codex* (lam. 42). Redrawn by Katarzyna Mikulska Dąbrowska.

---

[26] According to Ricoeur (1978 [1975]:3), "metaphor constitutes a displacement and an extension of the meaning of words," so that the character of metaphor is basically linguistic (cp. Craveri 2004:28).

[27] Lakoff and Johnson (1988 [1980]:25-28) understand *metaphors* to be *metaphorical ideas*: principles organized according to conceptual systems, which at the same time represent mental schemes by which we create metaphorical expressions, popularly known as metaphors.

[28] This term resulted from a very fertile discussion about this subject with Michela Craveri and Rogelio Valencia.

Fig. 5c. *Borgia Codex* (lam. 65). Redrawn by Nadezda Kryvda.

Fig. 5d. *Borgia Codex* (lam. 54). Redrawn by Nadezda Kryvda.
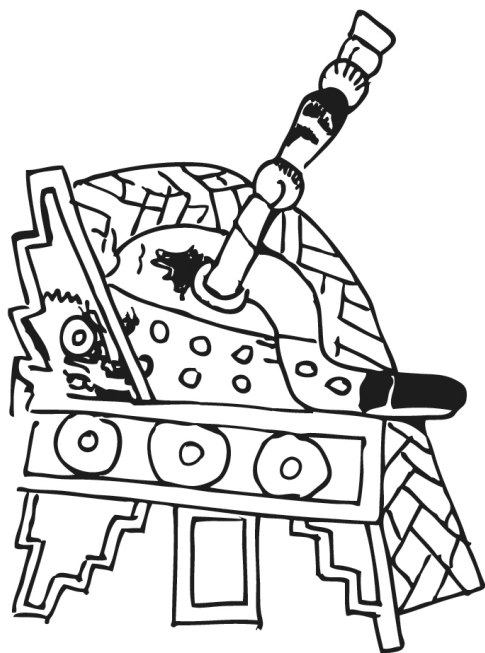
Fig. 5e. *Vaticanus B Codex* (lam. 83). Redrawn by Nadezda Kryvda.

Graphic representations of diphrasisms were not restricted to the calendar-religious context, even though they undoubtedly appear more frequently there and are more varied. One of the diphrasisms represented "outside" the *tonalamatl* is the expression mentioned previously, *in petlatl in icpalli* [the mat, the seat], which idiomatically means "authority." In the graphic version it takes the form of a seat made of matting (compare Sahagún *PM* 1997: fol. 51r; *Xolotl Codex*, 3; *Magliabechiano Codex*, fol. 67r; **fig. 5a**). In some codices of the Borgia Group there can be a jaguar skin instead of the matting (codices *Vaticanus B*, 42; *Borgia*, 65; **fig. 5b, 5c**), although the meaning is the same. But only in the calendar-religious codices can the diphrasisms be applied according to the *nahualicuilolli* rules—where "amplification" of meaning associated with this sign can be observed, as well as its appearance in metonymic form.

In the *Borgia Codex* (54), the diphrasism appears to be accompanying a human figure (**fig. 5d**). The extension of meaning here changes from "authority" to "ruler." This interpretation is based on three manuscripts that contain similar passages (the *Borgia*, *Vaticanus B*, and *Cospi* codices), where the subject concerns the apparitions of Venus

following her disappearance into the Underworld,[29] and the "attacks" on five different entities, with the purpose of releasing any negative energy emanating from the Underworld. The beings attacked by Venus are represented in detail in the codices, and this information can be compared to the sources written in the Latin alphabet. Thus the *Anales de Cuauhtitlán* (Velázquez 1975 [1945]:11) inform us that on days assigned with the *acatl* ("reed") symbol[30] Venus threatens the rulers, information that conforms to that presented in the *Borgia Codex* (**fig. 5d**). In the *Vaticanus B Codex* (83), however, we have a case of metonymic meaning; although it depicts the seat with the matting the human figure does not even appear (**fig. 5e**). In the *Cospi Codex* (10) the situation is further complicated. The image of the sun is added to the representation of a seat with a back (painted according to the correct conventions of this manuscript). In Mesoamerica there was a strong link between this star and the supreme leader (Durán 1984 [1967], ii:316; cp. Olivier 2008:275-78), which is why in this case in the pictorial representation we have not only a double example of a "graphic metonym," but also an accumulation of elements with meaning (which I will discuss in greater detail below). The message would undoubtedly have been complete with either image, whether of the sun or of the throne.

Other examples of metonyms are presented in these same passages. According to the *Anales de Cuauhtitlán* (Velázquez 1975 [1945]:11), in the days marked with the *ollin* symbol ("earthquake") Venus attacked young men, *alias* warriors. In the *Vaticanus B* (84) and *Cospi* (11;

Fig. 6. Representations of warriors.
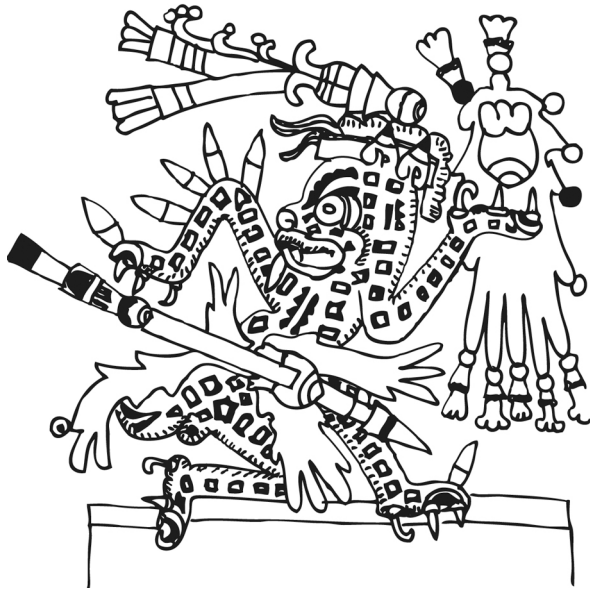
Fig. 6a. As a jaguar. *Cospi Codex* (lam. 11). Redrawn by Nadezda Kryvda.
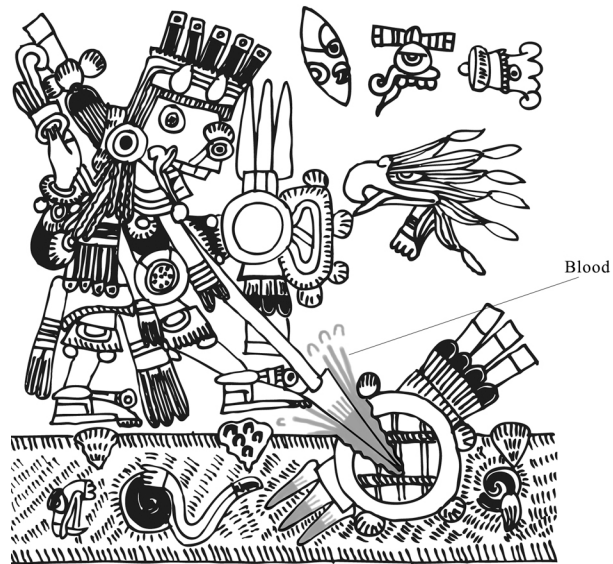
Fig. 6b. As a shield with arrows. *Borgia Codex* (lam. 54). Redrawn by Nadezda Kryvda.

---

[29] In other words, it is the moment when Venus reappears in the sky after the 8-day period of invisibility, called the inferior conjunction, which was the phase subsequent to that when Venus appears as the evening star (Anders et al. 1994:244).

[30] In Mesoamerica, the "date" consisted of a combination of a number (from 1 to 13) with one of the 20-day symbols, which may be named after animals (such as "dog," "eagle," and so on), objects (such as "house" or "knife"), natural phenomena (such as "rain" or "earthquake"), or abstract entities (such as "death").

fig. 6a) codices, the warriors are represented as jaguars, and in the *Borgia Codex* (54; **fig. 6b**) as a shield with arrows. In both cases the graphic images are representations of diphrasism. In the first case, only one of the two lexemes in the expression *in cuauhtli in ocelotl* [eagle, jaguar] is represented, while in the second both lexemes of the diphrasism *in mitl in chimalli* [arrow, round shield] appear, both making reference to war and/or warriors.

Fig. 7. Graphic representations of the agave goddess Mayahuel.
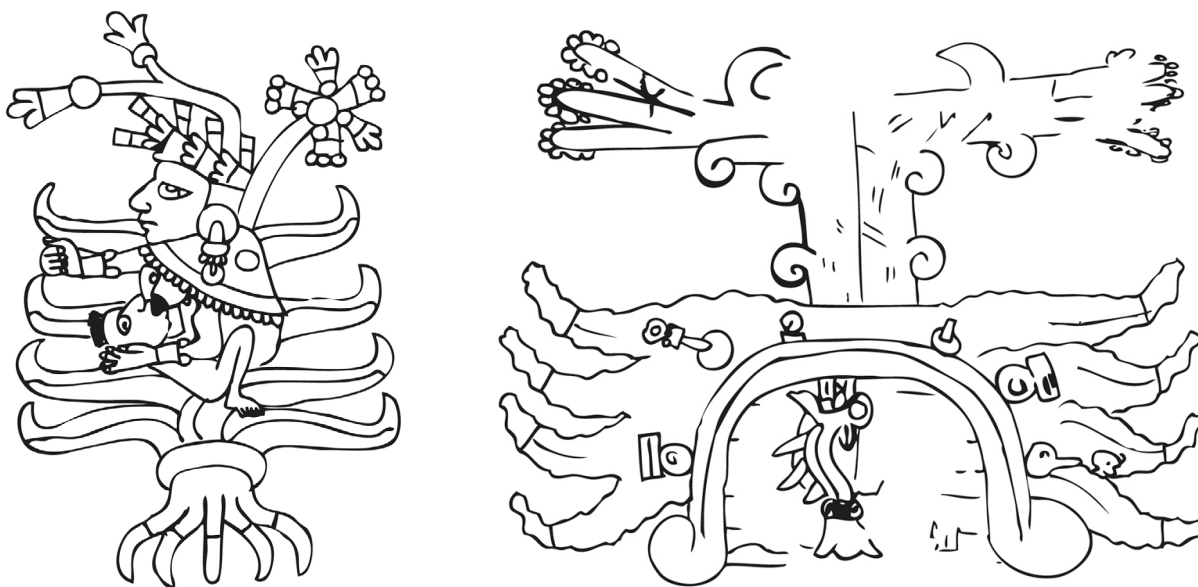
Fig. 7a. *Fejérváry-Mayer Codex* (lam. 28). Redrawn by Nadezda Kryvda.

Fig. 7b. *Vaticanus B Codex* (lam. 40). Redrawn by Nadezda Kryvda.

Equally characteristic of the *tonalamatl* books is synecdoche. In another series of parallel fragments in the codices *Borgia* (15-17), *Fejérváry-Mayer* (28-29), and *Vaticanus B* (40-42), four series of five deities are presented at different moments during the birth of a child.[31] The last of these groups consists of five women who are breastfeeding a newborn. Among them is the goddess of agave, Mayahuel.[32] A distinctive feature found in the images of the agave goddess is that she is always sitting on or in front of this plant. It is important to note that if this element is removed the deity represented becomes practically indistinguishable from the goddesses Tlazolteotl or Xochiquetzal (cp. *Borbonicus Codex*, 8; *Borgia Codex*, 49-52). Thus, I believe that the image of agave is an integral part of the representation of Mayahuel and as such can be observed in the manifestations of this mother-goddess in the *Borgia Codex* (16) and *Fejérváry-Mayer Codex* (28; **fig. 7a**). However, in the *Vaticanus B Codex* (40; **fig. 7b**), the figure of the goddess disappears, with only the agave effigy remaining, although here she is breastfeeding not

---

[31] See Anders et al. 1993a:109-15; 1993b:239-46; 1994:247-60; Boone 2007:140-41; Batalla Rosado 2008a:361-66; Mikulska 2008a:71, 125.

[32] Although considering the relevant data from written sources, it could also be interpreted as an incarnation of the plant itself; Sahagún *CF* 1950-82:ii, 132; *Vaticanus Ríos Codex*, fol. 20v; *Histoyre du Méxique* 1985 [1965]: 107; cp. Mikulska 2008a:118, 123-25.

so much a child as a fish. Thus here we have another "visual trope," surely the same one that appears in the *Borgia Codex* (16).[33]

These processes, which follow the same mechanism used to create metonyms and synecdoche, have resulted in the identification of the so-called "god hieroglyphs," as Anders, Jansen, and Reyes García termed them (1994:141-42), comparing this method of graphic representation with the Maya writing system. In the first eight pages of the *Cospi Codex*, as in other calendar-religious codices, the most important Mesoamerican calendar count is presented: 260 days or *tonalpohualli*. Nevertheless, in contrast to the other *tonalamatl*, in the *Cospi Codex*, to one side of the squares where the symbols of the days are placed, small images of nine gods are depicted, forming another cycle of time, known by the name of "Nine Lords of the Night." Since this representation takes up a very small physical space, most of them have only their heads illustrated (reduction), but possibly for the same reason—lack of space—the total representation of the head is conveyed by one of its details (synecdoche) or by another sign (which does not appear in the head representation but is closely related to the nature of the god in question), therefore functioning as a metonym.

Fig. 8. "Reduced" images of some deities of the *tonalpohualli* cycle in the *Cospi Codex*.
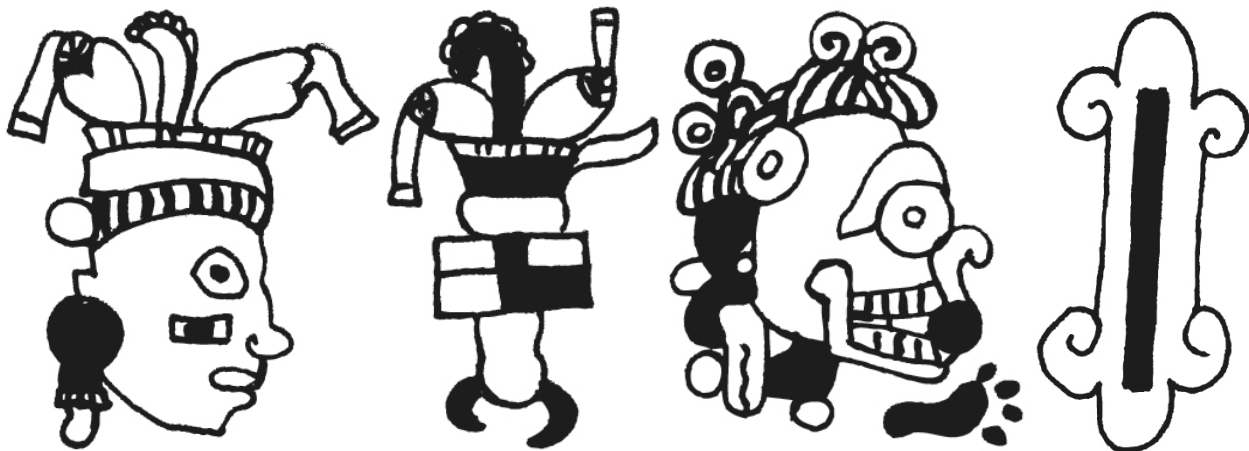
Fig. 8a. The maize god, Centeotl, in an anthropomorphic form (with corn cobs in his headdress) and as a bird claw with corn cobs and maize flowers. *Cospi Codex* (lam. 2). Redrawn by Nadezda Kryvda.

Fig. 8b. The god of the Underworld, Mictlantecuhtli, in an anthropomorphic form (as a skull) and as an image of a large bone. *Cospi Codex* (lam. 7). Redrawn by Nadezda Kryvda.

Thus the image of the god Itztli ("Obsidian Knife"), who instead of a face has a knife, can be "reduced" to a drawing of this telltale element alone. The maize god, Centeotl, recognized by the corn cobs in his headdress, also appears in the form of a bird claw with corn cobs and maize flowers (**fig. 8a**). Mictlantecuhtli, the god of the Underworld, is always represented as either a single large bone or a total skeletal form (**fig. 8b**). Another example of substitution based on synecdoche is found in the case of Tlalloc, the rain deity, who nearly always appears with a walking stick in the form of a snake (the symbol for lightning; Anders et al. 1994:158), where his

---

[33] According to Anders et al. (1994:98; 1993a:114, 233), the jade fish symbolizes something precious, for example a child.

image is reduced to just this element. Also the goddess Tlazolteotl, whose distinctive features are unspun cotton and a nose ornament in the shape of a crescent moon (Mikulska 2008a: 90-100), appears as just a ball of cotton with the symbol of a crescent moon (**fig. 8c**).

In the following two examples, the "hieroglyph" is not so much a representation of the particular features of the goddess, but rather of her names. Thus the water goddess Chalchiuhtlicue, whose name means "Her Skirt of Green Precious Stones," takes the form of the image of a green-blue skirt with a jade

Fig. 8c. The fertility goddess, Tlazolteotl, in an anthropomorphic form (with unspun cotton and a crescent moon nose ornament) and as a ball of cotton with the symbol of a crescent moon. *Cospi Codex* (lam. 7). Redrawn by Nadezda Kryvda.

jewel above it. [34] This mode of representation amounts to a very similar (if not identical) process in the Maya writing system (logographic-syllabic). In contrast, it is worth observing the representation of the name of the Nahua solar god Piltzintecuhtli, "Noble Lord" (noun *pilli*, "noble" + reverential *tzin* + noun *tecuhtli*, "lord"). If this name had been rendered by means of a logographic process, there might have been a drawing of the glyph for a turquoise diadem, which is the popular way of representing the word *tecuhtli* ("lord")[35] with another graphic element referring to a *pilli*.[36] Nevertheless, the "hieroglyph" consists of "an adornment of feathers and knots, indicative of the title of 'noble prince'" (Anders et al. 1994:146), undoubtedly related to nobility but here functioning as a metonymic substitute.

Accumulation

The feature of accumulation of elements with meaning, characteristic of the pictographic expression found in the *tonalamatl* codices, appears not to have been analyzed by researchers. As a first example, the graphic motif termed *tlaquaquallo* may be useful. It is made up of signs of parts of the human body: skulls, hands, feet, eyes, bones, deflated lungs, and blood. Even though it is not necessary for all these elements to appear, it is important that there should be at least two

---

[34] The same thing happens with the graphic representation of the name Tepeyollotl, "Heart of the Mountain," and in this case a human representation of the involved deity does not even exist.

[35] Cp. Olivier 2008:268. Cp. also the graphic representations of the name Motecuhzoma ("the Angry Lord") in various codices—for example, in the *Telleriano-Remensis Codex* the names of the rulers Huehue Motecuhzoma (fol. 34v) and Motecuhzoma Xocoyotzin (fol. 41r), or this second name found in the *Primeros Memoriales* (fol. 51v).

[36] Because of the almost certain provenance of the *Cospi Codex* from the volcanic region of Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl, its formulation in a Nahuatl-speaking region can be assured (Anders et al. 1994:93).
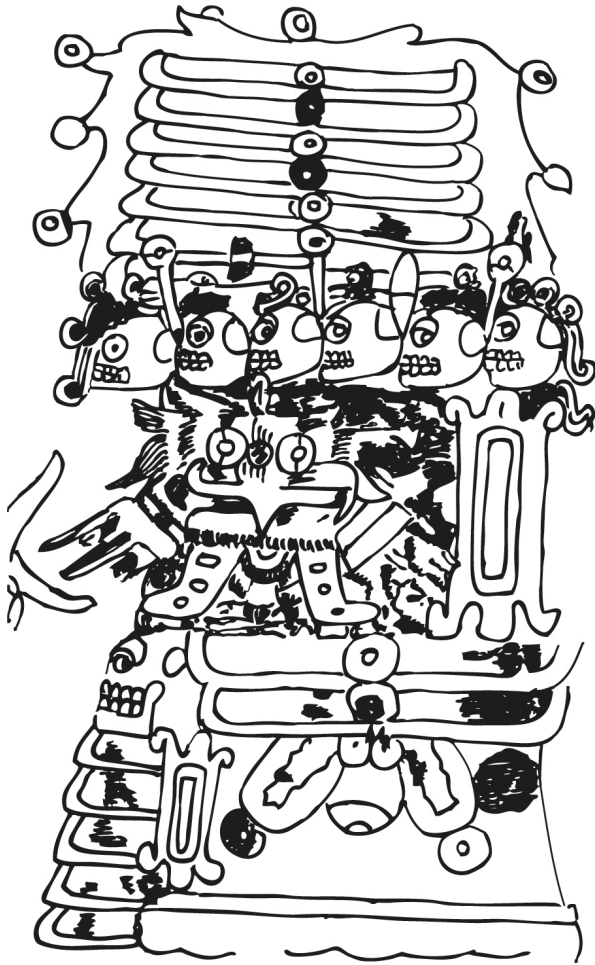
of them. This assembly is characteristic—or even distinctive—of the deities from the Underworld (especially the god Mictlantecuhtli and his feminine counterpart, Mictecacihuatl), where nearly all the dead go. These gods are normally represented in the form of skeletons (or at least with their heads depicted as skulls), frequently with the heart hanging between the lungs; they may also wear necklaces made of hands, hearts, and skulls.[37] The signs constituting the *tlatlaquallo* motif are mostly found in temples or thrones particular to these deities. Although these signs may be "decorated" with only two or three such elements, for example bones and blood (*Borgia Codex*, 13) or ribs, blood, and hearts (70), more often nearly all of them appear (*Cospi Codex*, 13; **fig. 9a**).

In the spoken language, the body parts just mentioned correspond to lexemes of certain diphrasisms signifying "human being," but emphasizing different human qualities. The following expressions exist: *in ixtli in yollotl* [the face/eye, the heart], which emphasizes "the external part of the person" and the understanding; *in ixtli in tentli* [the face/eye, the mouth], with "emphasis on the intellectual capacities of the person: perception and capacity for communication";

Fig. 9a. The temple of South (related to the Place of the Dead) decorated with *tlaqquallo* elements. *Cospi Codex* (lam. 13). Redrawn by Katarzyna Mikulska Dąbrowska.

in yollo in nacayo [the heart, the flesh of the human body], with a more physical and emotional connotation; and *in omitl in nacatl* [the bone, the flesh], again with a more physical connotation but focused on strength (Montes de Oca 2000:135-44). The most frequent diphrasism is *in maitl in ixcitl* [the hand, the foot], which by referring to the most external parts of the human body "integrates a totality and in this way represents the human being" (137).[38] Besides this aspect, the

---

[37] Cf. the monumental sculpture of Cihuacoatl in the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City and the representations of beings, named *tzitzimime* in the *Tudela* and *Magliabechiano* codices, fols. 46 and 76r, respectively.

[38] The lexemes "hand" and "foot" are also directly related to the number twenty because of the obvious link to the number of fingers and toes, even though the significance of this lexical pair is also derived from the idea that "the foot and the hand refer to constitutive parts that make up the whole" (Montes de Oca 2000:137-38). It is worth indicating that in the K'iche' Indian ritual texts, Craveri has collected many examples of the diphrasism *aqan q'ab* [the foot, the hand] that signify "human being," focusing on human possibility and necessity for interaction with the community (see Craveri 2004:122-23, 205-06, 246-47).

Fig. 9b. Dead man devoured by a skeletal deity, with a recipient with *tlaquaquallo* elements on its side. *Borgia Codex* (lam. 57). Redrawn by Nadezda Kryvda.

lexemes of this last expression also indicate what the food for the Lords of the Underworld consists of: "Mictlantecuhtli, Mictecacihuatl, there in Mictlan[39] they eat *feet* and *hands*,"[40] even though the meal also includes hearts: "he eats *hearts* in Mictlan."[41] It is evident that in this case we have a metaphorical description of the "menu" of the Underworld deities, even if the central idea is that they concentrate on stripping the flesh from the human remains after death (Mikulska 2007a:22, 2008a:288-91). Thus one of the names for Mictlan is *Ximohuayan* (cp. Castillo 2001 [1908]:117), the "place for stripping off flesh," and that is why the contemporary Nahua of the Sierra Norte de Puebla say "*Talocan*[42] gives us food, then *Talocan* eats us" (Knab 1991:41-42).

An excellent graphic manifestation of this idea is found on page 57 of the *Borgia Codex*, where a dead man is being devoured by a skeletal deity from the Place of the Dead, while to one side there is a receptacle containing the heart, the deflated lungs, and the eyes (**fig. 9b**). In the same way, the previously mentioned necklaces made of hands, hearts, and skulls, as affirmed by Montes de Oca (2000:439), represent an excellent example of visually conveyed diphrasisms by illustrating the parts that correspond to lexemes or to only one of these, precisely as occurs here. Given that the necklace of the deity represented is made up of human hands and hearts, they should therefore correspond to the two different diphrasisms—*in maitl in ixcitl* [hand, foot] and *in ixtli in yollotl* [face/eye, heart], both symbolizing a person although in different ways. My idea is that the *tlaquaquallo* design is nothing other than the graphic representation of various lexemes comprising the diphrasisms that symbolize "human being" (although they perhaps refer more to the human body). Similarly, the expressive freedom of the *tlacuilo* ("painter/writer" of the codex) may be observed both in the quantity of elements drawn (accumulation) as well as in the way they are depicted. Thus one of the "divination scenes" that accompanies the

---

[39] Mictlan is the Nahua Underworld, and at the same time it is a Place of the Dead.

[40]   In the original version: "Mictlantevuhtli, Mictecacihuatl, in ompa quicua Mictlan *xocpalli, macpalli*" (Sahagún *PM* 1997:177; italics added). It is clear that in the original text the lexemes for this diphrasism take a different grammatical form (different from that found in the basic form, *in icxitl in maitl*), a fact that confirms that this is a diphrasism, given that its lexemes always appear in the same form (cp. Montes de Oca 2000:37-38).

[41] ". . . *yollotli* yn ompa quiqua mictlan" (Sahagún *PM* 1997:177; italics added).

[42] The name used by the contemporary Nahua from Puebla in reference to the Underworld, corresponding to the pre-Hispanic *Mictlan*.

Fig. 10. "Divination scenes" with *tlaquaquallo* elements.
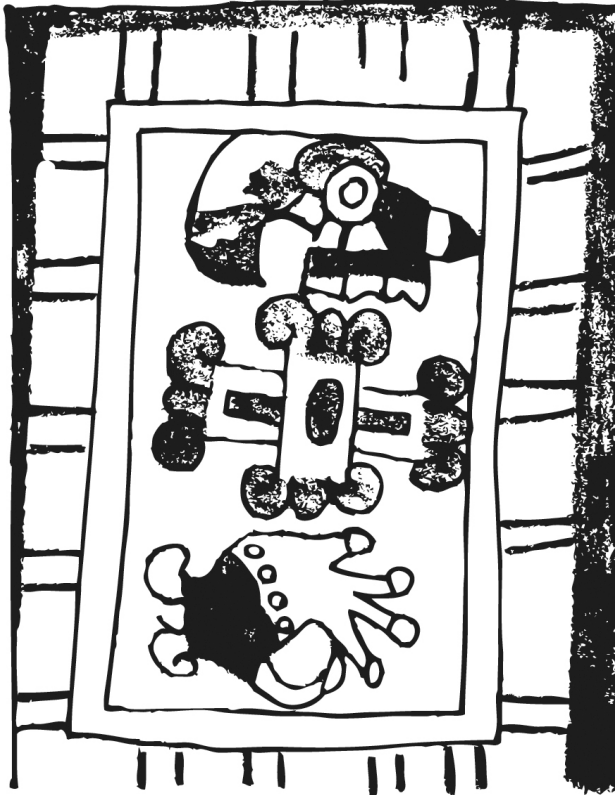
Fig. 10a. *Vaticanus B Codex* (lam. 7). Redrawn by Nadezda Kryvda.
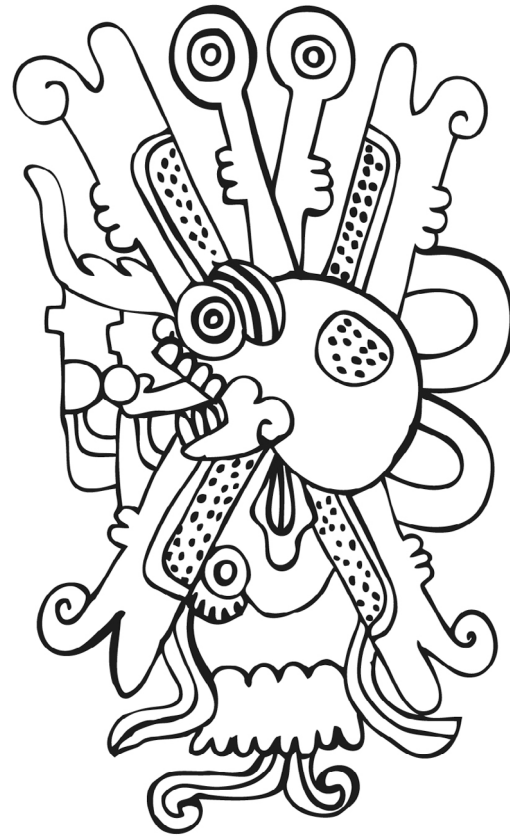
Fig. 10c. *Borgia Codex* (lam. 7). Redrawn by Nadezda Kryvda.
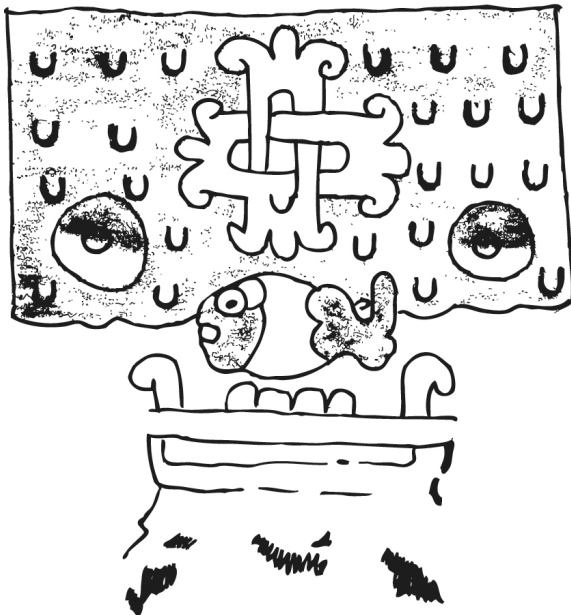
Fig. 10b. *Cospi Codex* (lam. 7). Redrawn by Nadezda Kryvda.

tonalpohualli tables is made up of images of parts of the human body. In the *Vaticanus B Codex* (7) it is a skull, two crossed bones, and a hand (**fig. 10a**), and in the *Cospi Codex* (7) crossed bones, a heart, eyes, and ribs[43] (**fig. 10b**). In both manuscripts these graphic elements are presented one beside the other. On the other hand, in the *Borgia Codex* (7), the elements of *tlaquaquallo* are found superimposed one on top of the other, in such a way that someone not accustomed to this mode of presenting visual signs might have difficulty identifying them. Additionally, in this scene there are presentations of all the possible components of the *tlaquaquallo* design: a skull, two large crossed bones, extracted eyeballs, ribs, a heart, deflated lungs, and blood (**fig. 10c**).

---

[43] The depiction of the lungs painted below the ribs may be missing because this part of the manuscript is badly damaged.

Fig. 11. Graphic representations of blood (the red color is marked with grey).

Fig. 11b. *Borgia Codex* (lam. 8). Redrawn by Nadezda Kryvda.
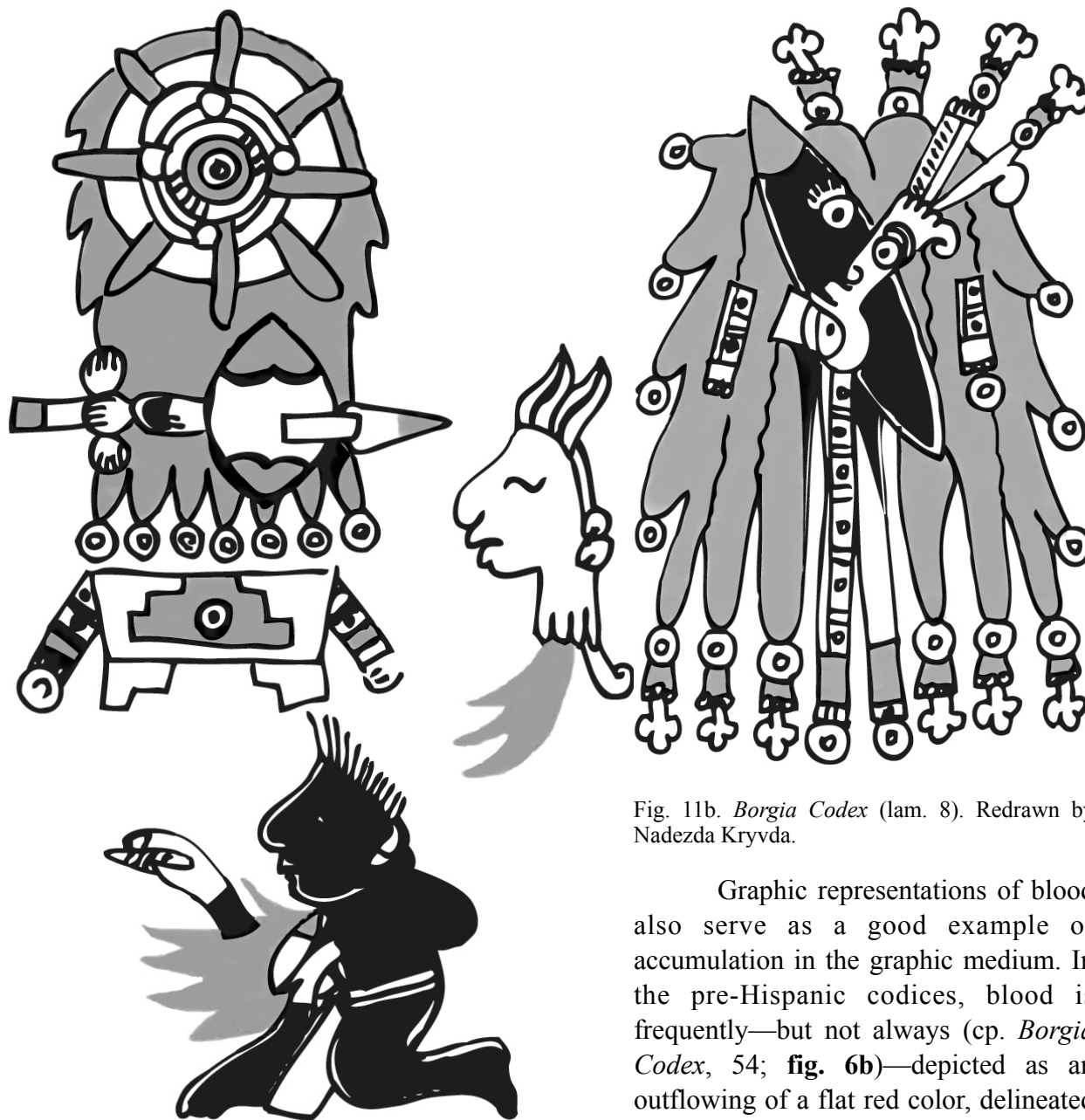
Fig. 11a. *Borgia Codex* (lam. 48). Redrawn by Nadezda Kryvda.

Graphic representations of blood also serve as a good example of accumulation in the graphic medium. In the pre-Hispanic codices, blood is frequently—but not always (cp. *Borgia Codex*, 54; **fig. 6b**)—depicted as an outflowing of a flat red color, delineated by a black line (48; **fig. 11a**), and it does not stain what it touches, in contrast to the European or Europeanized indigenous convention (Batalla Rosado 1994:48-49). At times, the image of blood looks very much like a representation of water,[44] also painted as a river but blue in color and decorated with two concentric circles and little pointed snail. The flow of blood may also be "adorned" with such circles but in a variety of colors: white, yellow, and green (depending on the manuscript). According to Reyes Valerio (*apud* Batalla Rosado 1994:48), these concentric circles are representations of *chalchihuitl*, "green, precious

---

[44] According to Batalla Rosado (1994:48), the representation of blood derives from that of water.

stone" (**fig. 11a** and **b**), in this way extending the significance of blood towards *chalchiuhatl*, "precious liquid." The image in the sign for *xochitl*, or "flower," should be interpreted in a similar way, as substituting for the "precious stone" (Dibble *apud* Batalla Rosado 1994:49). Nevertheless, there are also cases in which both elements appear at the same time (*Cospi Codex*, 11; *Borgia Codex*, 8; **fig. 11b**). This accumulation can be even more extensive. For example, in the *Borgia Codex* the image of blood is enriched by "circular stones and blocks of jade and some
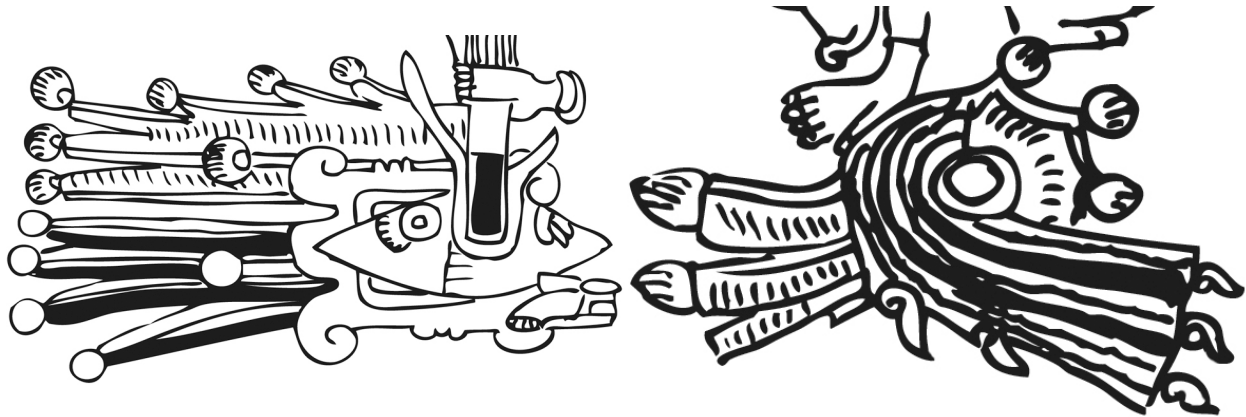
Fig. 12a-b. Graphic representations of water as precious liquid, with two different signs meaning "gold". *Borgia Codex* (lam. 50). Redrawn by Katarzyna Mikulska Dąbrowska.

small circles that possibly represent gold" (44; Batalla Rosado 2008a:433).[45] Signs that indicate "preciousness" with depictions of blood may be replaced fairly frequently by others indicating excrement, but painted in yellow color (*Borgia Codex*, 1, 17, 50, 54, 69) and therefore signifying *teocuitlatl*, "divine excrement" (cp. Batalla Rosado 2008a:339, 366, 450, 459, 481). Given that this word is a lexicalized diphrasism meaning "gold," it seems to be another way of transmitting the meaning "precious liquid." In fact, on page 50 of the *Borgia Codex* (**fig. 12a-b**), two images appear that assuredly confirm the possibility of an exchange of parts: these are two gushes painted in a spiral (certainly referring to "war"), one of fire (yellow with feather circles) and the other of water, painted first with yellow jewels (**fig. 12a**), and again with the *teocuitlatl* (**fig. 12b**) in both cases indicating "gold."

The last example of accumulation that I present here consists of the representations of "sacred pots." These are receptacles—vases, burners, or sacrificial plates—used for "communication between human beings and supernatural powers," serving as the "vehicle and connection" between the two worlds. They were used to offer the blood of (personal) sacrifice, in order that the gods should eat and be strong and in return should provide maize and other food products for humankind (Jansen 2002:313-14). In this way, the basic sequence of life and death was created, the "motor" of Mesoamerican existence. The "god pot" thus provided this "communication link" between gods and men. Hallucinatory substances were often kept therein

---

[45] In the *Borbonicus Codex* (20), there is also an example in which water is depicted, even though it certainly represents blood, and according to Dibble (*apud* Batalla Rosado 1994:49), "here a water ditch is made to represent blood; this is a metonymic device."

Fig. 13. The "god pot" with the face in form of skull, and with legs and arms opened on both sides. *Borgia Codex* (lam. 29). Redrawn by Katarzyna Mikulska Dąbrowska.

Fig. 14a. Graphic representation of "god pot." *Borgia Codex* (lam. 31). Redrawn by Katarzyna Mikulska Dąbrowska.

(302-14), possibly the famous *teotlacualli* ("divine food") described by Diego Durán (1984 [1967]:i, 51-52). A magnificent graphic representation of this idea is found on page 29 of the *Borgia Codex* (**fig. 13**), the beginning of an extraordinary passage in this codex that is interpreted by the majority of researchers[46] as representing a series of rituals.[47] According to the interpretation of Jansen (2002:302-06), at the center of the image in question is a pot containing black hallucinatory ointment, with a person superimposed on top who is bleeding from his virile member as he threads a rope through it. The drug, together with the pain, bring on a visionary experience, graphically illustrated in the form of "wind serpents and the night," in fact the same images already observed in the graphic representation of the

---

[46] See for example the interpretations by Anders et al. (1993a:175-245), Jansen (2002:284), Batalla Rosado (2008a:407-41), as well as others mentioned by Boone (2007:171-73).

[47] Note that Boone (2007:171-210) interprets these unique pages from the *Codex Borgia* (29-47) as a cosmological series.

diphrasism *in yohualli in ehecatl,* which, according to Jansen, gives meaning to the "mysterious and intangible."

In the same codex are other visual representations of these divine vases (cp. images 31, 38, 42, 46, 47, 57; **fig. 14a**), some of which are commented on by Jansen. Thus in image 31 a small human figure with a skeletal body (representing "a spirit from the Other World") emerges from the blood spilled from a sacrificed being. To the right of this being, two priestesses receive the "spirit" and give him a bath in a "sacred pot." Then, to the left of the central being, from the same "sacred pots" sprout maize plants, leading Jansen to conclude that "here, the magical

Fig. 14b. Graphic representation of "god pot." *Borgia Codex* (lam. 32). Redrawn by Katarzyna Mikulska Dąbrowska.

transformation of death into life takes place, symbolized by the corn cobs that sprout from Cihuacoatl's body" (2002:310). In a similar way, in image 32 of the *Borgia Codex* (**fig. 14b**) there is another "god pot" with an anthropomorphized sacrificial knife—the god *Itztli*—in the middle of the "patio in front of the temple . . . [where] the darkness of the night still reigns" (311), so that the divine vase appears to be placed in a temple of obscurity or in other words in a *Tlillan,* in the same way as in image 29. Without going into detailed interpretation of the entire representation, for present purposes it is sufficient to note that once again the main theme concerns a personal sacrifice bringing on a visionary experience (313).

Having introduced the general symbolism found in "god pots," I will now define their representation. Not all the "god pots" are painted in the same way as those in the *Codex Borgia*,[48] where they always appear anthropomorphized, or in the form of a skull with eyes and the famous "Mictlantecuhtli eyebrows" (cp. Batalla Rosado 2008a:339, 352, 355), as well as the fleshless jaw (**figs. 13-14a-b**). According to Jansen (2002:306), in this way "his relationship with the Lord of death is indicated and probably his capacity to cross the border between the world of the living and the dead, or between mortals and divine beings." Effectively, these images appear to represent a common image for the face of the skeletal god from the Underworld. The fact that the Underworld is also a place of creation (Mikulska 2008a:225-38; 2008b:152-64) confirms Jansen's interpretation. In addition, the "god pot" from image 29 has other added elements, which, taking into account their form and colors, appear to represent the stylized image of a heart hanging between deflated lungs, in the style common for bony gods of Mictlan. Certainly, the *tlacuilo* could have added more significant elements here because he had enough space on the sheet of the codex. Nevertheless, the image is a good example of accumulation.
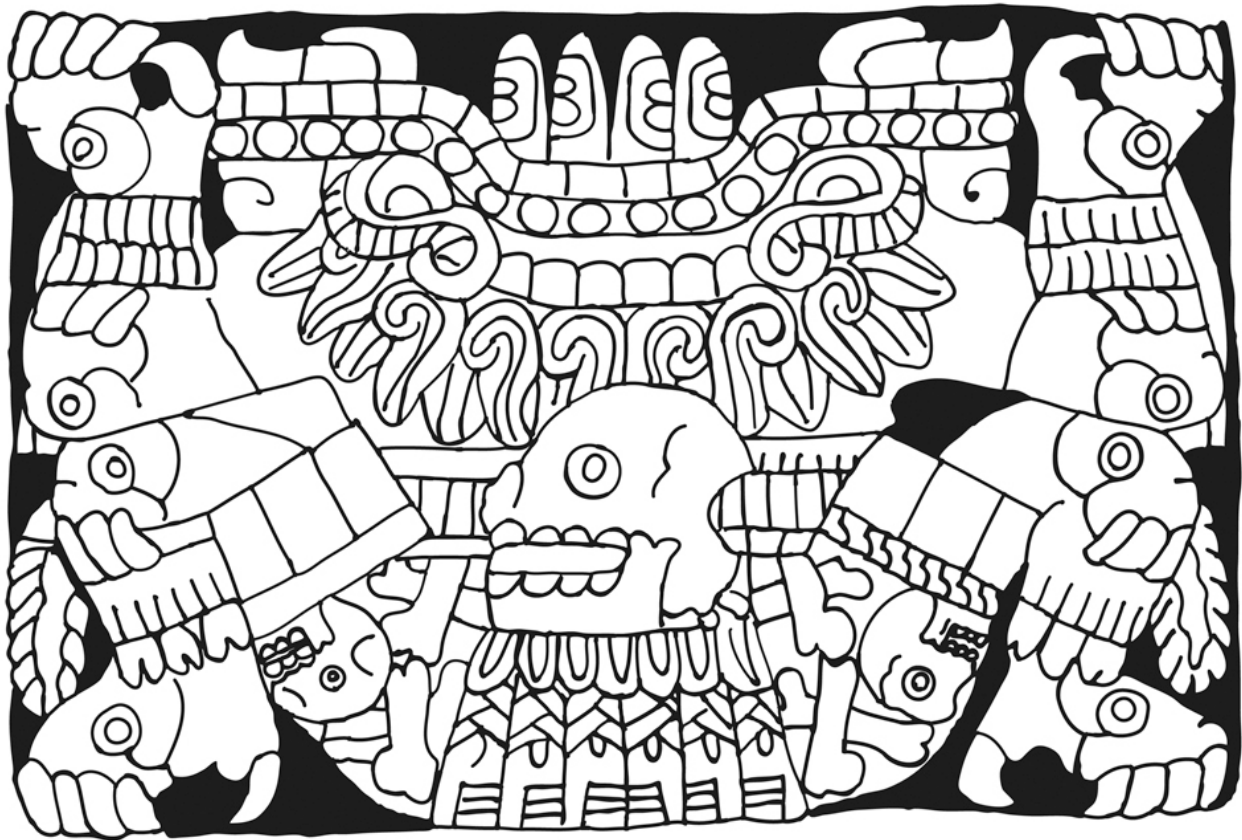
Fig. 15a. Earth in monster form, painted with arms and legs open. Image on the base of so called Hakmack Box. Redrawn by Nadezda Kryvda.

---

[48] Observe the other "god pots" analyzed by Jansen (2002:305-313): 1) the sarcophagus stone of Pakal; 2) a tripod plate of Ocotelulco with the face of the ancient priest Tezcatlipoca; 3) an image in the mural painting from Ocotelulco, almost the same as on page 32 of the *Borgia Codex*; and 4) an urn from Tomb 5 of Cerro de las Minas (Huajuapan) with the image of a pot full of ground tobacco in the hands of a man "on the point of shamanic flight."

The "god pot" is painted with legs and arms open on both sides, ending in claws (**fig. 13**). This posture is described by the German researcher Eduard Seler as *mamazouhticac* ("with the arms and legs open"; 1963 [1904]:ii, 15) or the "terrestrial toad" (i, 124, 147; ii, 14-15, 42-43, 46, 241), which is particular to the earth (**fig. 15a**)[49] and to the terrestrial deities, among whom should be mentioned not only Cihuacoatl and Mictecacihuatl, but also the goddesses Tlazolteotl (**fig. 15b**), Mayahuel, and Xochiquetzal. In the religious calendars these are usually presented as images of the earth in monster form (which in my opinion refers to the earth's surface; see Mikulska 2008a:150-56, 187-95), but by taking an anthropomorphic form its meaning changes to the interior of the earth or Cihuacoatl (Jansen 2002, Mikulska 2008a:190). Correspondingly, it is notable how metaphorical descriptions of the earth and of sorcerers correspond to the "visual manifestation" of this concept: "stretched out with her head facing upwards," "lying face down."[50]

This is undoubtedly the position for giving birth (cp. *Borbonicus Codex,* sheet 13; **fig. 15b**) and coitus.[51] This graphic symbolism refers to the reproductive act, fertility, and also the lustfulness of the earth and other beings who display this characteristic. The gods mentioned stand out because of their fecundity or as being lustful for corporeal love, thus assuring the abundant fertility of the earth. Similarly, the claws in the representations of the earth—which in other instances are accompanied by fangs and a fleshless face—indicate the

Fig. 15b. The fertility goddess Tlazolteotl, giving birth. *Borbonicus Codex* (lam. 13). Redrawn by Nadezda Kryvda.

---

[49] Above all, the sculptures of the earth in this posture have received a great deal of attention from researchers (cp. Nicholson 1963-64, Baquedano 1993, Gutiérrez Solana 1990, and Matos Moctezuma 1997, among others), but they are also found in the codices of the calendar-religious type (for example in *Borgia* (29-31, 32, 39-46), *Telleriano-Remensis* (f. 20r), *Vaticanus Ríos* (f. 29r); cp. Mikulska 2008a:150-56, 2007b: 263-90).

[50] In certain of these representations of the earth (for example in the relief at the base of the "Cihuacoatl monumental" and on the Bilimek Vase), the date 1-Rabbit also appears.

[51] This interpretation was first suggested by Eduard Seler (1963 [1904]:i, 120**).**

malevolent, destructive, and dangerous aspects of the earth as the devourer of the dead. Because of this network of meaning, "the posture 'of the toad' refers to the earth, which in its interior contains the beginnings of life, but also claims back that which previously emerged as a living thing, then returning dead" (Mikulska 2008a:194). Thus in the previously mentioned image of the "god pot" on page 32, the god Itztli, "Knife," is presented in this posture (**fig. 14b**).

In this interpretation, as made evident in the case of the "god pots" and the images of the earth, the concern is with something that permits transition between the human and the divine or supernatural world, or that marks the sacred transformation between life and death. In the case of the earth it is more obvious, but the "god pots" inspire more arguments, emphasizing their creative function or connotation. An example is the myth referring to the creation of humans, who were understood as being made by using the bones of previous generations, "ground up by Quilachtli, who is also Cihuacoatl, who created them forthwith in a beautiful glazed bowl" (*Leyenda de los Soles*, Tena 2002:179; cp. Mendieta 1993 [1870]:78 and Torquemada 1986 [1615]:ii, 121).

The linguistic expression that best corresponds to this idea of the "god pots" is the diphrasism *in toptli, in petlacalli*, or "the coffer, the reed chest." According to López Austin (1996 [1980]:i, 382), this expression refers to the idea of a secret, whereas for Montes de Oca (2000:259) "it makes reference to a secret place, out of the view of humans, with the function . . . of hiding something valuable so that it may be preserved." According to López Austin, this metaphor also corresponds to the Tlalloc pot,[52] that is, the pot that is inside the mountain (personal communication 2002), within which are engendered the mysteries of life. In other words, the dead arrive there, as indicated in multiple fragments from the *huehuetlatolli* of the *Florentine Codex*. For example: *ca otoconmotoptemilli, ca otoconmopetlacaltemili* (Sahagún *CF* 1950-82:vi, 21): "you went inside the coffer, you went inside the reed chest." Another example is the following, speaking of the dead (195):

> . . . *in oquinpolo, in oquintlati totecujo, in vevetque, in ilamatque, [...]*
> *ca oquinmotlatili in totecujo, â ca oquinmotoptemili, ca*
> *oquinmopetlacaltemili, ca oquinmihoali. In atlan in oztoc in mictlan*
>
> ". . . whom our Lord [destroyed, he hid them], [the old men, the old
> women] 'the ancestors' [...]; Our Lord put them inside [the coffer, the
> reed chest], sending them [into the water, into the cave] into Mictlan"

On the other hand, this same place—or the same recipients—contain within them the germs of life (agreeing perfectly with the concept of the Underworld/fleshless beings, who are also the source of creation, all of which coincides with the concept of "Tlalloc's pot," as López Austin states). Here we find the child about to be born (Sahagún *CF* 1950-82:vi, 138):

---

[52] As rightly argued by José Contel (2008:164-65); in spite of the widely accepted etymology suggested by Thelma Sullivan (1974), the name of this god continues to be written as Tlaloc, whereas it comes from *tlal-lo* ("covered with earth"), an etymology that supports its being written with a double l.

quenami ic quimapanilia in totecujo in piltontli in conetontli: ca
itoptzin ca ipetlacaltzin in totecujo

"How does Our Lord swaddle [the little child, the little kid]? Into his
coffer, into his reed chest, of Our Lord"[53]

And here we find the source of life (80):

in nican tictlapoain toptli in petlacalli in mixpan chayaui in
ticcecenmana in timomoiaoa

"here, you open [the coffer, the reed chest] and spill before you, sowing
and scattering seed"[54]

For all of the reasons given, I believe that the concept of the "god pot" is much more closely associated with the earth, marking the boundary between the divine and human worlds and also being the "place" where the mystery of life is engendered, a magical transformation from one state to another. Viewed from this perspective, the graphic representation of the "god pot," enriched with the elements of the face and body of the skeletal god of the Underworld with legs and arms open, can be perfectly understood. It also provides an excellent example of the accumulation of signified elements.

Conclusions

Examples of these "graphic manifestations" could be multiplied, considering that in the *tonalamatl* codices almost no simple images are found; all contain expansive semiotic information that—in spite of our ever greater understanding of the content—still leaves us with questions to be explored. Nevertheless, I believe it is possible to affirm that in the Nahua culture oral expression of magical-religious type, termed *nahuallatolli*, has its parallel in the graphic form, *nahualicuilolli*, even though the latter does not constitute a direct transcription of oral expression. This analysis coincides perfectly with the thesis of Patrick Johansson that there is a "pictographic discourse, parallel to oral discourse, that manifests its own form of expression" (2004:44). Considering Nahua graphic expression specifically, Johansson states that "image in the codices . . . constitutes a mnemonic backup for oral expression, where the word feeds and in turn is tinted by varying semiotic content, in terms of expressive nuances, which at times are conserved only in circumstances of oral elocution"(1994:305).

Given this situation, both the *nahuallatolli* and *nahualicuilolli* registers have their own rhetorical models suitable for a particular context, even though in both cases certain characteristic features of oral expression are evident: abundance and at times communicative

---

[53] My translation is based on the Spanish version of Montes de Oca (2000:259).

[54] See note 53.

redundancy, accumulation of significant elements, freedom concerning their composition, along with the presence of diphrasisms. Whereas the *nahuallatolli* appear to contain more metaphors and paraphrases, in the *nahualicuilolli* there are more visual metonyms and instances of synecdoche. The aim of both registers is undoubtedly to expand meaning and make it more profound—a poetic function—while at the same time communicating a more complete and more dynamic vision of the divine realm. This assertion derives from the fact that many diphrasisms were undoubtedly very widely disseminated and that both registers qualified as *nahual-*, "masked" or "disguised," and follow these patterns of orality. Nevertheless, the fact of classifying them as hidden, together with the data indicating rivalry among those who intended to use them, lead one to believe that they were completely understood only by the initiated few. Thus meaning was not directly communicated; mystery and imprecision assure magical function, maintaining the particular ambiguity inherent in the oracles.

It is very important to stress that the system for transmitting information in graphic form in Central Mexico provides the possibility of expression through varied registers, of which the *nahualicuilolli* is undoubtedly the most complex. In spite of its complexity, this register reflects characteristic patterns of oral communication, although once more I reiterate that these patterns are adapted for this specific medium of communication and not necessarily totally parallel to oral expression. The question remains as to whether this system—with its great potential as a form of expression, ranging from graphic representations of diphrasisms (or *digraphisms*) to the inclusion of a huge repertoire of "visual rhetorical resources"—should be classified only as "iconography."

University of Warsaw

References

Aguirre Beltrán 1963   Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán. *Medicina y magia: El proceso de aculturación en la estructura colonial*. Mexico City: Instituto Nacional Indigenista.

Alcina Franch et al. 1992   José Alcina Franch, Miguel León-Portilla, and Eduardo Matos Moctezuma. *Azteca-Mexica*. Barcelona: INAH-Lunwerg Editores.

Anders et al. 1993a   Ferdinand Anders, Maarten Jansen, and Luis Reyes García. *Los Templos del Cielo y de la Oscuridad: Libro explicativo del llamado Códice Borgia*. Códices mexicanos, 5. Madrid / Graz / Mexico City: Sociedad Estatal Quinto Centenario / Akademische Druck und Verlagsanstalt / Fondo de Cultura Económica.

Anders et al. 1993b   _____. *Manual del Adivino: Libro explicativo del llamado Códice Vaticano B*. Códices mexicanos, 4. Madrid / Graz / Mexico City: Sociedad Estatal Quinto Centenario / Akademische Druck und Verlagsanstalt / Fondo de Cultura Económica.

Anders et al. 1994   _____. *Calendario de pronósticos y ofrendas: Libro explicativo del llamado Códice Cospi, con contribuciones de José Eduardo Contreras Martínez y Beatriz Palavicini Beltrán*. Códices mexicanos, 8. Graz / Mexico City: Akademische Druck und Verlagsanstalt / Fondo de Cultura Económica.

Arzápalo Marín 1989   Ramón Arzápalo Marín. "El lenguaje esotérico y literario de Don Joan Canal en el Ritual de los Bacabes." *Tlalocan: Revista de fuentes para el conocimiento de las culturas indígenas de México*, 11:375-93.

Arzápalo Marín 1993   _____. "Cultura y pensamiento maya a través de su lengua." In *Perspectivas antropológicas en el mundo maya*. Ed. by María Josefa Iglesias Ponce de León and Francese Ligorres Perramon. Barcelona / Girona: Sociedad Española de Estudios Mayas / Generalitat de Catalunya / Comissió Amèrica i Catalunya / Ajuntament de Girona. pp. 433-42.

Arzápalo Marín 1995   _____, ed. *Calepino de Motul*: *Diccionario maya-español*. 3 vols. Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

Arzápalo Marín 1999   _____. "Algunas reflexiones sobre el vínculo entre la escritura de los mayas y su literatura." *Latin American Indian Literature Journal*, 15, ii:105-16.

Baquedano 1993   Elisabeth Baquedano. "Aspects of Death Symbolism in Aztec Tlaltecuhtli." In *The Symbolism in the Plastic and Pictorial Representations of Ancient Mexico: A Symposium of the 46th International Congress of Americanists, Amsterdam 1988*. Ed. by Jaqueline de Durand-Forest and Marc Eisinger. Bonn: Holos Verlag. pp. 157-84.

Batalla Rosado 1994   Juan José Batalla Rosado. "Datación del *Códice Borbónico* a partir del análisis iconográfico de la representación de la sangre." *Revista española de antropología americana*, 24:47-74.

Batalla Rosado 2008a   _____. *Codex Borgia: Una guía para un viaje alucinante por el inframundo*. Torrejón de Ardoz: Biblioteca Apostólica Vaticana / Testimonio Editorial.

Batalla Rosado 2008b   _____. "Los códices mesoamericanos: métodos de estudio." *Itinerarios: Revista de estudios lingüísticos, literarios, históricos y antropológicos*, 8:43-65.

Berlo 1983   Janet Catherine Berlo. "Conceptual Categories for the Study of Texts and Images in Mesoamerica." In *Text and Image in Pre-Columbian Art: Essays on the Interrelationship of the Verbal and Visual Arts*. Ed. by Janet Catherine Berlo. Oxford: British Archeological Reports Press. pp. 1-39.

Berlo 1989   _____. "Early Writing in Central Mexico: *In Tlilli, In Tlapalli* before A.D. 1000." In *Mesoamerica After the Decline of Teotihuacán, A.D. 700 -900*. Ed. by Richard A. Diehl and Janet C. Berlo. Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection. pp. 19-48.

Boone 2007   Elisabeth Hill Boone. *Cycles of Time and Meaning in the Mexican Books of Fate*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Borbonicus 1980/1899   *Códice Borbónico: Manuscrito mexicano de la biblioteca del Palais Bourbon (Libro adivinatorio y ritual ilustrado), publicado en facsímil*. Mexico City: Siglo XXI, América Nuestra.

Borgia 1993   *The Codex Borgia: A Full-Color Restoration of the Ancient Mexican Manuscript*. Ed. by Gisele Díaz and Alan Rodgers. Intro. and commentary by Bruce E. Byland. New York: Dover.

Castillo 2001/1908   Cristóbal del Castillo. *Historia de la venida de los mexicanos y de otros pueblos e historia de la conquista*. Trans. by Federico Navarrete Linares. Mexico City: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes.

CHBCH 2002   *Chilam Balam de Chumayel*. Ed. and intro. by Miguel Rivera Dorado. Madrid: Dastin.

Clark 1995   Lawrence E. Clark. *Vocabulario Popoluca de Sayula*, *Veracruz, México*. Tucson, Summer Institute of Linguistics. Series of "Vocabularios y diccionarios indígenas Mariano Silva y Aceves," no. 104. Dir. by Doris Bartholomew.

Coe and Whittaker 1982   Michael D. Coe and Gordon Whittaker, trans. *Aztec Sorcerers in Seventeenth-Century Mexico: The Treatise on Superstitions by Hernando Ruiz de Alarcón*. Ed. and intro. by Michael D. Coe and Gordon Whittaker. Albany: Institute for Mesoamerican Studies, State University of New York.

Colli 1991/1975   Giorgio Colli. *Narodziny filozofii* [*La nascita della filosofia*]. Warsaw / Cracow: Res Publica / Oficyna Literacka.

Contel 2008   José Contel. "Tlálloc, el cerro, la olla y el *chalchihuitl*: Una interpretación de la *lámina* 25 del *Códice Borbónico*." Itinerarios: *Revista de estudios lingüísticos, literarios, históricos y antropológicos*, 8:153-83.

Cospi Codex 1968   *Códice Cospi: Calendario Messicano 4095*. Commentary by Karl Anton Nowotny. Graz: Akademische Druck und Verlagsanstalt.

Coulmas 1996   Florian Coulmas. *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Writing Systems*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Craveri 2004   Michela Elisa Craveri Slaviero. *El arte verbal* k'iche'*: Las funciones poéticas de los textos rituales mayas contemporáneos*. Mexico City: Editorial Praxis.

Diccionario Maya 2001   *Diccionario Maya. Maya – Español, Español – Maya*. Dir. Alfredo Barrera Vásquez. Ed. by Juan Ramón Bastarrachea Manzano and William Brito Sansores, with Refugio Vermont Salas, David Dzul Góngora, and Domingo Dzul Poot. Mexico City: Editorial Porrúa.

Durán 1984 [1967]   Diego Durán. *Historia de las Indias de la Nueva España e Islas de Tierra Firme*. 2 vols. Mexico City: Editorial Porrúa.

Fejérváry-Mayer 1964-67/1831 *Codex Fejérváry-Mayer*. In *Antigüedades de México*. Vol. 4. Ed. by Lord Kingsborough. Mexico City: Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público. pp. 185-76.

García Quintana 2000   María José García Quintana. "Los *huehuetlatolli* en el *Códice Florentino*." *Estudios de cultura náhuatl*, 31:123-47.

GDN 2008   *Gran Diccionario Náhuatl*. Program of Marc Thouvenot. http://www.sup-infor.com

Gelb 1963/1952   Ignace J. Gelb. *A Study of Writing*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Gruzinski 2001   Serge Gruzinski. *La colonización de lo imaginario: Sociedades indígenas y occidentalización en el México español. Siglos XV-XVIII.* Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

Gutiérrez Solana 1990   Nelly Gutiérrez Solana. "Relieve del Templo Mayor con Tlaloc Tlaltecuhtli y Tlaloc." *Anales del instituto de investigaciones estéticas*, 61:15-27.

Heyden 1986   Doris Heyden. "Metaphors, *nahualtocaitl*, and Other 'Disguised' Terms among the Aztecs." In *Symbol and Meaning beyond the Closed Community: Essays in*

Mesoamerican Ideas. Vol. 1. Ed. by Gary H. Gossen. Albany: State University of New York, Institute for Mesoamerican Studies. pp. 35-43.

Histoyre du Mexique 1985/1965   Angel Mª Garibay K., ed. *Histoyre du Mexique*. In *Teogonía e historia de los mexicanos: Tres opúsculos del siglo XVI*. Mexico City: Editorial Porrúa. pp. 90-120.

HTCH 1989   *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca*. Ed. by Paul Kirchhoff, Lina Odena Güemes, and Luis Reyes García. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica / Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social.

Jansen 1985   Maarten E.R.G.N. Jansen. "Las Lenguas divinas del México precolonial." *Boletín de estudios latinoamericanos y del Caribe*, 38:3-13.

Jansen 1997   _____. "Símbolos del poder en el México antiguo." *Anales del Museo de América*, 5:73-102.

Jansen 2002   _____. "Una mirada al interior del Templo de Cihuacoatl: Aspectos de la función religiosa de la escritura pictórica." In *Libros y escritura de tradición indígena: Ensayos sobre los códices prehispánicos y coloniales de México*. Ed. by Carmen Arellano, Peer Schmidt, and Xavier Noguez. Mexico City: El Colegio Mexiquense / Katholische Universität Eichstätt. pp. 279-326.

Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2008   _____ and Aurora Pérez Jiménez. "Paisajes sagrados: códices y arqueología de Ñuu Dzaui." *Itinerarios*: *Revista de estudios lingüísticos, literarios, históricos y antropológicos*, 8:83-111.

Johansson 1994   Patrick Johansson. *Voces distantes de los aztecas*. Mexico City: Fernández Editores.

Johansson 2004   _____. "La relación palabra/imagen en los códices nahuas." *Arqueología mexicana*, 70:44-49.

Knab 1991   Tim J. Knab. "Geografía del inframundo." *Estudios de cultura náhuatl*, 21:31-57.

Lacadena 2008   Alfonso Lacadena. "Regional Scribal Traditions: Methodological Implications for the Decipherment of Nahuatl Writing." *The PARI Journal*, 8, iv:1-22.

Lakoff and Johnson 1988/1980   George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. *Metafory w naszym życiu* [*Metaphors we live by*]. Trans. by Tomasz P. Krzeszowski. Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy.

Lockhart 1999/1992   James Lockhart. *Los nahuas después de la conquista: Historia social y cultural de los indios del México central, del siglo XVI al XVII*. Trans by Roberto Reyes Mazzoni. Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

López Austin 1967   Alfredo López Austin. "Términos del *nahuallatolli*." *Historia mexicana*, xvii, 1-36.

López Austin 1991   _____. "Cuerpos y rostros." *Anales de antropología*, 28:317-35.

López Austin 1995   _____. "Aspectos intelectuales de las culturas mesoamericanas." In *Historia antigua de México*. Vol 3. Ed. by Linda Manzanilla and Leonardo López Luján. Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia / Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México / Editorial Porrúa. pp. 419-58.

López Austin 1996/1980   _____. *Cuerpo humano e ideología: Las concepciones de los antiguos nahuas*. Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

López García 2007   Ubaldo López García. "*Sa'vi*: Discursos ceremoniales de Yutsa To'on (Apoala)." Unpubl. Ph.D. Dissertation, Leiden University.

Lord 1960/2000   Albert B. Lord. *The Singer of Tales*, 2nd ed. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. With CD.

Lord 1975   _____. "O formule" ["About formula," in Polish]. *Literatura ludowa*, 4-5:62-75.

Magliabechiano Codex 1983   *The Codex Magliabechiano and the Lost Prototype of the Magliabechiano Group*. Ed. by Elisabeth Hill Boone. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Malinowski 1987/1935   Bronisław Malinowski. *Ogrody koralowe i ich magia. Studium metod uprawy ziemi oraz obrzędów towarzyszących rolnictwu na Wyspach Trobrianda.* [*Coral Gardens and their Magic: A Study of the Methods of Tilling the Soil and of Agricultural Rites in the Trobriand Islands*, in Polish]. Trans. by Barbara Leś. Ed. by Andrzej K. Paluch. Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy.

Martel and López de la Rosa 2006   Patricia Martel and Edmundo López de la Rosa. "*Than-uooh*: Experiencias con la escritura maya yucateca prehispánica." *Desacatos*, 22:93-108.

Martínez González 2006   Roberto Martínez González. "Sobre la función social del buen *nahualli.*" *Revista española de antropología americana*, 36, ii:39-63.

Matos Moctezuma 1997   Eduardo Matos Moctezuma. "Tlaltecuhtli: Señor de la tierra." *Estudios de cultura náhuatl*, 27:15-40.

Matrícula de Tributos 1991   *Matrícula de Tributos: Nuevos estudios*. Ed. by Víctor M. Castillo Farreras. Mexico City: Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público.

Mendieta 1993/1870   Gerónimo de Mendieta. *Historia eclesiástica indiana*. Mexico City: Editorial Porrúa.

Mendoza Codex 1997   *The Essential Codex Mendoza*. Ed. by Frances F. Berdan and Patricia Rieff Anawalt. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Mikulska 2007a   Katarzyna Mikulska Dąbrowska. "La comida de los dioses: Los signos de manos y pies en representaciones gráficas de los nahuas y su significado." *Itinerarios*: *Revista de estudios lingüísticos, literarios, históricos y antropológicos*, 6:11-53.

Mikulska 2007b   _____. "Las imágenes de la tierra, de su superficie y del aspecto terrestre en la iconografía del México Central." In *Reescritura e intertextualidad: Literatura – Cultura – Historia*. Ed. by Urszula Aszyk. Warsaw: Institute for Iberian and Iberoamerican Studies, University of Warsaw / Muzeum Historii Ruchu Robotniczego. pp. 263-90.

Mikulska 2008a   _____. *El lenguaje enmascarado: Un acercamiento a las representaciones gráficas de deidades nahuas*. Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México / Polskie Towarzystwo Studiów Latynoamerykanistycznych / Institute for Iberian and Iberoamerican Studies, University of Warsaw.

Mikulska 2008b
_____. "El concepto de *ilhuicatl* en la cosmovisión nahua y sus representaciones gráficas en los códices." *Revista española de antropología americana*, 38, ii: 151-71.

Molina 1980/1571
Alonso de Molina. *Vocabulario en lengua castellana y mexicana*. Mexico City: Editorial Porrúa.

Montes de Oca 1997
Mercedes Montes de Oca Vega. "Los difrasismos en el náhuatl, un problema de traducción o de conceptualización." *Amerindia*, 22:31-46.

Montes de Oca 2000
_____. "Los difrasismos en el náhuatl del siglo XVI." Unpubl. Ph.D. Dissertation, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

Musgrave-Portilla 1982
L. Marie Musgrave-Portilla. "The Nahualli or Transforming Wizard in Pre- and Postconquest Mesoamerica. *Journal of Latin American Lore*, 8, i:3-62.

Nicholson 1963-64
Henry B. Nicholson. "An Aztec Stone Image of a Fertility Goddess." In *Braessler-Archive: Beitrage zur Volkerkunde*. Ed. by K. Krieger and G. Koch. Berlin: Verlag von Dietrich Reimer, Neue Folge, Band 11. pp. 9-30 (1963), Addenda 235-37 (1964).

Olivier 2004
Guilhem Olivier. *Tezcatlipoca: Burlas y metamorfosis de un dios azteca*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

Olivier 2008
_____. "Las tres muertes simbólicas del nuevo rey mexica: reflexiones en torno a los ritos de entronización en el México prehispánico." In *Símbolos del poder en mesoamérica*. Ed. by Guilhem Olivier. Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas and Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. pp. 263-91.

Olko 2005
Justyna Olko. *Turquoise Diadems and Staffs of Office*: *Elite Costume and Insignia of Power in Aztec and Early Colonial Mexico*. Warsaw: Polskie Towarzystwo Studiów Latynoamerykanistycznych / Ośrodek Badań nad Tradycją Antyczną.

Ong 1992/1982
Walter J. Ong. *Oralność i piśmienność: Słowo poddane technologii* [*Orality and Literacy. The Technologizing of the Word*, in Polish]. Trans. and intro. by Józef Japola. Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL.

Oudijk 2008
Michel R. Oudijk. "De tradiciones y métodos: investigaciones pictográficas." *Desacatos*, 27:123-38.

Peralta Ramírez 2004
Valentín Peralta Ramírez. "Las metáforas del náhuatl actual como una estrategia discursiva dentro de los eventos rituales." In *La metáfora en Mesoamérica*. Ed. by Mercedes Montes de Oca Vega. Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. pp. 171-91.

Prem 1979
Hanns J. Prem. "Aztec Writing Considered as a Paradigm for Mesoamerican Scripts." In *Mesoamérica: Homenaje a Paul Kirchhoff*. Ed. by Barbro Dalhgren. Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia. pp. 104-18.

Prem 1992
_____. "Aztec Writing." In *Epigraphy*. Ed. by Victoria R. Bricker. In *Handbook of Middle American Indians*. Supplement 5. Gen. Ed. Robert Wauchope. Austin: University of Texas Press. pp. 53-69.

Prem and Riese 1983
_____ and Berthold Riese. "Autochtonous American Writing Systems: The Aztec and Maya Examples." In *Writing in Focus*. Ed. by Florian Coulmas and Konrad Ehlich. Berlin: Mouton. pp. 167-86.

Ricoeur 1978/1975   Paul Ricoeur. *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*. Trans. by Robert Czerny with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello, S. J. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Ruiz de Alarcón 1953/1892   Hernando Ruiz de Alarcón. *Tratado de las supersticiones y costumbres gentílicas que oy viuen entre los indios naturales de esta Nueva España, escrito en México, año de 1629*. In *Tratado de las idolatrías, supersticiones, dioses, ritos, hechicerías y otras costumbres gentílicas de las razas aborígenes de México*. Ed. by Jacinto de la Serna et al. Critical commentary by Francisco del Paso y Troncoso. Mexico City: Ediciones Fuente Cultural. Vol. 20. pp. 17-180.

Sahagún *CF* 1950-82   Bernardino de Sahagún. *Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain*. Ed. and trans. by Arthur J. O. Anderson and Charles E. Dibble. Santa Fe, NM: The School of American Research / University of Utah.

Sahagún *CF facs.* 1979   _____. *Códice Florentino: Testimonios de los Informantes de Sahagún*. Facsimile ed. by the Mexican Government. Mexico City: Giunte Barbera.

Sahagún *PM* 1997   _____. *Primeros memoriales: Paleography of Nahuatl Text and English Translation by Thelma D. Sullivan*. Completed and revised, with additions, by H. B. Nicholson, A. J. O. Anderson, Ch. E. Dibble, E. Quiñones Keber, and W. Ruwet. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, with the Patrimonio Nacional and Real Academia de la Historia de Madrid.

Sahagún *PM facs.* 1993   _____. *Primeros memoriales*. Facsimile ed. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Sampson 1985   Geoffrey Sampson. *Writing Systems*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Selden Codex 1964   *Códice Selden*. Ed. by Alfonso Caso. Mexico City: Sociedad Mexicana de Antropología.

Seler 1963/1904   Eduard Seler. *Comentarios al Códice Borgia* [*Eine altamexicanische Bilderschrift der Bibliothek der Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*]. Trans. by Mariana Frenk. 3 vols. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

Serna 1953/1892   Jacinto de la Serna. *Manual de ministros de indios para el conocimiento de sus idolatrías y extirpación de ellas*. In *Tratado de las idolatrías, supersticiones, dioses, ritos, hechicerías y otras costumbres gentílicas de las razas aborígenas de México*. Ed. by Jacinto de la Serna et al. Critical commentary by Francisco del Paso y Troncoso. Mexico City: Ediciones Fuente Cultural. Vol. 10. pp. 47-368.

Stross 1983   Brian Stross. "The Language of Zuyua." *American Ethnologist*, 1:150-64.

Stuart 1987   David Stuart. *Ten Phonetic Syllables*. Research Reports on Ancient Maya Writing, 14. Washington: Center for Maya Research.

Sullivan 1974   Thelma Sullivan. "Tlaloc: A New Etymological Interpretation of the God's Name and What It Reveals of his Essence and Nature." In *Atti del XL Congresso Internazionale degli Americanistici, Roma-Genova, 3-10 Settembre 1972*. Genova: Tilgher. pp. 213-19.

Sullivan 1986   _____. "A Scattering of Jades: The Words of the Aztec Elders." In *Symbol and Meaning beyond the Closed Community: Essays in Mesoamerican Ideas*. Vol. I. Ed. by Gary H. Gossen. Albany: State University of New York, Institute for Mesoamerican Studies. pp. 9-17.

Telleriano-Remensis Codex 1995   *Codex Telleriano-Remensis: Ritual, Divination and History in a Pictorial Aztec Manuscript*. Ed. by Eloise Quiñones Keber. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Tena 2002   Rafael Tena, ed. and trans. *Leyenda de los Soles*. In *Mitos e historias de los antiguos nahuas*. Mexico: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes. pp. 167-206.

Torquemada 1986/1615   Juan de Torquemada. *Monarquía Indiana*. 3 vols. Intro. by Miguel León-Portilla. Mexico City: Editorial Porrúa.

Tovar 2001   Juan de Tovar. *Historia y creencias de los Indios de México*. Transcription of *Manuscrito Tovar* by Susana Urraca Uribe. Ed., prologue, notes, and commentary by José J. Fuente del Pilar. Madrid: Miraguano, S.A. Editores.

Tudela Codex n.d.   *Códice Tudela* or *Códice del Museo de América*. Original from Museo de América, Madrid.

Vaticanus B Codex 1972   *Codex Vaticanus 3773*. Commentary by Ferdinand Anders. Graz: Akademische Druck und Verlagsanstalt.

Vaticanus Río Codex 1996   *Códice Vaticano A*. Ed. by Ferdinand Anders, Maarten Jansen, and Luis Reyes García. Graz / Mexico City: Akademische Druck und Verlagsanstalt / Fondo de Cultura Económica.

Velázquez 1975/1945   Primo Feliciano Velázquez, ed. and trans. *Anales de Cuauhtitlán*. In *Códice Chimalpopoca*. Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. pp. 3-118.

Vindobonensis Codex 1974   *Códice Vindobonensis*. Ed. and intro. by Otto Adelhofer. Graz: Akademische Druck und Verlagsanstalt.

Xolotl Codex 1996   *Códice Xolotl*. Ed., commentary, and appendix by Charles E. Dibble. Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

Zumthor 1983   Paul Zumthor. "Właściwości tekstu oralnego ["The Qualities of The Oral Text," in Polish]." *Literatura ludowa*, 30:41-58.

Zumthor 1991   _____. *Introducción a la poesía oral*. Madrid: Taurus.

This page is intentionally left blank.

Improvised Song in Schools:
Breaking Away from the Perception of Traditional Song
as Infantile by Introducing a Traditional Adult Practice

Albert Casals, Jaume Ayats, and Mercè Vilar

Within the repertoire of songs coming from the oral tradition of Catalonia there is an interesting corpus of melodies that have been used—and continue to be used—for the improvisation of verses. As is well known, this type of oral communication is not exclusive to Catalonia but forms part of a broad tradition deeply rooted in Mediterranean culture (Scarnecchia 1998) and in the Ibero-American world (Trapero, Santana, et al. 2000). And it is also allied to the

Map of *Països Catalans* Marc Belzunces / Albert Casals

rap music that originated in the United States that has had such enormous commercial success (Munar 2005).

In the Catalan-speaking regions, *Països Catalans*, Juame Ayats lists up to nineteen genres or classifications of "songs with lyrics that are improvised over a sole melodic formula" (2007:114-18). Most of them originate in Catalonia. In contrast to this variety, the presence of this type of singing is extremely limited within the current repertoire of traditional songs, and in the school orbit it is practically non-existent. In this article we describe a pilot project that has introduced improvised song[1] in five Catalan schools. The goal of this presentation is not to present a comprehensive picture of the educational project but rather to provide elements for analysis and reflection. Specifically, we focus on the implications of the educational utilization of improvised song with regard to certain deeply-rooted ideas about its use in schools.

Concepts of Traditional Song in Schools

In previous research—during the 2003-04 course—we analyzed the concepts and traditional genres associated with the construct *traditional song* in the context of primary schools in Catalonia. And we related it to educational policies of an identity-making nature (Casals 2004). On the one hand, we examined the song repertoires proposed by the six main publishing houses that print music books for primary education and, on the other hand, we analyzed the repertoire used in 21 schools. One of the most notable aspects of this research was the discovery of the existence of a process of infantilization that affected the traditional part of the song repertoire present in primary schools. Infantilization may be described here as a process where traditional Catalan songs have become a basic and essential part of primary schooling, but one that has also entailed a loss of presence and meaning in higher courses in favor of other types of songs—traditional songs from around the world, adaptations of classical authors, African diaspora spirituals, and so forth.

According to Casals, this situation may be explained in terms of at least three factors (2004:59-60):

- ▪ "The processes of manipulation and reinvention—by folklorists, teachers, and pedagogues—of the meaning and functionality of traditional songs when passing from oral expression to a written version." Moreover, this phenomenon is accentuated when introducing them into the school curriculum. The causes of these modifications lie in the desire to adapt these songs, in keeping with the notion of "folkloristic products" (Martí 2002:121)*,* to the hegemonic values valid during different sociocultural and educational phases in the twentieth century.

---

[1] Throughout the article, we refer to the traditional genre in which verses are improvised extemporaneously over a pre-set melody with the term normally used in the traditional context: *improvised song*.

- "The aspiration of anti-Francoist Catalanism—from the 1960s—to introduce traditional Catalan songs into schools as an expression of the mother tongue and as the first musical language to work with." This aspiration has largely met with success, but because of its serious, symbolic nature other types of traditional song that are more festive and suitable for young people and adults—incorporating humor, denunciation, dramatic narrative, eroticism, and so on—have been neglected. This circumstance has led to the erroneous equation *traditional music* → *simple music* → *music for infants* that often results when the traditional repertoire is being used as a basic introduction to music (Costa 1997).

- "The fact that teaching in schools in Catalonia adopted choral singing as the model of correct singing when choirs and choral societies were already an asset that served to defend an individual tradition." The choral model was very much conditioned by the aesthetics of European choral music and by a communicative framework that very often entailed a reduction in the large number of verses in narrative songs, thus losing the thread of the story and the original meaning. The world of choral music was an important reference point for a large number of music teachers in Catalan schools during the sixties, seventies, and eighties. It meant introducing melodies and lyrics that were often taken totally out of context and formulated using an academic approach to oral expression. The lack of contextual references is also linked to the sociocultural changes that have alienated part of the repertoire from the meaningful environment of today's students. The songs about work or trades, with outmoded vocabulary and actions, are a clear example of this phenomenon.

This last aspect is one of the reasons for the lack of functionality of traditional songs in schools (Pujol 2007:110-12). With the songs having lost their original function, the schools search for meaning by treating them as tools for didactic work—mainly but not exclusively music-based—or as play resources linked to festivals and other identifying activities, taking for granted their identity-making symbolism (Casals 2006).

Seen in this perspective, the infantilization of traditional songs should not be considered a deformation or a problem but rather a reinvention: a new conception that this repertoire has resorted to in order to be relevant and find a place among the growing "competition" represented by the diverse globalized world, in schooling in general and school singing in particular. In other words, traditional Catalan song has managed to gain—through the introduction in Catalonia of approaches such as the Kodaly method and identification with the concept of the mother tongue—a very notable presence during early childhood and especially with regard to the learning of the basics of language and music. The positive result is that, thanks to this new functionality, this type of song continues to be sung.

Alongside this infantilization, traditional song is conceptualized in the educational context in conjunction with other ideas that do not adjust to its historical and social reality. Very broadly speaking, we can mention two aspects: the separation of the languages and the association of traditional with old. The academic world is organized on the basis of the compartmentalization of knowledge. Consequently, the specific studies on songs carried out by scholars from different fields have separated out the different languages that make up a song

(Laborde 1996). The existence of two types of writing—music notation and letters, as if this form of expression had a dual nature—has reinforced this idea of duality in a Spanish educational system where oral expression has been neglected (Garzía 2007:69). On the other hand, in their oral origins traditional songs were not divided into musical, verbal, and corporal expression, but rather, as explained by ethnopoetic theories (Oriol 2002), they were experienced as a comprehensive social and communicative activity that could not be understood by merely summing together the different forms of expression. Moreover, singers of traditional music affirm that what they do is really only a way of speaking. In this sense, and without wishing to go deeper into the matter at this point, it may be well worth taking into account the studies that claim that the differentiation between singing and talking is cultural and not natural (Mang 2006), and also the examples of cultures where the differentiation between different types of vocal expression is not based on separate notions of language and music (Ayats 1996).

As affirmed by Ruth Finnegan (2003:84), the word *tradition* or *traditional* has deeply ingrained social connotations, in particular as regards the association with old products. From this standpoint, it is understood that the use of traditional song in Catalan schools often has more to do with museological concepts—heritage conservation—and "folklorization processes" (Martí 2002:121) than pedagogical concepts.

Lastly, the analysis of traditional song in schools—as a habitual repertoire when learning to sing—cannot ignore more general considerations reported by various authors on the decline of singing and pupils' lack of motivation to sing in schools. In this respect, Aintzane Camara (2004:1) and Maria Antònia Pujol (2007:111) agree that people sing less and less in Spanish society. Faced by this situation, many people are calling for schools to take responsibility for an activity that is closely linked to the work of historical-cultural transmission; like so many other tasks, this responsibility is now being delegated to schools and the media instead of the family (Garzía 2007:69). However, the fact is that singing decreases in schools over the course of primary education, and from starting as an attractive and enjoyable resource it degenerates into a rather dull activity (Camara 2004).

Corrandistes singing after a special lunch. Photo by Oriol Clavera.

The Tradition of the Improvised Songs in Catalan Language

The *Gloses* in Majorca and in Minorca (Balearic Islands), the *Cant d'estil* in País Valencià, and the *Jotes* and *Corrandes* in Catalonia are some of best-known types of improvised song in the Catalan language. As Ayats (2007:64) says, all this diversity of traditional forms of expression has to be put in the context of festivals and other collective celebrations important to a community.

And they have a common base that is always "a melody that the soloist repeats with newly invented lyrics." Regarding the members of the community in attendance, "sometimes the people listening participate, by singing the repetition of one or two of the soloist's verses . . . or even a set refrain that at times may also be only instrumental." The responses—singing the refrain or chorus, laughing, or applauding—reflect the degree of acceptance and legitimacy conferred on the event by the community.

On a functional level, the gatherings around improvised songs have traditionally served to develop and express a socially shared point of view using satire and humor and also as a formula for explaining collective and personal problems. In this setting, the singers—people with excellent memories and numerous creative and communicative strategies[2]—tend to have a certain charisma and are held in high respect by the

Lo Teixidó, one of the last traditional singers of *Jotes de l'Ebre*. Photo by Sergi Palau.

Carles Belda, a leading singer from the new generation of *corrandistes*. Photo by Sergi Palau.

community. The conclusion to be drawn from these elucidations is that it does not make much sense to develop theories strictly limited to the subject of discussion—improvised song. Instead, it becomes essential to analyze and explain this phenomenon using a more global communicative approach, as propounded by the approach known as Ethnopoetics.

Around Catalonia the revival of

---

[2] One of the more notable examples of these strategies is that of delaying the introduction of the main idea until the last verse despite the fact that it is the first aspect to be worked on.

improvised song by a younger generation of singers has occurred without direct inheritance from the older singers who preceded them and among whom few are still active. The new generation of singers is much better educated—many have university degrees—and very few of them experienced the phenomenon in a family or rural setting.

Instead, they seem to have become interested later in their youth. Thus, although they respect the basic parameters that determine the techniques involved in improvised song, new forms of interpretation have developed, new spaces and functions have been created, and performance is no longer an activity associated with the rural ambit. It is not a revival movement looking back at the past but rather a modern activity, although restricted to very small sectors of society.

Anyone can become the soloist. Photo by Sergi Palau.

Among the characteristics incorporated in recent years, the participative element stands out, in which the public and the performers merge into a single body: everyone sings the refrain, but, in addition, anyone can become the soloist. Moving away from the old spectacle of one or a few recognized singers who captivated their audience, the new dynamics permit audience participation led by more or less anonymous singers.

Another element that differentiates Catalan singers from those in other regions and communities—a good example are the *bertsolaris* in the Basque Country—is that in Catalonia the *corrandistes*[3] follow the custom of singing with an instrumental accompaniment: accordion, guitar, tambourine, and many others.

Finally, the most popular types of improvised songs in Catalonia at this point in time should be specified: the *corrandes*, the *garrotin*, the *nyacres*, the *jotes,* and the *cançons*

A *corrandista* singing *Cançó de pandero*. Video by Albert Casals.
http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/25ii/casals#myGallery-picture(6)

---

[3] In Catalonia, the term *corrandista* is often used in a general sense to refer to anyone who sings improvised verses even if they are not strictly speaking *corrandes*. This is the meaning we use here and elsewhere in this article.

de pandero.[4] It is worth pointing out that the majority of these genres have an associated dance reinforcing the festive atmosphere at the origin of these melodies.

Improvised Song in Primary Schools

Although in Catalonia improvised song cannot claim the same importance or prestige as that enjoyed by the *bertsos* in the Basque Country, the conclusion that Joxerra Garzía comes to may also be considered valid for the Catalan-speaking regions (2007:74):

> In the Basque Country we have and enjoy a highly prestigious form of oral expression that transmits both emotion and tradition effectively and economically. As we have discussed, the capacity to communicate, especially orally, is vital in contemporary society. Thus it seems important to emphasize that Basque improvised verse has proven to be a highly effective tool for achieving just this goal, a tool from which our modern "information society," in my opinion, could learn quite a bit.

All things considered, the different nature of the *corrandes* as compared with the *bertsos* did imply planning out different strategies for their application and use in schools. Aspects such as group participation in the refrains, the breakdown of the audience-performer dichotomy where all the listeners have the chance to be the soloist, or the possibility of instrumental accompaniments are examples of elements that had to

The arrangement of the participants in a circle encourages communication and participation as soloists. Photo by Col·legi Mare de Deú del Roser (St. Vicenç de Castellet).

---

[4] For more detailed information on each of these genres, see Ayats 2007.

be given consideration during the process of adapting the *corrandes* to the school environment.

Objectives

Leaving aside its enormous educational potential—which Garzía (2007:75-76) details at the level of content—this repertoire was used in an exploratory project that contributed solutions to the problem of offering an alternative in schools to the idea of traditional songs being infantile. The project was implemented during the 2006-07 and 2007-08 courses with the goal of developing a cross-disciplinary teaching proposal—music, language, and social interaction—based on improvised songs. This proposal was applied in several primary schools with the aim of evaluating the results in relation to various problematic initial aspects—structure, didactics, and musical didactics—some of which have been explained in the first section of this article.

Specifically, the proposed aims were as follows:

- Investigate the pedagogical possibilities and implications of the introduction of improvised song in Catalan primary school education.

- Design and test out a cross-disciplinary didactic proposal based on improvised song, which makes it possible to generate social and school spaces where singing and dialogue have a meaning based on their functionality.

- Analyze the results of the project in the context of general educational problems and the problems specific to traditional song in schools.

Lastly, to finish defining the project, it must be pointed out that improvised song—although it has experienced a slight revival socially—was an unprecedented activity in the school curriculum in Catalonia.[5] Moreover, it is important to stress that it was also introduced as part of the renewal of the primary school curriculum in general and the music education syllabus in particular (Malagarriga, Valls, et al. 2008:9):

> Music must also be understood, experienced, and assimilated in relation to other areas of knowledge, to other fields of experience or contexts beyond the music class, and it must share with them just as much the cultural aspects as the didactic and pedagogical ones. The education system is extremely compartmentalized and, especially in primary schooling, the fact that the responsibility for music education is assigned to a specialized teacher does not favor the probability of linking it to the development of the whole set of basic skills. The focus of the new curriculum requires . . . a decided spirit of cooperation among all the teachers in a team, in such a way that each of them contributes what he or she is most expert in, but without losing sight of the fact that education should consider the child as a whole.

---

[5] The only references to primary education we have found are a few isolated experiences, almost always individual initiatives by *corrandistes* who work as music teachers. All in all, in no case was there a clearly prepared, ongoing project.

Project Development

The project was developed in two phases. In the first—during the 2006-07 course—a pilot scheme was implemented in a school center, using "collaborative research" (Lieberman 1986; Lowe 2001). This action-research methodology was chosen for its suitability to a pilot project involving the university and the schools, for its past record in the interdisciplinary field, and as a source of joint work between specialized and non-specialized teachers (Casals, Vilar, et al. 2008). In the first phase, a researcher, a music teacher, and a non-specialized teacher worked together to apply a cross-disciplinary didactic proposal for three months in a class group of ten- to eleven-year-olds. During fifteen sessions the children were immersed in the art of improvised verse through singing, working on specific aspects—musical, linguistic, corporal, and social—but always interrelated within the global context of the activity required by this repertoire.

In the second phase, during the 2007-08 course, the didactic proposal was introduced in four more schools by a teaching group set up for this purpose. This group, made up of music teachers and language teachers and coordinated by a researcher, contrasted the findings obtained during the preceding course with their own findings, on the basis of the varying age groups, social context, and mother tongues of the pupils. Bearing in mind the goal of this article, the project design and the findings presented below (Table 1) are restricted to the age factor.

Table 1: Project data		
• Length of project:	*November 2006—July 2008*	
• Primary schools:	*5*	
• Researchers:	*3*	
• Teachers:	*14*	
• Students:	*208*	
Distribution of pupils by age groups		
Level	*Groups*	*Number of pupils*
8-9 year-olds	1	27
9-10 year-olds	3	78
10-11 year-olds	3	52
11-12 year-olds	2	26
Total	*9*	*183*

During the two phases of the project, it was decided to work on two genres, the *garrotins* and the *nyacres*. One of the main reasons was that these are two of the melodies most frequently used in the circles of young improvisers in Catalonia. Another reason was that they were considered the most suitable for an initial presentation at primary school level (see Table 2).

Table 2: Criteria and elements used to select the melodies		
Characteristics of the selected melodies		Pedagogic Criteria
Garrotins	*Nyacres*	
▪ Structure: verse + participatory refrain.	▪ Structure: verse + participatory refrain.	*Bring about collective participation.*
▪ Less rigid heptasyllabic meter compared to other melodies.	▪ Structured verses organized in quatrains, but with the repetition of the third line by the audience.	*Flexibility of rhythm to make the adaptation of the lyrics easier.*
▪ More rhythmic melody, a feature that makes it more attractive to pupils.	▪ Simple melody on a melodico-rhythmic level but with refrain that encourages multi-part singing in parallel.	*Little musical difficulty but with melodico-rhythmic and multi-part appeal.*

Findings

We interpreted the general findings as very satisfactory. With regard to the aspect dealt with in this article, the following points are of particular interest:

▪ The best quantitative results—the greatest number of improvisers capable of performing in public—and qualitative findings—the most correct use of language as regards structure, rhyming, richness of vocabulary; rhythmic adaptation of the melody; melodic precision; and communicative capacity—were observed in three groups of ten- to eleven-year-olds:

– All the children in these groups were capable of singing *corrandes* as soloists, although sometimes with previously prepared and memorized lyrics.

– In two of the three groups of ten- to eleven-year-olds, there was spontaneous improvised participation by 70% of the pupils in the final special session open to

Children improvising verses in a special school event. Video by Albert Casals.
http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/25ii/casals#myGallery-picture(8)

Pupils improvising *corrandes* in a final special session. Photo by CEIP Dr. Ferrer (Artés).

the rest of the groups and teachers in the school.

−   In all three groups under study, several *corrandistes* emerged who were capable of improvising with ease and employing good communicative resources. It is important to point out that the best *corrandistes* are not necessarily pupils with good academic records. A very clear example is that of a ten-year-old boy who did not stand out in any subject—in fact, his teachers graded his results as poor to middling—but who became the most active *corrandista*, capable of improvising ten *corrandes* in less than twelve minutes. The teachers suggest that one of the key factors here may be the fact that this is oral work that breaks away from the entrenched culture of writing.

−   In these groups many communicative and social traits were observed that are usual in the world of adult *corrandes*: the use of gestures and other body movements to emphasize and enhance oral communication, constant questions and answers, critical and comic dialogues, an awareness of the playful and fictional components of *corrandes* based on exaggeration and criticism, and the possibility of drawing attention to sensitive issues difficult to cope with in a normal conversation.

- On the other hand, only strictly technical results were recorded—language structure and melodico-rhythmic precision—in the performances by eight- to nine-year-old pupils. Expressive elements that support the communication of the message were not detected, and bidirectional communication hardly emerged at all. In the sense of a theatrical presentation, instead of being group performances the sessions of improvised song were reduced to a succession of more or less thematic monologues.

- The links between genres and the comparison of classes and age groups were the most commonly recurring themes in the various groups studied. Issues related to the circumstances of the students themselves were also addressed: neighborhood, school, teachers, and class group. In short, the songs mixed general themes—also habitual in adult contexts, but from a point of view appropriate to the age group—with other themes that are specific to each educational framework.

- In all the schools, activities were carried out in which improvised song had an objective that went beyond its potential use as a tool for work on language or music. In this respect, a variety of applications outside language and music classes were identified: school festivals, retreats and outings, and festivals in the neighborhood or town.

- The conclusions of both the non-specialized teachers and the music teachers involved in the project were very positive, and this result has encouraged us to broaden the scope of the working group during the 2008-09 course. The teachers will place particular emphasis on the efficient contribution of oral language to learning, as regards fostering group cohesion and personal development. With reference to the latter, they highlighted the potential of this repertoire to help pupils overcome shyness and the fear of making mistakes, and to learn to accept criticism. There was even a paradoxical case in one group of children in which only 30% improvised in front of the whole school. The teachers, when outlining their expectations prior to the project, had stated that "there are some pupils who certainly won't want to improvise: CR, IM . . . children like them who are so shy." And precisely these two children improvised *corrandes* in the final session in front of the audience!

Discussion

In the first part of this article we explained the problematic aspects detected around the presence and use of traditional song in schools. Now that this two-year project has come to an end, we can draw certain conclusions. With regard to the aforementioned phenomenon of infantilization, improvised traditional song emerges as a living repertoire on an adult level with very clear social functionality and shows itself to be particularly effective after the age of ten because of the aptitudes it requires. It is precisely the skills that need to be brought into play—

language, but also music and social skills—that make its infantilization impossible and, at the same time, justify its importance as an educational tool of a holistic nature.

Particular mention should be made of the fact that during this experiment of transferring *corrandes* from the traditional adult world to the school ambit, the ethnopoetic concept has prevailed, by and large, over ubiquitous and severe educational compartmentalization: it was conceived as an integral project for the pupils, of a communicative and entertaining nature, and not as a set of language and music tasks. In addition, this use of this repertoire apparently makes it possible to challenge the growing lack of functionality and interest in singing as the pupils get older, as shown in the summary of observations in Table 3.

With regard to the perception of

Table 3:
Aspects denoting interest in improvised song by Primary School pupils from 10 to 12 years old

- High participation by all the pupils in improvised performances of songs.
- Among the reasons given by teachers and students for the interest it provoked, they mentioned in particular:
  - The use of meaningful subject matter by the performers themselves.
  - Pupils as protagonists when learning inside a process of socialization.
- Easy application to pupils' school and social experiences

Figure 1. The building of group identity.

traditional as *old*, obligatory improvisation in the here-and-now demonstrates the falseness of this association that is so deeply rooted in society, and it also checks the tendency towards *folklorism*. On the other hand, the melodies and associated creative techniques have origins and features that define them as traditional: in the school framework they echo the main aspects present in adult singing in the region.

An interesting theme worth further exploration is the change in the use of this medium as a statement of identity. While a large part of traditional song used up until now in schools contained a great deal of identity-making symbolism, though highly disfunctionalized, improvised song has shown itself to be a generator of group identities (see Figure 1) and modifications in individual identities, with clear functional weight.

The atmosphere in a class during an improvised song performance. Video by Albert Casals.
http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/25ii/casals#myGallery-picture(11)

In conclusion, this pilot project has provided new data and opened up new approaches in the field of the possibilities of improvised traditional song in Catalan schools. From analysis of the results, it has been possible to draw conclusions that confirm the viability of improvised sung verse as a contemporary educational tool, as also illustrated by other similar experiences in neighboring regions—Majorca, the Basque Country, and Murcia—and as described by various authors (see Munar 2001; Garzía 2007). On the other hand, in the context of Catalan schools, not only does this program help in the work on oral language by improving social and communication skills and aiding the survival of a particular historical-social heritage, but it also turns certain ideas about traditional song in schools on their heads and opens the door to the habitual presence of singing as a social activity in the school environment.

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

References

Ayats 1996   Jaume Ayats. "Chez les indiens Pumé de la Savane vénézuélienne." In *Tout un monde de musique: Identifier, enquêter, analyser, conserver*. Ed. by Denis Laborde. Paris: L'Harmattan. pp. 21-44.

Ayats 2007   _____. *Les chants traditionnels des pays catalans*. Cahiers d'ethnomusicologie régionale, 8. Toulouse: Centre Occitan des Musiques et Danses Traditionnelles Toulouse Midi-Pyrénées.

Camara 2004   Aintzane Camara. "La actividad de cantar en la escuela: Una práctica en desuso." *Revista de Psicodidáctica,* 17:75-84. http://redalyc.uaemex.mx/redalyc/pdf/175/17501708.pdf

Casals 2004   Albert Casals. "Etnicitat i cançó tradicional catalana a l'escola." Unpubl. Dissertation, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Social and Cultural Anthropology Department).

Casals 2006   _____. "Etnicidad y canción tradicional: Un binomio que políticamente también se juega en la escuela." Unpubl. paper presented at VII Congreso Internacional de la Sociedad Española de Antropología Aplicada.

Casals, Vilar, et al. 2008 _____, Mercè Vilar, et al. "La investigación-acción colaborativa: Reflexiones metodológicas a partir de su aplicación en un proyecto de Música y Lengua." *Revista Electrónica Complutense de Investigación en Educación Musical*, 5.4:1-17. http://www.ucm.es/info/reciem/v5.htm#4

Costa 1997   Luis Costa. "Práctica pedagógica y música tradicional." *Revista Transcultural de Música (Trans Iberia)*, 1. http://www.sibetrans.com/trans/transiberia/costa.htm

Finnegan 2003   Ruth Finnegan. "Oral Tradition: Weasel Words or Transdisciplinary Door to Multiplexity?" *Oral Tradition*, 18:84-86. http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/18i/finnegan

Garzía 2007   Joxerra Garzía. "*Bertsolaritza* in the School Curriculum." *Oral Tradition*, 22:69-76. http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/22ii/garzia2

Laborde 1996   Denis Laborde. "Une chanson, paroles et musique? Notes sur un chant basque." In *Tout un monde de musique: Identifier, enquêter, analyser, conserver*. Ed. by Denis Laborde. Paris: L'Harmattan. pp. 75-121.

Lieberman 1986   Ann Lieberman. "Collaborative Research: Working with, Not Working on . . . . "
                         Educational Leadership, 43.5:28-32.

Lowe 2001   Anne Lowe. "Researcher's Challenge in a Collaborative Approach to Research
                         Mediation Effort between University and Public School Cultures." In *Desert
                         Skies Symposium on Research in Music Education.* Ed. by Donald Hamann.
                         Tucson: University of Arizona School of Music. pp. 61-76.

Malagarriga, Valls, et al. 2008   Teresa Malagarriga, Assumpta Valls, et al. "La música a l'educació infantil i
                         primària." Unpubl. paper presented at Segon Congrés Internacional de Música a
                         Catalunya*,* Barcelona.

Mang 2006   Esther Mang. "The Effects of Age, Gender, and Language on Children's Singing
                         Competency." *British Journal of Music Education,* 23:161-74.

Martí 2002   Josep Martí. "Hybridization and its Meanings in the Catalan Musical Tradition."
                         In *Songs of the Minotaur: Hybridity and Popular Music in the Era of
                         Globalization.* Ed. by Gerhard Steingress. Münster: LIT-Verlag. pp. 113-38.

Munar 2001   Felip Munar. *Manual del bon glosador: Tècniques, exercicis i glosades*. Palma
                         de Mallorca: Documenta Balear.

Munar 2005   _____. *Formes d'expressió oral*. Mancor: Consell Insular de Mallorca.

Oriol 2002   Carme Oriol. *Introducció a l'etnopoètica: Teoria i formes del folklore en la
                         cultura catalana*. Valls: Cossetània.

Pujol 2007   Maria Antònia Pujol. "La canción tradicional catalana en la enseñanza
                         primaria." *Eufonía,* 41:107-17.

Scarnecchia 1998   Paolo Scarnecchia. *Música popular y música culta*. Trans. by Ana Sedano.
                         Barcelona: Icaria.

Trapero, Santana, et al. 2000   Maximiano Trapero, Eladio Santana, et al., eds. *Actas del VI Encuentro-Festival
                         Iberoameriacno de la Décima y el Verso Improvisado*. Las Palmas de Gran
                         Canaria: Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria/Asociación Canaria de la
                         Décima.

The Tuzu *Gesar* Epic: Performance and Singers

Wang Guoming
Translated by Li Xianting

Wang Yongfu performing the Tuzu *Gesar*. Photo by Wang Guoming.

The Uniqueness of the Tuzu *Gesar*

Different minority groups have different versions of the *Gesar* epic. Their respective forms differ from the Tibetan version in content, structure, characters, events, and actual performances. This kind of variety is common in Asian oral epic traditions.

The Tu people are a unique minority who reside in northwest China with a total population of 200,000. The *Gesar* epic of this group is found mainly in Tu communities in Gansu and Qinghai provinces. The Tuzu *Gesar* is performed as a combination of verse and prose. It also

shows some differences from the Anduo dialects of Tibetan. As a result of phonetic changes, the Tuzu *Gesar* has its own structure and follows strict procedures and performance rules. Many native scholars and experts have studied this tradition.
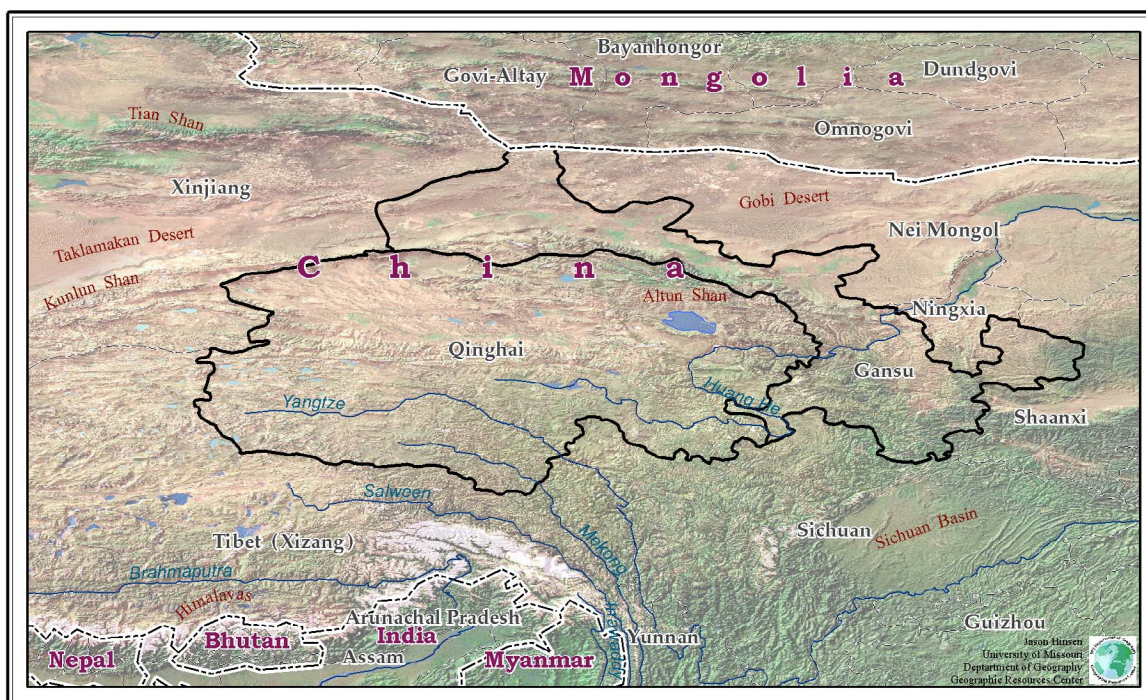
For a long time, the *Gesar* epic performances have mixed stories, myths, proverbs, and quotations through the medium of prose and verse, as well as combinations of chanting and recitative. The Tu people have no written language, and more and more performers are passing away. Currently Wang Yongfu, who is 79 years old and lives in the Zhucha village, Tiantang town, in Tianzhu, is the only performer in China who can sing the entire Tuzu *Gesar* epic.

The Combination of Verse and Prose

Because Tuzu is a spoken language with no written system, the Tuzu *Gesar* is unique in its pattern and content. When performed, the verse sections are sung in Tibetan, and there is no limit on the order of rhymes and lines. After the Tibetan exposition, the performer then interprets the epic in the Tu language. Instead of explaining the action literally, he adds ancient Tuzu cultural stories, uniting the bilingual presentation. To represent the linguistic makeup of this material, I have adopted the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to make a complete and scientific record of the Tuzu *Gesar*, and have translated the result to both the Tibetan and the Mandarin languages. As for the prose part, I have recorded the sounds in IPA and translated it word-for-word into Mandarin. This process preserved the materials in original and scientifically sound form. In this way, the Tuzu *Gesar* is presented as a multi-ethnic production with rich Tu

cultural characteristics. It reflects the great influence of the Tibetan *Gesar* on other ethnicities, and foregrounds and clarifies its unique content and pattern. The Tuzu *Gesar* fully illustrates the Tu people's creativity in dialogue with other ethnic cultures.

How did the Tuzu *Gesar* develop its current performative pattern? There are two explanations. First, the Tu are a unique minority in northwest China. For centuries, they frequently communicated with other groups, including the Han, Tibetan, Hui, and Mongolian peoples. The Tu have been significantly influenced by other ethnic groups, and not only by their languages but also, to varying extents, by their customs, religion, literatures, and arts—especially by Tibetans. Tuzu folk literature consists mainly of various special myths, legends, folktales, narratives, ballads, proverbs, and fables, all of which are depictions of Tu social history. These have been passed down through oral performance, and the Tuzu *Gesar* is the most representative of the overall cultural heritage.

Second, when initially introduced into the Tu area, the Tuzu *Gesar* was much the same as the Tibetan version, with verse and prose portions performed in Tibetan. In most cases, when an ethnic culture is introduced to other areas and peoples, it is changed and transformed by the folk performers who adapt it to their daily life, basic concepts, social environment, and aesthetic needs. In this way the transformed cultural product is appreciated for generations. Tu epic performers have imported *Gesar* into a mother-tongue tradition. Keeping the original Tibetan verses, the performers also added native heroic stories and other content with Tu cultural characteristics. Under such circumstances, the Tuzu *Gesar* circulated throughout the Tu area, and a *Gesar* version with unique characteristics developed and was passed down to the current era with its integrity and originality intact.

Even though the long tradition of *Gesar* has maintained its original prose elements since the beginning, after generations of performance the Tibetan vocabulary has been simplified and modernized. The remaining Tibetan words have sometimes been transformed by the Tu language, and sometimes have retained the ancient pronunciations or even original words. These Tibetan words are similar to the Tu language in their phonetic pronunciation.

The Practice of Sacred Performance

The Tuzu *Gesar* is performed according to a strict procedure and within a unique pattern. My father, Gengdeng Shijia (Wang Yongfu), is the only living individual who can perform the complete version of the Tuzu *Gesar*. He has observed that "the procedure and performance pattern date back to ancient times, and if performers do not follow this procedure or pattern they will offend the deities and King Gesar, and they will also feel guilty and be punished due to Karma." Several days before the event, the performer will usually go to a valley several miles away in order to get water from between six and nine springs, and also cut some twigs from the top of a cypress tree to worship Gesar and other gods. In addition, he cleans the performing place and burns the twigs to purify the site. Then the performer puts on special clothing, burns incense along with the cypress twigs, lights Buddha lamps, offers the pure water he has collected, and recites prayer scriptures. Then, sprinkling wine and water, he worships three levels of gods: the higher "King Heaven," the middle "Treasure," and the lower "Dragon," as well as of all the

mountain and family gods. It is believed that if the performer follows these procedures the people will not suffer any illness or disaster, and that they will also enjoy good harvests for the entire year. After all of these steps are complete, he begins his performance.

The Discovery and Protection of the Tuzu Gesar. Video by the Northwestern University for Nationalities. http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/25ii/guoming#myGallery-picture(3)

Near Extinction

Many Tuzu epic performers of great achievement have passed away in recent decades. The only one left is Wang Yongfu (Gengdeng Shijia), who is 79 years old and has been ill for some time. Thus the need to study and to protect the Tuzu *Gesar* epic as performed by him is extremely urgent. With the development of science and technology, as well as the evolution of the market economy, people's cultural life has become more varied and more complex. Many have lost interest in the Tuzu *Gesar*, and this change has had a negative impact on epic performance. Now it is difficult to transmit the Tuzu *Gesar*, which is on the verge of dying out. Maxim Gorky valued highly the role of folk performers in developing and promoting the arts (Suonan 2005). He highlighted the importance of protecting ethnic culture, and argued that losing a folk performer was like losing a library. Lu Xun, a famous Chinese writer, considered

folk artists to be "non-literate writers," and praised their contributions to cultural history. Therefore, if the government does not take effective measures to protect *Gesar*, an important manifestation of human oral and intangible heritage will be forever lost in our lifetime and we will be responsible for that loss.

The Epic Performer: Wang Yongfu

Before 1990 there were some four performers of the Tuzu *Gesar*. Today, Wang Yongfu, from the Tianzhu region, is the only one still living. Here is his story.

One August morning in 1930, a baby was born in a crude cave dwelling to a family who had performed the Tuzu *Gesar* for at least five generations. This baby grew up to become the famous performer Wang Yongfu, whose Tibetan name is Gengdeng Shijia. From childhood, he was clever and had an excellent memory. Under his father's instruction, he acquired the skills for performing the epic when he was a teenager. The table below provides detailed information on the genealogy of his family. (I have recorded this material according to Wang Yongfu's memory because the family record was lost. We are currently conducting research on the accuracy of the facts provided for the first generation.)

Generation	Name	Gender	Birth date	Literacy	Transmission pattern	Performing era	Home region
First	Huoer Jiamaya	Male	Unknown	Illiterate	Within family	Unknown	Huzu county, Qinghai
Second	Sangou Acairang	Male	Unknown	Illiterate	Within family	Unknown	Huzu county, Qinghai
Third	Lin Qiaheilo-ngjiang	Male	Unknown	Illiterate	Within family	Unknown	Huzu county, Qinghai
Fourth	Yang Zeng	Male	1912	Illiterate	Father-in-law to son-in-law	After 1927	Tiantang town, Tianzhu
Fifth	Wang Yongfu	Male	1930	Illiterate	Father to son	After 1942	Zhuca village, Tiantang town, Tianzhu

Wang Yongfu has earned high praise for his performances. He won an honorary certificate from the National Administrative Panel in November of 1991, and was chosen as a Paragon Individual for his contribution in protecting *Gesar*. In 1996 he was invited to attend the Fourth International Academic Conference. In June 1997 he was commended by the National Ministry of Culture, the National Ethnic Affairs Commission, the National Literary Union, and the National Academy of Social Science, who jointly conferred the title of Paragon Individual with Remarkable Contributions. In September 2006 he was listed as one of the First Group of Representative Inheritors of the National Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Cultural Context, Structure, and Content

Wang Yongfu praying before his performance. Photo by Wang Guoming.

The Tuzu *Gesar* is similar to the Tibetan version only in its characters and general plot; it is different in content, structure, events, and the story as a whole. From its very beginning, the Tuzu *Gesar* is dependent on the folk custom of the Tu people, and reflects many aspects of the Tu people's daily life. It consists of an unusual mixture of creation epic, mythology stories, and heroic epic, an uncommon combination in other traditions. The two completed studies of *Gesar* demonstrate that the epic has a rich content, covering topics as diverse as the original universal chaos, human emergence, the origin of various species, raising domestic animals, and cultural development from primitive tribes to modern nationalities. It also recounts the biography of Gesar, who is transformed from a god into a human being, and then from an ordinary person into the tribal chief. He teaches his people to be self-reliant instead of trusting in the gods, and to develop agriculture and livestock to enrich their lives. The epic also includes information about food, living, clothes, and customs, as well as about agriculture, politics, military matters, and religion. The hero and gods from the Tuzu *Gesar* are half human and half divine, and we can observe that the epic illustrates a transition from the "mythological age" to the "heroic age." Its diverse content touches on language, religion, folk culture, mythology, history, geography, politics, and economics, as well as agricultural and handicraft-related topics.

The first part of the Tuzu *Gesar* is known as the Creation Epic, which has an independent conceptual system. It exists, for example, in the collection by Shi Luode, *Alangbu Creation History*, as discovered by Wang Xingxian, and in the Tuzu *Gesar* as performed by Wang Yongfu. The creation epic illustrates the living conditions and practices of the primeval people, such as collecting wild fruit, hunting, cave-dwelling, and dressing themselves in clothes made from animal skins and tree bark. Wang Yongfu tells a creation tale that is more detailed, more real, and more magnificent. His Creation Epic demonstrates to us a Tuzu *Gesar* that is unusual and more fully nuanced, showing us how the universe developed, how human beings were created, and how the different species arose. This part is a prelude to the following section, but is also in its own right of great significance in the Tuzu *Gesar*: it provides a comprehensive summary of the Tu people's original concepts of the universe, human beings, religion, language, and origins.

The second part of the Tuzu *Gesar* is called the Heroic Epic, and it tells the origin of Alang tribe, the power struggle among tribal members, and wars against other tribes. The elder chief (Khan) Alang Qiagan wants to abdicate and to choose a successor. But the evil Agu Jiadang usurps the throne by bribing the diviner. Agu Jiadang is weak, depletes his people's resources, and puts the Alang tribe at war for years. Under such circumstances, the elder Khan goes to heaven and beseeches the bottom-level Dragon God to let the god's third son be born into the Alang tribe. That son later becomes Gesar; he is the hero sent to the earth by the gods. From the time of his birth he is persecuted by his uncle, but the smart young Gesar outwits Agu Jiadang many times. Finally the young man overthrows his uncle, conquers some nearby tribes, and restores relationships with them; as a result the people of Alang have a peaceful and happy life. The second part of the Tuzu *Gesar* is similar to the Tibetan and Mongolian versions, with additional Tu cultural content.

The Study and Protection of the Tuzu *Gesar*

For a long time, people have valued the Tibetan and Mongolian versions of *Gesar*, and researchers initiated the preservation, collection, and edition of these versions quite early on. However, since people knew little about the transmission of the Tuzu *Gesar*, they have not done a great deal so far to protect, collect, and edit it. There are two principal explanations for this situation. The first is geographical and demographic. The Tu people live mainly in the areas with minority communities (Huzhu Tuzu Autonomous County, Minhe Huizu and Tuzu Autonomous County, and Datong Huizu and Tuzu Autonomous County of Qinghai Province; Tianzhu Tibetan Autonomous County and Yongdeng County of Gansu Province). The Tu people are a small population of fewer than two hundred thousand, and they have a poor economy. Second, the lack of a written language historically frustrated developments in their politics, economy, and culture, and made communications with other ethnic groups difficult. Therefore, Tu traditional culture was not preserved well, and researchers did not pay much attention to the preservation and edition of the Tuzu *Gesar*.

Wang Yongfu speaking with his son, Wang Guoming. Photo by Li Wei.

Since the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee, the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the State Council have issued several documents, stating that "the edition of ancient books, inheriting the precious cultural heritage of our homeland, is a significant task in regard to our posterity." This statement placed the edition of ancient minority works on the government's agenda.

Scholarly research on Tuzu *Gesar* has advanced in three stages: discovery, edition, and research. The first stage (1948-85) was the period when foreign scholars discovered the "Akelong *Gesar*" for the first time. Dominic Shlode from the former West Germany was the first scholar to discover, edit, and publish this tradition. The second stage (1985-2005) witnessed domestic scholars beginning to collect, edit, and publish the Tuzu *Gesar*. They made tremendous efforts to explore the oral epic performed by the inheritors of the tradition. As a result they were able to save this outstanding historical cultural heritage and publish their achievements. People began to pay attention to the epic's historical and cultural value, and the Tuzu *Gesar* was gradually accepted by the Gesar study group and by scholars in other social science fields. This was significant for future edition, exploration, and research on the Tuzu *Gesar*. The main scholastic achievements of the second stage are as follows:

   1. The survey conducted by the researcher Yang Enhong (June 25-July 3, 1986)
   2. The experience of "seeking the treasure" by the researcher Wang Xingxian and his important contribution (September 6, 1986)

3. The collection and edition of the Tuzu *Gesar* by Wang Guoming, son of Wang Yongfu (from 1994 to the present)

      The third stage began in 2006, when the Tuzu *Gesar* was placed among the first group of the national intangible cultural heritage. With the further development of reform and opening up in China, more efforts were made by the government to explore, collect, and save the cultural heritage of all minorities. The State Council promulgated "Instructions on Strengthening the Preservation of Works of the National Intangible Cultural Heritage" for effective protection in 2005, and in 2006 published a name-list of the first group of the national intangible cultural heritage, which included 518 items in total. The confirmation of the Tuzu *Gesar* in that name-list has far-reaching significance, even though the relevant work has just started. The tradition has gained national respect for its historical and cultural position. Its immense research value in the areas of history, culture, religion, and art is acknowledged, and it is also unique in the overall research area of *Gesar*. Including the Tuzu *Gesar* on the list means that it will be fully explored with national support and that research achievements will be published as a series.

Gesar Research Institute
Northwest University for Nationalities

References

[All original citations in Chinese]

Office 2003   Office of the National Administrative Team of Gesar Affairs. *Studies on Gesar*, 6 vols. Lanzhou: Gansu National Press.

Schlode 1994   Domenik Schlode, ed. *The Tuzu Gesar*. Trans. by Li Keyu. Xining, Qinghai: People's Press.

Suonan 2005   Suonan Zhuoma. *Oral Performers: Carriers of the Tuzu Gesar Epic: Tibetans in Qinghai*. Vol. I.

Wang 2002   Wang Xingxian. *Key Arguments on Gesar*. Lanzhou: Gansu National Press.

Wang and Wang 1996   Wang Xingxian and Wang Guoming, *Tuzu Gesar*. Gesar Library, 3.1. Lanzhou: Gansu National Press.

Wang and Wang 2000   _____. *Tuzu Gesar*. Gesar Library, vol. 3.2. Lanzhou: Gansu National Press.

Zhao 1998   Zhao Bingli. *An Anthology of Gesar Studies*, 5 vols. Lanzhou: Gansu National Press.

Zhaxi and Wang 2002   Zhaxi Dongzhu and Wang Xingxian. *A Historical Sketch of Gesar Studies*. Lanzhou: Gansu National Press.

Interperformative Relationships in Ingrian Oral Poetry

Kati Kallio

[*Transcriptions and audio excerpts of sung materials are available at*
http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/25ii/kallio]

The Baltic-Finnic ethnic groups used trochaic tetrameter called Kalevala-meter in their oral poetry. These ethnic groups included the Finns, Karelians, Estonians, Izhors, Votes, and Ingrian-Finns. The present name of this poetic meter[1] derives from the Finnish national epic, *The Kalevala* (1835), which was compiled by Elias Lönnrot on the basis of folk poems. Kalevala-metric poetry was mainly sung, though it served as a vehicle for proverbs embedded in speech and recited charms. This form was the central poetic language of these groups, used in epic, lyric, ritual, and occasional songs. The very first sources derive from the sixteenth century, while the largest corpora were collected in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Map 1: Ingria, Estonia, Finland, Karelia, and Russia.

One of the extensively documented geographical areas of Kalevala-metric oral poetry is Ingria, and in all of Ingria the majority of the sound-recordings were collected from the western districts of Soikkola and Narvusi. Beginning in 1853, many scholars traveled in West Ingria to record the predominantly female singing culture, first manually and later by using sound recording technologies. The Ingrian practices, structures, and stylistics of singing were varied, and this area is often referred as a counterpart to or a point of comparison for Karelian singing of a more male and epic character (Gröndahl 1997; Siikala 2000).

In recent years, new insights have created opportunities to understand the massive archival collections from Ingria as textualized products of communicative, situational, varying singing practices.

---

[1] Kalevala-meter is called *regivärs* in Estonian and *kalevalamitta* in Finnish. This poetic genre is often referred to as Kalevalaic, Kalevala, or Kalevala-meter poetry, but sometimes also runic poetry or rune-singing, though it is not connected to the Scandinavian runic alphabet. I use the term Kalevala-metric poetry here to stand for both the Estonian *regilaul* and the Finnish-Karelian *runolaulu*, although the term is somewhat anachronistic and no consensus has been reached on its status.

Studies on the forms, uses, and meanings of Kalevala-metric poetry have been published by the Finnish researchers Lauri Harvilahti (1992a; 1994; 2004), Heikki Laitinen (2004; 2006), Lotte Tarkka (1996; 2005), and Senni Timonen (2000; 2004), while Anna-Leena Siikala (1994; 2000) has highlighted the regional differences among typical singing practices in Finnish, Karelian, and Ingrian oral poetry. For the scope of this article, other noteworthy scholars are the Estonian researchers Janika Oras (2004; 2008) and Taive Särg (2000), as they have connected the analysis of textual, contextual, and musical aspects when studying Estonian traditions. These studies are connected to larger discussions of several partly overlapping lines of thought for understanding the dynamics of various oral traditions discussed by John Miles Foley (1995; 2002).[2]

The aim of this article is twofold: to introduce the Ingrian poetic singing culture, which is often referred to when discussing Kalevala-metric poetry, and to discuss aspects of performance and intertextuality. The central point here is to highlight that the meanings of a song are created on the various levels of performance; not only is the text itself worth studying, but likewise the other performance features, such as musical structures, singing conventions, and performance situations warrant analysis. After referring to the most central theoretical thoughts and concepts, I will introduce the geographical area and then proceed to a general portrait of Ingrian Kalevala-metric poetry with its typical contexts and conventions of use. As case studies, I will first discuss the interperformative relationships and situational stylistics of West Ingrian swinging songs[3] and lullabies, and then focus on the various uses of one poetic theme, *The Sad Widow*. With this general introduction of Ingrian oral poetry and the treatment of some particular cases, I hope to draw a picture of some aspects of situational variation and referentiality in performance.

Performance and Intertextuality

The meaning of a song is not entirely in the text. Richard Bauman was one of the early scholars who launched the interest in performance (1977:9):

> In other words, in an artistic performance of this kind, there is something going on in the communicative interchange which says to the auditor, "interpret what I say in some special sense: do not take it to mean what the words alone, taken literally, would convey." This may lead to the further suggestion that performance sets up, or represents, an interpretive frame within which the messages being communicated are to be understood, and that this frame contrasts with at least one other frame, the literal.

---

[2] On performance theory, see Bauman 1977, 2004; Bauman and Briggs 1990; Briggs and Bauman 1992; and Reichl 2000. On ethnopoetics, see Tedlock 1983; Hymes 1981; see also Anttonen 1994; on immanent art, see Foley 1991; see also DuBois 2006. On some relevant aspects of ethnomusicology, see Feld 1990, Nettl 1983, Niemi 1998, and Niemi and Lapsui 2004.

[3] Swinging songs were an Ingrian local genre that included both epic and lyric poems and was used while passing time in huge outdoor swings. At springtime feasts, both the adults and the young people participated in swinging and singing, while later on in the summer it was mainly an amusement for young people.

As Bauman observed (16), to mark a particular interpretive frame, the performance may then be keyed on various levels: "special codes, figurative language, parallelism, special paralinguistic features, special formulae, appeal to tradition, disclaimer of performance," and so on, the use of which varies according to genre and tradition (Foley 2002:79-94). Following Foley (1995:47-49, 79-82), the interpretive frame associated with or evoked by certain types of performances, genres, or poems may be called a *performance arena*. When the audience knows the poetic language, system of genres, and the wider backgrounds of a particular performance, it is possible to interpret even vague or partial references by the singer. As a consequence, a single word or gesture may activate larger interpretive frames or narrative structures in the minds of a competent audience. Yet, the audience is never homogenous: individual competence, previous experiences, and personal attitudes direct the possibilities for interpretations, and this also applies to the researcher (Foley 1991; Geertz 1973).

The aim here is to investigate the various levels of performance in order to gain some understanding of the manifold relations and cross-references between Ingrian songs. The meanings of a song may be created by using or referring to words, song structures, melodies, rhythms, tones of voices, or gestures, and this all happens in interaction with a particular audience in a particular place and time (Harvilahti 1998:200-03; Reichl 2000; Tedlock 1983). The term *intertextuality* is often used when discussing the relations between poems or poetic genres (Briggs and Bauman 1992; Tarkka 2005:61-72). Bauman also employs the term *interdiscursive*, which helps to avoid the textual impressions associated with the previous term (2004:2):

> The perspective that I am suggesting here is founded upon a conception of a social life as discursively constituted, produced and reproduced in situated acts of speaking and other signifying practices that are simultaneously anchored in their situational contexts of use and transcendent of them, linked by interdiscursive ties to other situations, other acts, other utterances. The sociohistorical continuity and coherence manifested in these interdiscursive relationships rests upon cultural repertoires of concepts and practices that serve as conventionalized orienting frameworks for the production, reception and circulation of discourse.

The term *interdiscursive* fits well into oral contexts, since the textual side of an utterance is always combined with various non-textual aspects. Lee Haring (1988:365) has used the concept of *interperformance* to refer to "the relation of inclusion which connects storytelling events to the various types of discourse which engendered them." Since the concept of performance is the most central here, I am adopting the term *interperformativity* for the purposes of this article to refer to relations between performances. These relations take place on various levels: textual, musical, stylistic (involving voice production, tempo, and intonation), gestural, and so forth. Thus, I am not adopting this term in an Austinian sense by referring to the power of performances, but simply to refer to "something between performances" or "something referring to or deriving from earlier or typical performances." Similarly, the term *performative* in this article means simply "something relating to performance." The word *performance* here refers both to performances that are elevated, highlighted, or full (Bauman 1977) and to informal or partial renditions of a poem.

The learning of singing culture begins during the early interaction of a child with the people who take care of him or her (Tarkka 2005:101), and the text and melodies are not the only aspects that he or she needs to learn. The foundation of the internalized understanding of the singing culture is the whole language and aesthetics of singing: how is the text created and varied, which themes are reproduced more conservatively, which may be transformed more freely, and which are often or nearly always linked together? How is voice produced, how are melodies and rhythms used, how are they varied and how not? How does one move one's body, or react to and speak about the various kinds of songs? When one learns the basics, it is easy to sing one's own versions, learn more songs, or make new ones. In an oral singing culture, a song is often learned from several distinct performances and performers, not from one single source (Saarinen 1994).

To grasp the multi-level variation of poems and melodies in the corpus of Ingrian poetry, I will make practical use of the terms *formula*, poetic *theme*, and *poem*. By *formula*, I refer to the shorter units containing similar lexical, semantic, and syntactic elements often used for similar purposes. In musical formulas, these elements are melodic and rhythmic. *Theme* refers to those sections consisting of several verses with similar content and form, whereas *poem* refers to a longer recognizable textual entity, but is also used as a synonym for (a text of) one song. These concepts are flexible tools, and in some cases, I will use both *formula* and *theme*, or *theme* and *poem* nearly interchangeably, since the limits between these are, with Ingrian material at least, typically open to various scholarly interpretations (Timonen 2000:634; Harvilahti 1992a: 141-42).[4]

Multicultural Ingria

Ingria is a Russian area situated between St. Petersburg and Estonia on the coast of the Gulf of Finland (see map 1 above). The first known inhabitants were Votes, a Baltic-Finnic group speaking a language somewhat similar to Estonian. The other early people in the area were Izhors, also a Baltic-Finnic group, whose language is closer to Karelian. Both groups were in contact with Slavic groups from at least the twelfth century onwards: they were slowly converted to the Greek Orthodox religion, and the area first came under Novgorodian rule and later, Moscovian rule. Sweden conquered Ingria in 1617, and significant portions of the indigenous population of Izhors and Votes were either killed or fled behind the retreating borders of Russia. New inhabitants immigrated from eastern Finland and the Karelian Isthmus, both of which were a part of Sweden at the time. The newcomers formed ethnic groups according to their region of origin. The Ingrian-Finns were Lutheran, which was the official religion of Sweden from the sixteenth century on. The Izhors and Votes, who were Orthodox, had difficulties practicing their religion under Swedish rule. Aleksej Krjukov (1993) has estimated that during this period, many Izhors and Votes were converted to Lutheranism and were counted as Ingrian-Finns thereafter. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Russia re-conquered Ingria, and Peter the Great founded

---

[4] See Foley 1990:278-84, 311-12, 327-28; 1991; 2002:48; Harvilahti 1992a; 1992b; 1994; 2004; Saarinen 1994; and also Lippus 1995:48,71; Lord 1960.

St. Petersburg in the eastern part of Ingria, in the middle of the Ingrian-Finn and Izhorian populations. This led to a significant new Russian population settling in Ingria.[5]

Different Baltic-Finnic ethnic groups of Ingria—Votes, Izhors, and Ingrian-Finns, as well as some immigrant Finnish and Estonians—sang Kalevala-metric poems in various ways and languages. These poems had some common and some distinct features; some poems were local, others were learned and translated from each other. The amount of interaction between groups seems to have varied in time and space. In addition to Baltic-Finnic groups and Russians, there were also some Germans, Swedes, and Gypsies in the region. For the most part, these groups remained separate: serfdom restricted population movement until 1861, and the boundary between the Lutheran and Orthodox groups was quite distinct. However, the evidence also suggests interethnic marriages, Gypsies mediating Finnish songs to Izhors, or Russians learning Izhorian poems in Soikkola villages.[6] Contacts between these groups also reflect their languages. For example, the Izhorian dialects of Western Ingria contain a significant number of Russian, Estonian, and Votic loan words (Nirvi 1971:IV).[7]

Collecting Ingrian Songs

From 1809 to 1917, Finland was an autonomous Grand Duchy of Russia, and scholars of this period had easy access to Ingrian and Karelian areas. Most of the Ingrian poems were collected during that time. From 1853 to 1938, over twenty scholars visited West Ingria. For the purposes of this article, the work of some of those scholars is particularly important. For instance, Vihtori Alava collected a rich corpus of poems, stories, and ethnographic information at the end of the nineteenth century, whereas Armas Launis made a notable phonograph recording of some 200 melodies from western and central Ingria in 1906. Another important scholar, Väinö Salminen, visited the area in 1906, 1930, and 1931, and wrote several monographs on Ingrian poetry.

Between the First and the Second World War, many Finnish and Estonian scholars visited the westernmost villages of Ingria, which were on the Estonian side of the border at that time. In particular, Elsa Enäjärvi-Haavio documented more information on the contexts and uses of the songs than the earlier collectors had accomplished. Moreover, Aili and Lauri Laiho were particularly interested in the singing practices and in 1937 they even took six singers to be recorded for the Finnish Literature Society at the Estonian radio station in Tallinn. The early

---

[5] See Harvilahti 1992a:95; Nenola 2002:54-58; Nevalainen and Sihvo 1991; Västrik 2007.

[6] SKS KRA Alava XIII:159-60 and VII B 1882:167; Porkka 1886:158.

[7] See Anttonen 1987; Harvilahti 1992a:17-18; Heinonen 2005:11-16; Laiho 1940; Nevalainen and Sihvo 1991; Timonen 2004:84-87.

collections from West Ingria include over 6,000 poems, 400 short notations, 200 short phonograph recordings, and 44 entire songs on shellac disks.[8]

After the Second World War, Ingria was modernized and, to a degree, emptied of Baltic-Finnic groups; as a consequence, the social occasions for Kalevala-metric singing disappeared. Later, some poems were recorded from the refugees who moved to Finland and Sweden, but the most important collections of the time are recordings made by Soviet (mainly Estonian, Karelian, and Ingrian) researchers beginning in the 1950s.[9] When Finnish researchers visited the Soikkola villages again in 1991, only a few old people were able to sing short parts of Kalevala-metric songs: mostly they sang newer Russian and some Finnish folksongs.[10]

Regarding collected poems and melodies, one of the most interesting Ingrian areas is the Soikkola peninsula. This region has the highest density of Izhorian villages, with Votic villages to the south and Ingrian-Finn villages to the east. Collectors of both texts and melodies have praised the Izhors of Soikkola for their songs. This area was in contact with Izhorian villages of Narvusi in the West and Hevaa in the east, and it also influenced the Votes and Ingrian-Finns of the area.[11]
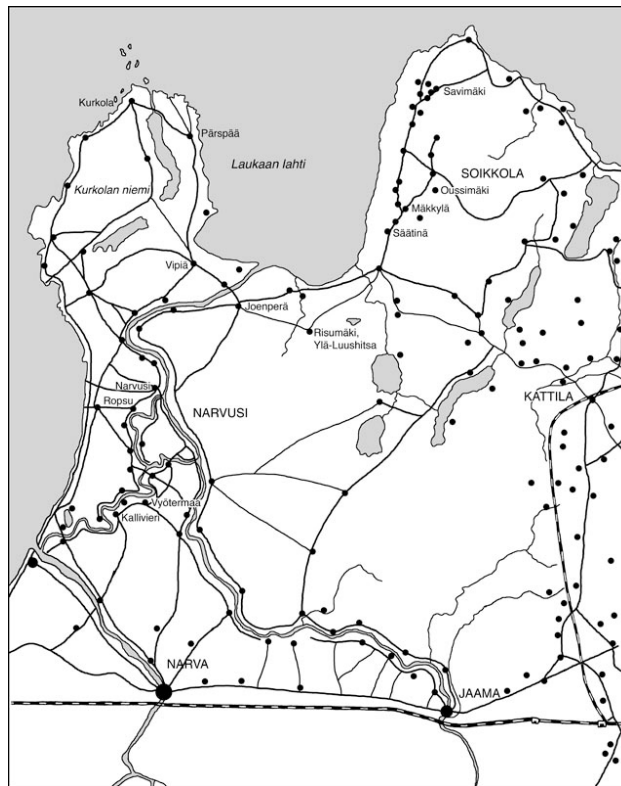
Map 2: The villages of the West Ingria.

Processes of Textualization

For a collector, performance often differs from an inter-group performance. This has led researchers to question its value or validity as being representative of typical, true, or traditional performances. This central question has been approached by Richard Bauman (1977:8): "How many of the texts in our collections represent recordings of informants' abstracts, résumés, or

---

[8] A significant part of the textual material was published in the first half of the twentieth century (SKVR) and is now available on a public database (www.finlit.fi/skvr), but the sound recordings have been used very little in research. On the history of collections, see Nenola 2002:83-91, 866-76; Heinonen 2005:22-24; Järvinen 1990; Launis 1910a; SKVR III.

[9] See Gomon 1977; Kiuru et al. 1974; Laanest 1966; Rüütel 1977.

[10] See Asplund 1992; Harvilahti 1991:220-21; Nevalainen and Sihvo 1991.

[11] Harvilahti 1992:14-18; Heinonen 2005:11-16; Laiho 1940.

reports of performance and performance forms, rather than true performances?" However, as Senni Timonen has suggested (2004:288; Bauman 2004:10; Tarkka 2005:101), a song performed for the collector also qualifies as a performance—a performance of a special kind, produced in a particular situation that is not culturally typical. The singer adapts his or her knowledge of the poetic tradition to an unusual context: the recorded performance refers to and builds on the competence acquired through the earlier performances, while some variation emerging in the recording situation is of a universal character. Depending on the ongoing interaction, the singer may then realize the song as a résumé or partial rendition,[12] explain more than she would probably do when performing to a native audience,[13] be inspired to an elevated, full performance,[14] or perform something that she has probably never done before.[15] Due to these possible variations, the analysis needs to be more layered.

When using archival material, particular emphasis must be given to the situations where the songs were recorded and on the collectors' and informants' aspirations. In other words, how does a particular situation, the interaction and the interests of the participants, and the technology used all influence the recorded performance? In some cases, the archival material includes diaries, additional notes, travel reports, and so forth, all of which make answering this question easier.[16] In other cases, the only possibility is to consider the overall character of the materials produced by one collector or one singer, and to compare that corpus with the materials recorded from other persons, periods, or areas. This comparison helps to form an idea of how the interaction may have influenced a particular performance and its documentation.

If a singer is unaccustomed to recording, the situation may contribute to his or her experiencing serious performance anxiety. The folk music researcher Armas Otto Väisänen recounts an occasion when he once had to stop his phonograph after each line of an Ingrian lament[17] because the presence of an unfamiliar machine made the singer too nervous to remember the improvisational phrases she normally performed without difficulty.[18] In fact, the mere presence of a stranger without any technical equipment could result in the same effect. Lauri Laiho wrote down Tatjana Jegorov's impressions of collectors (SKS KRA L. Laiho 5422):

---

[12] Harvilahti 2004:201; e.g., SKVR III:1879; compare SKVR III:959 with III:1905.

[13] See, e.g., SKRV III:2079; 2170.

[14] As may be felt with many collected texts and heard on some tapes, e.g., SKSÄ L 87-101.

[15] See Heinonen 2008b.

[16] Harvilahti 2004; Heinonen 2005:22-46; Oras 2008.

[17] The other main poetic genre in Ingria and Karelia was the lament, which was used particularly in funeral and wedding rites, but also on other occasions. The metric and musical structures of the laments were looser than those found in the Kalevala-metric poetry, a poetic language that was more complex, and the overall character of laments was more improvisational (Nenola 2002). The third main genre was the newer rhymed, strophic folksong (Asplund 1992; Timonen 2004:257). These two genres differed from Kalevala-metric songs in meter, structure, poetic language, melody, and characteristics of the performance. In fact, the singers themselves saw these genres as separate categories, though in some rarely recorded cases a poem may have begun as a Kalevala-metric song and have ended as a lament or a rhymed folksong (SKS KRA A. Laiho 3247; Sääski 5009).

[18] SKS KRA Väisänen e:15.

> Tatjana said she had been very shy of her Finnish guests [Lauri and Aili Laiho] at first, but after the recording trip to Tallinn, now "we are such friends." Then she said of [an earlier meeting with] the university student Niemi: "well, what could I do, when the strange man arrives, I just put up my guard and kept my eyes wide open and was afraid—said two or three songs—I just waited for him to go away."

From this testimony, it is no wonder that Lauri Laiho was the one who recorded the most and the best of Tatjana's poems. Collectors often remark about the fear and even anger of the local people: for them, it was difficult to be sure why all these poems and information were being collected. The depth of local peoples' suspicions often depended both on the skills of the collector and the varying political atmospheres, but similar stories of mistrust have been recorded from 1858 to the 1950s (Niemi 1904:270-310; Ariste 2005:67). Performers who exhibit fear and anxiety may shorten their songs, decrease the amount of textual and melodic variation, or change their voice production, although some experienced singers may not face these problems at all. Yet even the shortened versions are valuable because they build on the foundations of earlier and culturally typical performances. The singer is using his or her familiar poetic language in an unusual context.

Not all people wanted to be recorded, nor did all songs interest collectors, either. Since the early scholars were mainly seeking old epic poems similar to those in the Finnish national epic, the *Kalevala*, they were not always content with the personal, lyric, and ballad-like poems that the Ingrians preferred. Moreover, most of the collectors clearly did not want to record all the genres that were offered to them, such as the rhymed folksongs, Russian songs, and various kinds of obscene or mocking songs (Gröndahl 1997:31-46; Niemi 1904:358-59, 400).

Nevertheless, there were enough collectors with sufficiently diverse interests to collect a relatively thick corpus[19] of Ingrian poetry (Timonen 2000). As with any archival material, not all questions can be answered by this collection. But some of the interpretative gaps may still be surpassed by comparing the corpora generated by different individuals in different times and places, and by trying to situate the poems in the particular contexts of their recording, as far as it is possible. Since this corpus of songs was collected according to diverse interests across a period of approximately one hundred years, it provides a fine opportunity to characterize some of the consistent features and underlying patterns of the Ingrian singing cultures.

Ingrian Oral Poetry

The Kalevala-meter, with its various regional features, is one of the oldest known Finnish, Estonian, Karelian, and Ingrian poetic meters, and it was very widely used: for epic, lyric, festive songs, wedding songs, mocking songs, lullabies, dancing, working songs, and so forth (Kuusi 1994). This meter was embedded in speech as proverbs and quotations, recited as

---

[19] Lauri Honko (2000:16) describes thick corpora in a following way: "Their time span may be short and their geographic scope limited, but the frequency of the folklore expressions studied may be high, i.e. the same story will be documented several times from one or more performers. Such thick corpuses make organic variation visible."

charms or incantations, but was used predominantly in songs. The poems make use of parallelism and alliteration, but not rhyme or strophic form. Depending on the geographical area, they were sung in many ways: as a solo, as alternating between two singers, all together, or in an alternation of lead singer and chorus. Technically, any text could be sung with any melody in any situation, but there seem to have been regional propensities toward typical combinations.[20] Though many features were common to wide geographical areas, every area had its own distinctive conventions. For instance, in Ingria various forms of dance and ritualized walking were often used in the performance of Kalevala-metric songs.[21]

In the Ingrian poems, lyric and lyrical epic features were dominant, though there were also many festive, ritual, and occasional poems, ballads, legends, and even some epic and mythical poems. Lauri Harvilahti (1992a:69-86; 1994:96-98; cf. Siikala 2000:273) characterizes Ingrian lyrical epic as being personalized, often tragic poetry linked to love or family relationships and to the concrete environment of the singers. These features, especially the use of the first person, also appear in many Ingrian lyric and epic poems, and only very few poems can be counted as being a heroic epic (Siikala 1994:27-29). "Nowhere is the boundary between [Kalevala-metric] epic and lyric as vacillating as in Ingria," observes Senni Timonen; she continues: "the boundaries are also broken between . . . genres which are expressively and stylistically completely different" (2004:85).

The Kalevala-meter has been called a trochaic tetrameter, though it is defined by both the length of the syllables and by their stress (Leino 1994; Kuusi 1994). As such, it is deeply rooted in the structures of Baltic-Finnic languages, and the different forms it takes within different areas are connected to the differences in dialect and language (Sarv 2008; Laitinen 2006:53; Lauerma 2002). The meter is syllabic: the last three feet consist of two syllables each, whereas the number of syllables in the first foot may vary from two to four.[22]

Especially in Ingria, the sung poetic line may occur in variant forms. For example, the verses could proceed directly from one to the next, be repeated in sequences of one or two verses, or be augmented by various forms of partial repetitions. In addition, some short words or syllables may be inserted, the last syllable of the verse may be omitted, or refrains of various lengths may be added or used instead of repeating the verses.[23] In West Ingrian songs, the basic line "what should I rise to sing" ("mitä noisen laulamahan") was a common beginning formula that was not connected to any particular situation but was used with various lyric and epic

---

[20] See, e.g., Käppi 2007; Launis 1907; Oras 2008; Särg 2000; Virtanen 1968.

[21] See Enäjärvi-Haavio 1949; Siikala 2000; and also Siikala et al. 2004; Siikala and Vakimo 1994.

[22] Basically, the meter has two main types of line with many variations. The first type, which is referred to as *normal trochee*, is divided by a caesura in the middle of the line: La̲ ka | ka̲t-son ‖ li̲e-ku-|a-ni. In the other type, which is referred to as *broken line*, the caesura is omitted: Kä̲-si-|puu̲t kä̲-‖lyi-sen | teh̲-ty. The number of these line-types in a poem is usually equal, but they occur randomly (see Laitinen 2004). In Baltic-Finnic languages, the main stress lies on the first syllable of the word or part of a compound. For that reason, long syllables with primary stress should be situated at the rise of a foot (with exception of the first foot), whereas a short syllable with primary stress should be placed in the fall, and the placement of syllables without primary stress is unrestricted.

[23] See IRS, the main published collection of Ingrian melodies.

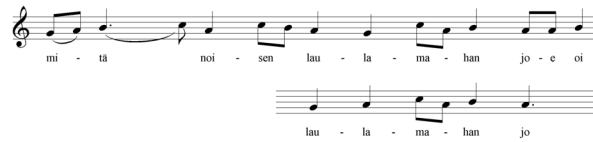**1. Mitä noisen laulamahan**
(What Shall I Rise to Sing)

Unknown singer
Säätinä, Soikkola, Ingria
Transcribed by Armas Launis in 1903
SibA 189; IRS 61
Reinterpreted from the manuscript
by Kati Heinonen

mi - tä noi - sen lau - la - ma - han   ku - ta noi - sen kuk - ku - ma - han

Example 1.

2. La ka katson liekkuvani
(Let Me See My Swing)

Ljuboi Jeyssennainen and chorus
Säätinä, Soikkola, Ingria
Recorded by Armas Launis in 1906
SKSÄ 300/27a; IRS 781
Transcribed by Kati Heinonen

♩=45 a1=c1

la Ga kat - sol leek - ku - vaa
ee   la ka (vaa) kat - sol   leek - ku - vaa - (ha)

kiu - za - e - len   keek - ku - vaa
ee   kiu - za - (vaa) - e - len   keek - ku - vaa - (ni)

on -Go vaa   liik - ku   vel - loin teh - ty
ty   on - Go (vaa) liik - ku   vel - loin teh - ty

kä - zi - puut kä - lyi - zem mee - He(n)
He(n) kä - zi - (vaa) - puut kä - lyi - ze(m) mee - He(n)

Example 2.

5. Mitä noisen laulamahan
(What Shall I Rise to Sing)

Unknown singer
Vyötermaa, Narvusi, Ingria
Transcribed by Armas Launis in 1903
SibA 7; IRS 80
Reinterpreted from the manuscript
by Kati Heinonen

mi - tä   noi - sen lau - la - ma - han jo - e oi

lau - la - ma - han   jo

Example 5.

themes.[24] It was often followed by the parallel verse "whom should I rise to cuckoo" ("kuta noisen kukkumahan"). The line could take, for example, some of the following textual forms:

Mitä noisen laulamahan (IRS 61; see example 1);

Mitä noisen laulamahan *joe oi*, laulamahan *jo* (IRS 80; see example 5);

Oi, mitä noisen *vaa* laulamahan, laulamahan (IRS 864);

Mitä noisen laulamaa, kuta noisen kukkumaa; *hee* kukkumahan *hoilee* (IRS 471);

These units may then be repeated, sung independently, or divided between the lead singer and chorus. Moreover, one textual structure of this kind could be connected to various rhythmic and melodic structures. In Ingrian melodies, the musical structures were also flexible, so that one melodic pattern could be combined with several rhythmic and textual structures. Nevertheless, certain tunes were rather fixed combinations of melodic, rhythmic, and structural elements.

The most common West Ingrian melody type contained one basic poetic line: it was a narrow scale melody that often was syllabic[25] and consisted of one musical line of four beats (see example 1 and example 2; IRS 61, 781). It was similar to many Estonian melody types, but was also found in Finland and Karelia. Similar melodies consisting of one line or two lines with five beats (see example 3; IRS 178) are found as well, though these are more

3. Leekuttaja keekuttaja
(The Swinger, the Swayer)

Vöglä and Okkuli (and a little girl)
Savimäki, Soikkola, Ingria
Transcribed by A. A. Borenius in 1877
SKS KRA Borenius 11 e 198; IRS 178
Reinterpreted from the manuscript
by Kati Heinonen

lee - kut - ta - ja kee-kut - ta - ja   lee - kut - ta - ja kee-kut - ta - ja

vas - ki - se vi - na-hut - ta - ja   vas - ki - se vi - na-hut - ta - ja

Example 3.

---

[24] For example, see SKVR III:160, 1032, 1038, 1354, 1427.

[25] Syllabic here means one or sometimes two notes per syllable.

6. Nyt ol lusti nuoren noissa
(Now It Is Fun for a Young One to Rise)

Example 6.

8. Oli tässä ennen kylä
(It Used to Be a Village Here)

Example 8.

7. Ei miun laulella pittäisi
(I Should not Be Singing)

Example 7.

typical in Karelia and Finland than in Ingria. Besides these two basic melody-types, there were dozens of rhythmic patterns and verse structures in use. For instance, verses were sometimes partially repeated or refrains of various kinds were added to the line, as in the verses above. Obviously, the melodies were then longer (see example 5 and example 6; IRS 80, SKSÄ 89b). All these melody types were used both in solo singing and as an alternation between the lead singer and chorus. Sometimes refrains were used instead of repeating the verse, particularly in choral parts. Most of these longer refrains were borrowed from Russian songs, as were many melodies relating to these structures (see example 7 and example 8; IRS 547; 624).[26]

Since the area was multicultural and has a long and complex history, the origins of one melody or performative feature are often difficult or impossible to trace. Nonetheless, it is

---

[26] See Koski 1974; Launis 1910b; 1910c; Lippus 1995; Rüütel 1977.

evident that the Ingrian melodies and performance practices reflect Finnish and Estonian influences in addition to Karelian ones. They also reflect significant Russian or Slavic influences, and probably also Baltic ones. Many tunes of more recent Russian and Finnish folksongs were also adapted for singing Kalevala-metric poems; sometimes this may even create an impression of a four-line strophic form.[27]

One melody might be sung in many ways, and many different melodies might be used within one context. Moreover, it is sometimes difficult to draw a line between the different melody-types even for the needs of scholarly analysis. Among the Ingrian genres, the dance-melodies apparently contained the most performative variation. Armas Launis (1904:52) offers this lively description of Ingrian dancing on the basis of his experiences in Soikkola villages:[28]

> When the young people are gathered, the girls here sing poems in the evenings of nearly every Sunday and holiday in between the instrumental dances. Without holding hands, they get into a circle and walk around to the rhythm of the song. The walking changes into dancing if the pace is faster. The most skillful girls take a lead in turns. They sing a line as a solo, and [with the last syllables of the line] the others join as a chorus. They either repeat the words and the tune of the lead singer, or sing a permanent refrain, such as "laadoi laadoi laadoi majoi" or "oi Kaalina, oi Maalina." The chorus ends with a fermata [a long note] . . . . Sometimes the lead singer sings two lines at time, both with the same melody, while the chorus repeats them twice at double speed . . . . If the lead singer and the chorus consisted of elder women, they were not walking, but the chorus stood in a half circle in front of the lead singer. In this case the chorus was able to keep the last note even longer, as they were not dancing. In one village of Northern Soikkola, they used a peculiar accompaniment: someone in the chorus kept beating two sticks together.

In performance, even one short melody would often vary. Early collectors often encountered problems with this variation, since many of them were trying to depict melodies with a few lines of notation: how were they to choose "the right" version of the melody from a flow of constant variation?[29] Different singers seem to have varied the melody to different degrees, and the scale of variation apparently also depended on the song genre and singing contexts. In choral sections, this variation often caused heterophony or polyphony.

Ingrian singing styles did not please most of the collectors, as the aesthetics of Western classical music did not apply to folk singing at all. For this reason, the collectors complained about the harsh and loud voice production of girls, calling it shouting and screaming, and they found the simple, ever-varying melodies to be boring. Even for a contemporary listener who is aware of ethnopoetic and ethnomusicological endeavors to understand poetic and musical cultures in terms of their own aesthetics, some stylistics of Ingrian singing may be difficult to appreciate. Such features include the varying non-classical scale structures, unfamiliar principles of heterophony and rhythmic variation, as well as the constant variation of melody on a narrow

---

[27] Asplund 1992; Harvilahti 1992a:18; 1998:198; Lippus 1995; Rüütel 1998.

[28] Translations in the following citations and examples were made by the present author.

[29] Heinonen 2008a:256-58; Laitinen 2006:61-65.

scale of tones, or sometimes the simple, non-varying repetition of short, fixed melodic formulae.[30]

Ingrian Genres and Contexts of Singing

Ingrian singers seem to have been remarkably free to create combinations of different poems and themes. Senni Timonen (2004:24; 2000:634) has analyzed the genres labeled by the singers themselves, as found in the field notes and descriptions of some collectors. She discovered that the singers did not differentiate between lyric and epic, but that these local, emic or indigenous genres were most often named by the context or purpose of singing: a poem or a tune for swinging, for dancing, for the forest, for a bonfire, for weddings, for thanking the cook, and so forth. These categories include both epic and lyric themes, which may either refer directly to the situation at hand or be more vaguely, thematically connected.

Singing would often begin with a specific poem, theme, or formula that referred to the situation at hand, and then continue with others connecting at some level to the atmosphere of the situation or to the mood and habitus of the performers (Timonen 2004:84-157, 238-303). Similarly, Armas Launis (1907:105) states that the melodies were determined more by the situation than by the poem itself. His collections and writings about the subject lead to the suggestion that the singing practices were not clear-cut, and the use of certain melodies was not limited only to certain situations, although it might have been typical of them. Launis (105-07) continues that although locals often categorize their tunes according to singing contexts, these melodic categories do not always coincide with the categories of a musicologist. However, they sometimes do. According to Launis, the most fixed melodies were certain festive and wedding melodies, which are indeed a clearly distinct group. Yet even these melodies would be used in other situations; the categories were not exclusive. In many situations, the variation seems to have been broad and, as Heikki Laitinen[31] has suggested regarding the songs in the forest, the local typologies may have been based on stylistics not perceivable in notations, such as voice production, movements, pace, and so forth.

The most prominent singing contexts in West Ingria were the weddings and orthodox *praasnikka*-feasts. These feasts were held predominantly in Russian, Izhorian, and Votic villages in honor of the village's patron saint(s), and they often included features of local calendrical rituals. Both the weddings and the *praasnikka*-feasts typically lasted three days. The most fixed combinations of textual and musical elements seem to occur particularly in the poems and melodies connected to these ritualized occasions. On the other hand, these situations created a more general festive frame, and in between the most ritualized moments nearly anything could be sung: lyric, epic, lyrical epic, dancing songs, mocking songs, drinking songs, rhymed folksongs, Russian songs, hymns, and so forth.[32]

---

[30] Heinonen 2008a; Laitinen 2003:313-99; 2006:54-65; Niemi 1904:141; Virtanen 1994.

[31] On oral communication, see also Timonen 2004:99 and n. 82.

[32] Anttonen 1987; Alava 1932; Forsberg 1893:53; Heinonen 2005:109-25; Salminen 1917:28-30.

Poems would also be sung while working, passing time, or entertaining each other in various situations. As Launis mentions in his description of Ingrian dance, when the young people had free time they could gather outside to sing and dance nearly every evening. Though women and girls were the most prominent performers, some accounts also mention that boys and men of various ages sang; and though the performance often took the form of alternation between the lead singer and chorus, which was characteristic of the area, the poems were also sung solo.[33]

In Ingria, singing practices were thus multiple. Certain "ways of singing"—typical textual, musical, and performative elements—were characteristically used in particular situations, although it was possible to employ them in other contexts. When these elements were used outside the most typical contexts, to my mind they would still refer to these more central contexts. Moreover, there are many possible levels of interperformative reference: melodies, rhythms, forms of repetition, vocal style, movements, formulas, or larger textual units. All of these, in varying degrees, could hint somewhere outside the actual performance. Naturally, many of these relations are impossible to trace from the archival records, but some are still there to be seen.

Festive Singing by the Swing

Swinging was an outdoor amusement for young people during summer evenings; on certain springtime holidays, adults also participated in the singing and swinging. The swings were huge and were not made for children: a swing would accommodate from ten to twenty adults. The speed was sometimes fast, and at times serious injuries occurred. For children, or for other occasions, smaller swings were built. Some researchers have made the connection of swinging to fertility rituals, since swinging marked the beginning of spring and the poems contained references to sowing and harvesting.[34]

Easter was the occasion that brought the entire village to gather around the swing. Many singers associated swinging songs explicitly with this context. According to Salminen (1929:63), on Easter everyone, even the older men, would take part in singing by the swing, and people would travel long distances to the Soikkola villages. Dancing

Photo 1: Swinging in the Kallivieri village during the Second World War in 1943 (SKS KRA Hämäläinen 533:4).

---

[33] Enäjärvi-Haavio 1949:149; Harvilahti 1992a:13-20; Heinonen 2008a; Siikala 2000:273-75.

[34] Launis 1904:52-53; 1907:107; Salminen 1929:63; 1931a:27-38.

songs could be sung, and a small accordion was sometimes played near the swing.[35] Besides Easter, swinging was more generally connected to many calendrical *praasnikka*-feasts.[36] The general pattern of these various feasts was rather similar in the different villages. On the first morning, guests and relatives would arrive from nearby areas and gather around the church. After the service, they would all go to separate houses to eat, drink, and entertain themselves. After eating, the young ones would gather outside to dance, sing, walk, play, and swing. The adults could visit several houses to eat, drink, sing, and tell stories. Altogether, feasting lasted from two to four days (Lukkarinen 1911).

The style of singing by the swing seems to be closely connected to the nature of the situation. Salminen points out that on Sundays and holidays the girls would sing as loudly as they could, but during singing on weeknights "the swing would be still or move very slowly, and so the lead singer would hum the verse and others would quietly repeat it in a way that the singing would not be heard in the village" (1931b:530). Collectors and researchers have often emphasized the loudness of Ingrian festive, public singing. Very few descriptions are available of informal, everyday singing (Heinonen 2008a), although, as Siikala has noted (2000:275), "the private or spontaneous arena was no doubt far more common" than the public one.

In West Ingria, certain poetic themes and one type of melody were particularly tightly connected to swinging (Launis 1907:107). The poetic formulas of the beginning of the song would direct the gaze to the swing ("la ka katson liekkuani/leekkuani," "let me see my swing"), be addressed to the swing itself ("lee lee lee lee leekkuani," "swi swi swi swi my swing"), or speak to the one or ones who would make it swing. An Izhorian woman Vöglä from Soikkola sang in 1877 (SKVR III:597):

Leekuttaja, keekuttaja,	The swinger, the swayer,
Vaskise vinahuttaja,	the squeaker of the bronze-made!
Kanttaak(a) leekku kahta neittä,	Does the swing carry two maidens,
Kahen neijoi kaatteroja,	the head ribbon of two maidens,
Kolmen neijoin koittania?	the head band of three maidens?
Onko leekku velloin teekku,	Is the swing made by my brother,
Käsipuut källysen tehty,	the handrests by my sister-in-law,
Vitsat on väännetty vävvyisen?	the twigs bent by my brother-in-law?
Kuhu leekku lendenöhö,	Where the swing is flying,
Sinne velloi ozran kylvi,	there the brother did sow the barley,
Sisoi sinne niittämähä,	sister [went] there to mow,
Pääsköi päitä perkoimaa,	the swallow to clean the tips,
Sisgaavat sikertammaha.	the nightingales to work.
Älä leekku lankettele	Swing, do not drop [us],
Heliähä heekkamaaha,	to the bright sands:
Marjoi maassa märkänöö	the berry will decay on the ground,

---

[35] SKS KRA A. Laiho 3171.

[36] See Timonen 2004:149-51; SKS KRA Borenius e:125, 375; Enäjärvi-Haavio 539, 830-32; A. Laiho 3171.

Veel o velloit pikkaraiset,	[and her] brothers are still small,
Siaret sitä alemmat;	the sisters even smaller.
Kuulek kui siar sannoho,	Listen to the sister say
Emoi lapsi laateloho.	the child of the mother telling.

The singing would start with similar themes that were connected to the actual situation. Several swinging poems proper continue the context-bound swinging themes with lyrical verses about singing or about worries and plaint. Furthermore, singing could proceed with various epic and lyric poems connected, at some level, to the situation at hand or to the mood of performers (Launis 1907:107; Timonen 2004:149-51). These could include a praise poem for one's own village, a lyrical epic poem about a lazy groom, or a plaint poem about a dead mother.[37]

Thus separate poems with no swinging themes proper might also be called swinging songs. The Ingrian-Finn singer, Anni Porissa from the Narvusi district, sang some lines of the swinging melody to Vihtori Alava with verses of a lyrical epic poem she had sung ten years earlier for another scholar as a complete and separate poem (SKVR iii:959, 1905). The poem tells about the fate of a maiden who, when she marries, has to leave the house where she has worked for her brother and sister-in-law. Porissa said that the tune would apply to all the swinging songs. A

Photo 2: The girls of Risumäki village posing still by the swing for the collector A. O. Väisänen in 1914 (Museovirasto 128:11).

similar observation was recorded from a Votic singer in the Soikkola district in connection with her swinging poem: "Swinging tune. It is almost the Izhorian/Ingrian-Finn one. There are many poems but one melody."[38]

The particular West Ingrian melody-type of swinging songs consisted of four beats, a narrow scale (3-4 tones), and a melody with an up and down character. This type of melody proceeded line-by-line and had neither refrains nor partial repetitions. The way in which these songs were sung was that the lead singer would sing a verse and the chorus would then repeat it. The melody might vary to some degree during the performance, and thus contain some heterophony in choral parts. Moreover, the singers might sometimes add rhythmic syllables in unstressed metrical positions. This same melody-type with similar textual themes of swinging

---

[37] SKS KRA V. Salminen 2978; SKS KRA Haavio 2558; L. Laiho 4732.

[38] "*Löekkunootti. Suomen o melkein. On virsii a yks nootti o.*" Oute from the Joenperä village in Soikkola (SKS KRA Borenius e:200; SKVR III:600).

appears in all central West Ingrian collections,[39] although the melody-type was also used with other poems and in other singing contexts.[40] (See example 2 for this typical swinging melody, IRS 781).

With two exceptions, the West Ingrian swinging songs in all the collections follow this scheme of one-line, narrow-scale, and a four-beat melody. One swinging melody recorded in Narvusi has a slightly different rhythmic scheme, but the singer said it was of a kind that was in use in another area, on the island of Lavansaari in the Gulf of Finland (see example 4; SibA 104; IRS 70). There is also one Central Ingrian Votic swinging song following this same scheme (IRS 33).

4. Lavansaaren liekkulaulu
(The Swinging Song from Lavansaari)

Unknown singer
Kurkola, Narvusi, Ingria
Transcribed by Armas Launis in 1903
SibA 104; IRS 70
Reinterpreted from the manuscript
by Kati Heinonen

la(s) mie koi - tan liek -ku - ja - ni   kiu - sa - e - len kiek - ku - ja - ni

Example 4.

Another exception to the typical swinging melody was collected in 1877 by A. A. Borenius from the singers Vöglä and Okkuli in Soikkola (see the example 3).[41] Vöglä said that this was a *leekutusvers*, a poem to set someone swinging with, and it would be sung when swinging on Easter. The poem she sang is an excellent example of the typical themes connected to swinging, and for this reason I chose it for the main example above. However, her melody consists of five beats and is of descending character; that is to say, it is clearly different from the rest of the recorded swinging melodies of the area. Borenius wrote above his transcription of this melody: "A tune to set someone swinging with, also when children are put to sleep." He also made a very small note: "compare to the proper one above," which, I think, refers to some swinging tune proper written down earlier.

Thus, this exceptional tune did not represent the most typical swinging song, *the* swinging tune proper. Instead, it was a melody that could *also* be used when swinging but that was associated equally with lullabies. Armas Launis (1904:53) actually said that the melodies proper to a swinging song might be used when putting a baby sleep. Vöglä called the melody "a tune to set one swinging with" (*leekutusnootti*) and not "a swing tune" or "a tune for swinging" (*leekkunootti*), as it was referred to most often.[42]

A small girl was also present in the interview and she sang with and listened to Vöglä and Okkuli. The presence of this girl seems to have affected the recorded comments and word

---

[39] In SKS KRA Europaeus (1853), Launis (1903, 1906) and Väisänen (1914, 1931). Eino Levón (1903) recorded it in the area of Central Ingria as well. From the mainly Izhorian villages of Central and Western Ingria, see IRS 34, 58, 72, 78, 767, 869, 780, 781; SKS KRA Väisänen 2:60; SKSÄ A 507/9 a; from Votes IRS 33, 45; from Ingrian-Finn villages IRS 95, 421, 651, 765, 800, 805, 811, 822; SKSÄ A 302/97-98. The melodies collected from Ingrian-Finn villages sometimes contain five tones, and in Central Ingria the verses were occasionally added with the syllables "oi" or "joi" appearing at the beginning of the verse.

[40] For an example, see IRS 55, 62, 65, 766.

[41] SKS KRA Borenius e:198, 6:923.

[42] The term "to swing" (*liekkua* or *leekkua*) refers to the movements of both the huge swings outside, to the smaller ones made for children and the cradle where the small children slept, but the verb to express the making of the movement has a separate form (*liekuttaa* or *leekuttaa*), while it likewise refers both to swinging and lulling. See also SKS KRA Laiho L. 5340, 5342.

choices. As they sang their very first song, a wedding tune, Vöglä and Okkuli said: "we sing to children, and also other poems, with this same tune."[43] So, according to these singers, the tune associated with swinging (though not the swinging tune proper), a wedding melody, and apparently, also the poem going along with the swinging could all be used equally when lulling or entertaining a child. This incident provides hints as to the uses of the public and rather formal swinging and wedding songs in the more intimate contexts outside their primary settings.

Situational Stylistics of Lullabies

While the swinging songs represent festive, collective, and public singing, the lullabies were typically intimate, everyday solo singing. Even so, as was noted in the previous section, the melodies and poems of swinging songs could also be used when singing to a child.

On the textual level, a Votic-Izhorian singer, Darja Lehti, made a similar associative connection between lullabies and swinging songs as did Vöglä and Okkuli on the melodic level in the previous section. In 1930, Lehti sang a short swinging theme in between her numerous lullabies for Väinö Salminen (SKS KRA Salminen 2899, 2900):[44]

Lē lē lēkkuja!	Swi swi my swing!
tšen on tehnyt lēkun?	Who has made the swing?
Armaz on aizat pannut - - -	The loved one has made the shafts - - -

The dashes marked by Salminen at the end of the verses may either suggest that he thought that the singer did not remember the rest of the poem or, in this instance, more probably that the singer moved directly to the next theme:

Lēkuta mie lasta pēntä,	I swing my little child,
lekuta ja laulan:	I swing and sing:
makkā pēni lapsikkene,	sleep my little child;
tänä vōna tätä lasta,	this year this child,
teisel vōtta teista lasta.	another year another child.

---

[43] SKS KRA Borenius e:193, 6:917; of the use of the wedding poems as lullabies, see SKS KRA Mannonen 11109.

[44] See also SKS KRA Salminen 2891-95; 2901-05. Lehti said that the songs in her home village of Joenperä were the same as the songs in (Izhorian) Soikkola villages (SKS KRA Haavio 2303). It is important to note that Lehti sang only lullabies and told some charms (for curing children) to Salminen. She did this by using some Votic words and sounds ([tš]) in some poems though her repertoire of poems was large and often her dialect in songs was closer to Izhorian (see for example Haavio 2486-501; A. Laiho 2218-26, L. Laiho 5131-36). She seems to have been in the mood for lullabies that day, or it could be that Väinö Salminen tried to record Votic songs from her, and while most of her poems were similar to Izhorian poems of Soikkola villages, some lullabies contained Votic features.

The first short part makes use of common swinging themes and the other incorporates common lullaby themes, but they both contain a similar vocabulary of swing and swinging, and they were told or sung to the collector one after the other. In this session, Lehti seems to have been performing most of her poems in such an improvisatory way that Salminen even noted in connection to an earlier poem: "About swinging a child. Half-metric performance. Improvised?"[45] The meter of nearly all of the songs recorded in this interview is unusually free. For instance, the first three lines above "miss" from one to two stressed syllables in the middle of the line, and the first two lines of the second part would actually make a perfect half-strophe of a rhymed folksong. Yet, Darja Lehti was an experienced performer, and when singing for other collectors she ordinarily used rather firm Kalevala-metric structures.[46] It seems that in lullabies, it would be possible to use metrically and thematically freer forms than in other situational genres.

Lullabies have not been widely recorded. As an informal, intimate genre for children, they were not of central interest to the collectors, and the singers themselves probably did not think of the lullabies as the first songs to sing for outsiders. However, there are some accounts and examples of the improvisatory character of texts, melodies, and song structures in this genre. My favorite description is from Vihtori Alava, who sketched a short notation in his notebook in 1892, and wrote a brief description in shorthand: "In Oussimäki village Olena sang to a child with this melody, something she hummed in which there were no fixed words."[47] This sketch of notation seems to represent one basic type of Kalevala-metric melody, but Alava did not record the varying or unclear words of this "humming." He either felt they were not worth documenting or was not able to catch them, even in shorthand. Olena was apparently not performing for him, but either putting a baby to sleep or entertaining it. The verb "hum," *hymistä* in Finnish, may reflect various aspects of a song: an informal attitude, a quiet and soft voice, obscurity, a lack of fixed structures, or the use of meaningless sounds. Indeed, many of these features appear in the later recordings of lullabies.[48]

Launis (1907:110) wrote the following on the melodic variation of lullabies: "There do not seem to be any fixed melodies for lullabies, but instead one often hears very pretty improvisations from a mother sitting next to the cradle." The collections contain several rather simple melodies and structures that appear in connection with textual lullaby themes: many of these melodies are four- or five-beat, and one- or two-line basic melodies with no partial repetitions or rhythmic prolongations, but no one type seems to be the most common (Heinonen 2008a:259, n. 12). Despite Launis' admiring comment on improvising mothers, the two recordings he made of lullabies are rather fixed. Either he was not interested in recording these improvisational songs, since he was seeking constant melody-types for international

_____

[45] SKS KRA Salminen 2895.

[46] For an exception, see SKS KRA A. Laiho 2351, which begins as a Kalevala-metric poem and ends up as a rhymed song.

[47] SKS KRA Alava VIIb:217; see also SKS KRA Borenius e:182-83.

[48] See Heinonen 2008a:256-61.

Example 9.

comparisons, or the recording situation froze the singers.[49] Nevertheless, variation and improvisation were not the only stylistic possibilities of this genre. There were also rather fixed textual themes, and some singers would sing without much variation in the melody.

In some lullaby recordings, a peculiar structural variation occurs that is not found in other Ingrian songs. In 1937, Anna Kivisoo performed part of a chain of lullaby themes for recording on a shellac disk. She sang this poem in sections of one or two verses with an ever-changing refrain between them. The refrain consisted of various meaningless syllables and its temporal length varied, yet the poetic meter of the verses proper was mainly stable and clear with the final syllables of the verse occasionally left unsung, in contrast to Darja Lehti's previous song (see example 9):[50]

Nuku nuku yksi sil(i)mä,	Sleep, sleep, the one eye,
tor(o)ku tor(o)ku toine sil(i)mä,	nod, nod, the other eye,
bai bai bai bai	*bai bai bai bai*
nukkukaa molemmat silmät (i),	sleep, both eyes (and),
saissisi mammasi maataksee,	you mother could get some rest,
ääää ä	*ääää ä*
saissisi mammasi maataksee,	you mother could get some rest,
ja kylässä käyväkseen.	and could go to village.
bau bau bau	*bau bau bau*
Poika l'iekkuu paita löyhkää,	The boy is swinging, his shirt is swaying,
ää ää ää ää	*ää ää ää ää*
poika l'iekkuu paita löyhkää,	the boy is swinging, his shirt is swaying,
vipu vinkuu vaahterainen,	the maple-made lever is squeaking,
l'uu l'uu l'uu	*l'uu l'uu l'uu*
vipu vinkuu vaahtarainen,	the maple-made lever is squeaking,
tupa kuusine kumisoo.	the spruce-made room is pealing.
ää ää ää ää	*ää ää ää ää*

---

[49] SKSÄ A 300/42 b, 301/50 b.

[50] SKSÄ L 90 c.

This type of structural variation, with sections of both one line and two lines and a varying refrain in between, is not seen in other Ingrian song genres. Although there are a number of possible structures and refrains, these usually remain fixed within one performance of a song. I interpret this as one aspect, or one possibility, of the improvisatory character of the lullabies.

Poetic themes in Kivisoo's song refer to several genres. The first two verses were, besides a common lullaby theme, also a central formula in some prose fairytales.[51] Here, the theme is prolonged with a lullaby theme of getting some rest when the child falls asleep. On other occasions, Kivisoo connected these themes to different poetic chains.[52] The verses about the swinging boy usually belong centrally to the epic poem about the war between two brothers, Untarmo and Kalervo, in which the small son of Kalervo is the only member of his family to survive.[53] After the war, he is found happily swinging in his cradle, and he copes with all of Untarmo's subsequent hostilities. Different themes connected with this epic poem are also found in other lullabies.[54]

Thus, the lullabies drew from various textual and melodic sources and contained possibilities for variation on many levels. This is particularly evident when they are contrasted to the structurally and melodically stable swinging songs. The stylistic differences between the swinging songs and lullabies arise for the most part from their typical singing situations. It was a festive practice to perform with a loud vocal quality and participate in coordinated group singing, whereas it was more intimate to produce the quiet, loosely structured humming to a child. Informal context creates a freer, unceremonious space for singing. For a child, singing calls for a softer voice, and solo singing permits more improvisation than does a choral performance. Incidentally, there is a stark contradiction between the informal character of lullabies and the rather elevated atmosphere of recording situations. The recording often directed "the focus of the performance to the contents of the text," as Lotte Tarkka (2005:101) has observed, and thus some performative structures may be left unsung or unrecorded. Consequently, the particular song structure with changing refrains used by Anna Kivisoo was recorded from her, and some other singers, only by Lauri Laiho.[55]

Finally, I suggest that by using textual and melodic swinging or wedding themes while lulling a child, the performance arenas (interpretive frames) of these typical, festive singing situations are evoked. Thus, the presence of a small child may be interperformatively linked to his or her future as a young girl or boy in festive occasions, or the singer may evoke her own recollections of these situations. In a similar way, by adopting a short, epic theme, the mythical character of the son of Kalervo may be evoked and associated with the child.

---

[51] SKS KRA Alava VIA:759, 980.

[52] SKS KRA L. Laiho 5340, 5340.

[53] See, e.g., SKVR III:701-15, 1280-91.

[54] Timonen 2004:n. 141; SKS KRA Haavio 2434; see also IRS 221, 849.

[55] SKSÄ 90b, 90c; SKS KRA L. Laiho 4720, 4986, 5133; see also K. Salminen 98, 99.

Various Uses of One Poem

In this last section, I present various uses of one lyrical epic poem. By analyzing contextual comments, performative features, and intertextual links recorded in archival recordings, I show how a single poetic theme may be subject to nearly opposite interpretations and thereby provoke various associations, and that these interpretations and associations may be created on the various levels of a performance.

The Ingrian-Finn Valpuri Vohta sang the poem of *The Sad Widow* (*Leino leski*) twice in 1936 and in 1937 to collectors, maintaining the same song structure and the main points in her contextual comments.[56] At that time, Vohta was also singing in the choir when the song was recorded on shellac disk in 1937 (see example 10).[57] Vohta was consistent with the textual and structural elements of the poem. Her two solo versions follow the same song structure as the sound-recorded choral version: she sang two verses and repeated the end of the latter verse twice. The chorus should then sing these partial repetitions, as she mentioned to both collectors. By pointing to the alternation between the lead singer and the chorus, she emphasized the collective performance of this particular song, though the emphasis may have also partly been derived from the interest of these collectors in the performance practices of these songs (Enäjärvi-Haavio 1949; Simonsuuri 1972). Vohta sung this version to the first collector, Elsa Enäjärvi-Haavio (SKS KRA Enäjärvi-Haavio 467):

Example 10.

---

[56] SKS KRA Elsa Enäjärvi-Haavio 467; A. Laiho 2291.

[57]SKSÄ L 87 c by Mari Vaher (and Vohta singing in the chorus) is one of the only sound recordings of this poem from West Ingria. However, the Izhorian Jeodokia Räkälä, with a choir from Narvusi district, sang the beginning of the poem with the very same structure and similar melody recorded on the phonogram by Armas Otto Väisänen in Helsinki in 1931 (SKSÄ A 507/8b). Considering the opening formulas of IRS 221, 624, and 849, these poems may also have continued with the same theme, but there is no way to ascertain this.

Helise heliä metsä,	Tinkle, the bright forest,
Kumise komia korpi,	peal, the handsome woods!
:,: Joi komia korpi :,:	:,: *joi* the handsome woods :,:
Korvessa kolmet lähettä,	In the woods three springs,
Kolmet (-i-) lohta lähtehessä,	three salmon in the spring,
:,: Lohta lähtehessä :,:	:,: salmon in the spring :,:
[Kolme lohta lähtehessä]	[three salmon in the spring,]
Kolme linnaha lohessa,	three castles in the salmon:
:,: Linnaa ka lohessa :,:	:,: castles in the salmon :,:
Yks on nuoren neion linna,	One castle of a young maiden,
Toinen nuoren morsiamen,	another of a young bride,
:,: Nuoren morsiamen :,:	:,: of a young bride :,:
Kolmas lesken leina linna.	third one a widow's sad castle.
Kump on nuoren neion linna,	The one of the young maiden,
[:,: Nuoren neion linna :,:]	[:,: of the young maiden :,:]
[Kump on nuoren neion linna,]	[The one of the young maiden,]
Se on kullalla kuvattu.	it is coated with gold.
:,: Kullalla kuvattu.	:,: coated with gold :,:
Kump on nuoren morsiamen,	The one of the young bride
Se on hoppeel huolitettu,	it is netted with silver.
:,: Hoppeel huolitettu :,:	:,: netted with silver :,:
Kump on lesken leina linna,	The one of the widow's sad castle
Se on vaskella valettu,	it is casted with copper.
:,: Vaskella valettu :,:	:,: casted with copper :,:
En oo lesken leina linna,	I am not a widow's sad castle,
Miul on kolmet vaa pojutta:	I have three sons:
:,: Kolmet vaa pojutta :,:	:,: three sons :,:
Yks on Ruotsissa rovasti,	One is a cleric in Sweden,
Toinen piispa pappilassa,	another a bishop in the parsonage,
:,: Piispa pappilassa :,:	:,: bishop in the parsonage :,:
[Toinen piispa pappilassa,]	[another a bishop in the parsonage,]
Kolmaas on kotinen herra.	the third one is a master at home.
:,: Joi kotinen herra :,:	:,: *joi* master at home :,:

This poem begins with a call for the forest to tinkle and peal and continues with a surrealistic picture of three springs in the forest, three salmon in each spring, and three castles in the salmon. The poem describes the conditions of women in different social positions: the young maiden's castle is made of gold, the young bride's of silver, and the widow's of copper (or tinplate in other versions). The widow is called sad, but she proudly denies this label because she has three sons. Typically, the poem continues with the death of the sons and reiterates the widow's insecurity and sorrow; this has often been interpreted as a punishment for the widow's pride (Harvilahti 2004:202).

Vohta did not sing this very common, sad ending. Consequently, her two versions could be interpreted as expressing the proud self-praise of a woman with sons if we did not have any additional information. However, sorrow seems to be lingering beneath Vohta's contextual description and interpretation of this song (A. Laiho 2291; SKS KRA Enäjärvi-Haavio 467):

> In weddings, when already tired, we went to the table, put a bottle of liquor on it, and so we sang hand to cheek. This is a sad song. In summertime, sitting by the side of the river, this was a song to be sung from a sitting position.

> When walking around the village the girls did not sing this. This would not be sung while walking or dancing. Women would sing this on Saint George's day [when women had their own *praasnikka* feast]. Similarly, this would be sung at weddings, when the wedding songs proper had already been sung or . . . , for example, while sitting around the table after the "*tunsit tulla*" ["you knew to come," a guiding song for the bride] was sung.

The contextual information given by Vohta suggests that this poem did not belong to any fixed situational subgenre, but could be sung in several situations—in weddings after the wedding songs proper, on a women's feast, or by the riverside. Nonetheless, Vohta was quite strict about how, by whom, and where this sad poem could be sung. For the collectors, Vohta always sang it with a certain choral repetition of the verses. Furthermore, adult women sang this poem, not unmarried girls, and Vohta claimed it would be sung only when sitting, and certainly not while dancing or walking. The sad tone of the song may also be anticipated in the sound-recording, in which the singing of women is even, surely not dance-like, and the tone of their voices is serious (SKSÄ A 87c; see the eCompanion, 8).

The same poem was sung to Lauri Laiho in 1938 by another Ingrian-Finn singer from the very same Kallivieri village, Maria Otsa, but Otsa sang her version with a rather different contextual description. According to her, this poem was sung by young girls while dancing in a circle by the river.[58] The description provided by Otsa is nearly the opposite to that of Vohta, even though the text proper is almost the same word-for-word. Two lines of the opening formula sung by Otsa (but not found in Vohta's version) reinforce the performance arena she described: "now it is fun for a young one to rise [dancing] / fun to make one's bones move."[59] As this short beginning formula anticipates, the life of a maiden is characterized in many poems and laments as the happiest and the most care-free time in her life, while the fate of a married woman is seen as a renouncement of a maiden's own will and a beginning of her worries and hard work.[60] Maidenhood was, ideally at least, a time to dance, to sing, and to be happy, and it was to this time of their youth that the older singers often referred when Elsa Enäjärvi-Haavio and Aili Laiho asked them about the contexts and uses of their songs.[61] Many poems about the unhappy

---

[58] SKS KRA Laiho 4832: "When we youngsters went to the riverside, then we danced in a circle and sang."

[59] "Täs on lusti nuoren noissa, kaunis kassapään karata."

[60] See e.g. Nenola-Kallio 1982; Nenola 2002; Timonen 2004:117-25; SKVR III:904, 1015.

[61] See e.g. SKS KRA A. Laiho 2094.

fate of married women have undoubtedly sounded different to unmarried girls than to married women. From the maiden's point of view, the poem of the sad widow could be interpreted as a warning or as a praise of her own happy life. For a married woman, the same poem may speak of an impending future–or of a *fait accompli*–as a widow who is without a son and unsheltered. While Vohta's version would be, as she states, a performance by the married women, Otsa's would be an interpretation from a maiden's point of view. However, the case here is more complex.

Besides age groups, these two opposite interpretations may point to regional differences. The collectors marked the village of Kallivieri as a place of origin for both Vohta's and Otsa's poems. Whereas Vohta was born in Kallivieri and had spent four years with her husband's family in Vyötermaa, Otsa was born in Vyötermaa and had moved to Kallivieri when she was married. Vohta reported: "I spent four years in Vyötermaa. The dialect of songs was different there." I interpret her comment as encompassing not only the dialect, but also some stylistic and performative features of poems.[62] Thus, the different interpretations might also be attributed to the regional conventions of use.

Descriptions contrary to the one provided by Vohta are also provided by some Izhorian singers of the same Narvusi district. Before singing the poem, Anna Kivisoo reported: "When the girls went together into the forest to eat berries [they sang this song]."[63] Here, as Senni Timonen (2004:100-02) has suggested, the opening formula, "Tinkle, the bright forest," may connect the poem to the local category of "the songs in the forest," which were often sung with particular stylistic features. Another singer, Maria Hauki, sang two poems to Lauri Laiho with a Russian-derived refrain "Saadul mois saadul, seedenna saadu" ("my green garden") that was used in Ingrian songs connected to ritualized walking through the village during *praasnikka*-feasts and weddings; the second of Hauki's poems was the song of the sad widow.[64] She did not use refrains of any kind with the other poems she sang to Laiho. The melody-type associated with this refrain is of a similar character in all the collected materials (see example 11; IRS 234). Poetic themes connected with these melodies and refrains often praise one's own

11. Lähemmä läpi kyläsen
(We Shall Get through the Village)

Anna Mitrintytär and chorus
Mäkkylä, Soikkola, Ingria
Recorded by Armas Launis in 1906
SKSÄ 300/36a; IRS 234
Transcribed by Kati Heinonen

Example 11.

---

[62] SKS KRA L. Laiho 5409.

[63] SKS KRA L. Laiho 5324.

[64] SKS KRA L. Laiho 5213; See e.g. Launis 1907:107; IRS 227-39; SKS KRA Enäjärvi-Haavio 504, 905; A. Laiho 2147, 2210, 2337; L. Laiho 4736.

village and mock the other villages. Hauki's first poem with this refrain begins with a common opening formula often connected to this melody-type: "My village, my castle / my very best place"[65] followed by praise of her own village. Less typically, the poem continues with a sad lyrical theme: "I should not be singing, I just buried my dear one." Immediately thereafter, Hauki sang the poem of the sad widow with the very same refrain. Similarly, Maria Tuisk combined this poem with another opening formula that is usually connected to the same melody-type and walking through the village: "Let's get through the village / through the misty road."[66]

All these Izhorian singers appear to have associated the poem with girls (or women) who were walking either in a forest or through a village, while one Ingrian-Finn, Maria Otsa, associated it with girls dancing, and the other Ingrian-Finn, Valpuri Vohta, with women sitting. The poem of the sad widow was also recorded from many other West Ingrian singers, both Izhor and Ingrian-Finn (Harvilahti 2004). These poems contain no contextual information, but they do reveal some interesting variation: The poem of the sad widow may be sung separately[67] or combined with other lyric and lyrical epic themes.[68] In the latter cases, the associative links are diverse—one singer even connects the sons of the widow to the characters of the tragic epic poem on the war between the brothers Kalervo and Untarmo (SKVR XV:805). Across this variation, the poems most often describe or complain of the fate of a married woman (SKVR III: 1445, 1509), and the general athmosphere of textually linked poems is mostly tragic or sad.

There are two additional cases related to the sad interpretations of this theme, although these poems contain no direct contextual information. Two singers, Izhorian Naastoi from Soikkola, and Ingrian-Finn Juljaana Pohjalainen from Narvusi, both sang the basic theme of the sad widow with no special opening formulas, structures, or associated themes (or at least none that were recorded).[69] While singing their poems, both mentioned the one-year period of mourning after the death of a close relative. "Even the small accordion remains hung on the wall, [during that period] it cannot be played," Pohjalainen explained. For her part, Naastoi stated: "when people die here, we mourn: we will not wear any red, we will not sing or dance." Both felt it was necessary to explain this habit to the collectors while singing the poem of the sad widow.

At first sight, the sad and tragic tone in these comments and the associated themes evoked by the song would seem to contradict the notion of girls dancing as described by Maria Otsa. Nevertheless, in Ingria people could also dance to sad and tragic songs. In the 1937 sound recordings, the women started one song with the same formula Otsa used, "now it is fun for a young one to rise," and they then sang their poem with a fast melody and a partial repetition of a verse that they used for other dancing-songs as well (SKSÄ L 89b). On the shellac disk, the women sing in a rhythmic, dance-like way, and yet in this particular poem they sound deadly serious. The poem says it is fun for those whose parents are alive, and describes the longing for a

---

[65] "Kylähäni, linnähääni, parahaini paikkahaini."

[66] "Lähemmä läpi kyläisen, läpi uulitsan utuisen" (SKS KRA L. Laiho 5913; see also SKVR III:2799).

[67] SKS KRA Haavio 2530, L. Laiho 4803; SKVR III:1817.

[68] SKS KRA L. Laiho 5112; SKVR III:1407, 1445, 1509; 2799; XV:805; see also Harvilahti 2004:206.

[69] SKVR III:2293; see Harvilahti 2004:202-06; SKS KRA Haavio 2530.

deceased mother in terms of singing and crying on her grave. Similarly, in 1972 Natalja Ivanovna Lukina sang a lyrical plaint poem with the very same melody and song structure and with a fast tempo and rhythmic intonation, and commented that it was a song for dancing in a circle (ERA Gomon 1972:42/3). She began the singing with another common opening formula that accompanies dancing, "Let us make one circle," and continued with Otsa's formula: "Here it is fun for a young to rise," followed by lyrical themes: "I did not promise to sing [. . .] / my mouth is singing / my heart mourning [. . .], I just buried my dear one [. . .]."[70] As may be heard on the tape, she wept while singing. Lukina was also an accomplished lamenter, so she was able to perform in that style. So, along with light and happy lyrical themes, dancing in Ingria also included sad poems, which could be sung to rhythmic and fast dancing-tunes, although it seems to have been more common or typical to sing sad and tragic poems with slow melodies or while sitting (Enäjärvi-Haavio 1949:157-59).

Though the two descriptions of the use of this poem given by Valpuri Vohta to Elsa Enäjärvi-Haavio and Aili Laiho are the most complex descriptions in all of the early collected material, they do not seem to be complete explanations of the uses of the poem. Vohta links the poem to several situations, while the central points in her description, namely the women singing while sitting and the weddings as a central performance arena, remained the same, even for different interviewers. Even these descriptions are incomplete accounts of all the possibilities of use in West Ingria, in the Narvusi district or even in Kallivieri village.

The contextual or interpretive comments by other singers and collectors are far more laconic. It seems that when asked about the contexts of singing a poem, the singers often referred to one particular situation or a way of singing that was central to them rather than giving an exhaustive explanation. These individual interpretations might have been shared by the singer's age group, ethnic group, village, family, or all of them together, but they do not always represent the only possible interpretive frame for a single poem. On the basis of scarce contextual information, it is impossible to say which interpretations might have been most common and which were only local, personal, or produced by the interview situation. It is noteworthy that despite the different interpretations of *The Sad Widow* given by Valpuri Vohta and Anna Kivisoo, they could sing the poem as members of the same choir.[71]

Interperformative Relationships

A song carries the meanings of its past (or typical) performances while it is constantly reinterpreted (Foley 1995:xi). References to earlier performances may appear on various levels

---

[70] "Tehkää yksi ympärikkö, ympärikkö [. . .] Täss on lusti nooren noissa, nooren noissa / lusti ol luita liikutella, liikutella [. . .] el luvannut laulaella, laulaella [. . .] vast mie kullan hautasin i, hautasin i [. . .]."

[71] In 1937 the six singers, including Valpuri Vohta, Anna Kivisoo, and Darja Lehti, who were born in the different villages of Ropsu, Kallivieri, and Joenperä and were representing Izhors, Ingrian-Finns and Izhor-Votes, were able to coordinate their singing styles. Nevertheless, they did have some difficulties in integrating some aspects of Ingrian-Finn and Izhorian poetic language and ways of performance, and in some songs the others were not able to sing with the only Ingrian-Finn Valpuri Vohta as their lead singer (Laiho 1940:229; Simonsuuri 1972:44). On idiolectal, dialectal, and pan-traditional variation of poetic language, see Foley 1990:288-328.

Photo 3: West Ingrian singers returning from the recording trip to Tallinn in 1937. Valpuri Vohta, the collector Aili Laiho, Mari Vahter, Tatjana Jegorov, Anna Kivisoo, and Darja Lehti (SKS KRA Järvinen).

of the song: the content, meter, melodic and rhythmic structures, refrains, song structure, voice production, and so on. To discuss these relations, especially when dealing with their purely extra-linguistic or nonlinguistic features, the term *interperformative* seems to be more appropriate than *intertextual*.

Ingrian singers created the main categories of song genres according to the following poetic forms: Kalevala-metric poems, laments, rhymed Finnish folksongs, and various kinds of Russian folksongs. All of these genres had distinctive features of meter and form; they were characteristically sung to different melodies, and were partly used in different typical contexts. Nonetheless, poetic and melodic formulas and themes were borrowed even between these main forms. When the local conceptions of these mega-genres are analyzed more carefully, as Senni Timonen (2004) has done with the Kalevala-metric poems, the picture becomes more blurred and complicated. This is because singers did not mark any difference between the lyric and epic Kalevala-metric poems that could indeed mix in various ways. They used instead terms referring to typical singing contexts, such as swinging, walking in the forest, or dancing. These situational and often action-oriented subgenres consisted of context-bound themes on the one hand, and of a mass of loosely linked poems on the other.

In certain festive contexts, such as weddings and some *praasnikka*-feasts, the connections between poetic themes and melodies of the central songs were rather fixed. Thus, the main wedding and swinging tunes are clearly recognizable in the vast archival material, where the

same contexts, formulas or themes, and musical structures are linked repeatedly. In the swinging songs studied here, variation took place mainly on the textual level: after the contextually bound opening themes, a wide range of themes and poems could be sung to the same swinging tune. The singing took the form of an alternation between the lead singer and the chorus that resulted in rather fixed musical structures.

When singing for a child, the connections between the poetic themes, melodies, and structures of the song were much looser than in more formal contexts. In this intimate situation, the singers had great freedom to employ various registers, and to connect poetic and melodic themes and structures as they pleased. Occasionally, both the melodies and the textual themes could be used as interperformative links to more formal situations of swinging and weddings. Nevertheless, the scale and level of variation would depend heavily on the singer and on his or her mood. For example, the singer could improvise the words, the melody, or the song structure, and combine various kinds of themes. She could use either common lullaby themes or poems having nothing to do textually with the actual situation; she could sing without melodic variation or use rather free musical structures. There does not seem to be any particular melody-type for lullabies; several song structures could be used. The lullabies seem to have been a rather open field for improvisation and for the various elements typically connected to other situations. The improvisational character of this genre may have permeated many levels, including poetic themes, meter, melodies, refrains, and song structures. Both swinging song and lullaby genres are open for variation, but the possibilities for this variation take place partly on different levels.

A single poem may be interpreted within several situational genres. The singers set the poem of the sad widow in several situational or interpretive frames by incorporating different initial formulas, associations to other epic and lyrical poetic themes, verbal explanations, and by using different melodies, refrains, and song structures. Since this poem was not tightly connected to any ritual context, it was receptive to various interpretations and associations, and could be sung and interpreted by different social groups. One singer said that it was a sad song to be performed by married women while sitting still, another remarked that it was sung by the young girls when dancing by the riverside, and yet others connected it to the ritualized walk through the village or to an informal walk in the forest. The sad and tragic tone of this poem still prevails and is reinforced by several contextual comments and associated poetic themes. Even the connection to the dancing girls does not neutralize its sad tone, since in Ingria sad and tragic poems may accompany dancing. The multitude of interperformative references connected to this poem suggests that individual contextual comments were not even meant to be all-embracing. When the singer mentioned a certain performance context or used a certain song structure or melody while rendering a poem, she actually provided some clues about her personal or situational interpretation of that song.

In Ingrian oral poetry, local genres seem to build sometimes on rather fixed, sometimes on relatively vague combinations of various textual, melodic, contextual, and performative features. As the examples above illustrate, no categories or rules occur without exceptions. As Bauman (2004), Foley (1995), Harvilahti (1992a), Timonen (2004), and others have suggested, it is often more accurate to speak about tendencies, ranges or spectrums of variation than of strict rules or fixed categories. The systems of communication are flexible, but to understand them, and thus to understand what is actually said, we need to understand the tendencies, patterns, and

models that occur in the background of communication, as Anna-Leena and Jukka Siikala (2005:18) have proposed.[72]

  Ingrian singing culture contains both relatively constant features and endless variation, and the dynamics between these two aspects are not random and certainly are not meaningless. By analyzing a large and relatively thick corpus of poems, melodies, and descriptions that have been collected from many singers by many collectors over a long period of time, it is possible both to identify certain typical or constant features and to suggest some local, situational, or even personal interpretations (Tarkka 2005; Timonen 2004). This analysis of musical and other non-textual levels of performance enriches our understanding of various referential ties in oral poetry. Accordingly, the references between performances, and thus the meanings of a song, do not take place at the textual level only.[73]

University of Helsinki

References

Alava 1932   Vihtori Alava. "Minkälaisissa tilaisuuksissa vanhoja kansanrunojamme on käytetty?" *Uusi Suomi,* 58:10.

Anttonen 1987   Pertti Anttonen. "Rituaalinen pilkka länsi-inkeriläisissä kylähäissä." Unpub. M.A. Thesis. S 351. University of Helsinki, Department of Folklore.

Anttonen 1994   _____. "Ethnopoetic Analysis and Finnish Oral Verse." In Siikala and Vakimo 1994:113-37.

Ariste 2005   Paul Ariste. *Vadja päevikud 1942-1980*. Ed. by Ergo-Hart Västrik. Litteraria, 22. Eesti kultuuriloo allikmaterjale. Tartu: Eesti Kirjandusmuuseum.

Asplund 1992   Anneli Asplund. *Kansanlauluja Inkerinmaalta.* Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran toimituksia, 557. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

Bauman 1977   Richard Bauman. *Verbal Art as Performance*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.

Bauman 2004   _____. *A World of Others' Words: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Intertextuality.* Malden, MA: Blackwell.

---

[72] See also DuBois 2006:243; Tarkka 2005:384-88.

[73] I am greatly indebted to John Miles Foley for suggesting the concept of *interperformativity* and discussing many of my unfinished thoughts. Senni Timonen, Lauri Harvilahti, Anna-Leena Siikala, Heikki Laitinen, Frog, and Venla Sykäri have provided most valuable comments on several stages of the work, and Kate Moore has guided me on English language usage.

Bauman and Briggs 1990   _____ and Charles L. Briggs. "Poetics and Performance as Critical
                                Perspectives on Language and Social Life." *Annual Review of Anthropology,*
                                19:59-88.

Briggs and Bauman 1992   Charles L. Briggs and Richard Bauman. "Genre, Intertextuality and Social
                                Power." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology,* 2:131-72.

DuBois 2006   Thomas A. DuBois. *Lyric, Meaning, and Audience in the Oral Tradition of
                                Northern Europe.* Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

Enäjärvi-Haavio 1949   Elsa Enäjärvi-Haavio. *Pankame käsi kätehen: Suomalaisten kansanrunojen
                                esittämistavoista.* Porvoo: WSOY.

ERA   Estonian Folklore Archive. A. Gomon (1972). Tartu.

Feld 1990 [1982]   Steven Feld. *Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics, and Song in Kaluli
                                Expression.* 2nd ed. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Foley 1990   John Miles Foley. *Traditional Oral Epic: The Odyssey, Beowulf, and the Serbo-
                                Croatian Return Song.* Berkeley: University of California Press. Rpt. 1993.

Foley 1991   _____. *Immanent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic*.
                                Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Foley 1995   _____. *The Singer of Tales in Performance.* Bloomington: Indiana University
                                Press.

Foley 2002   _____. *How to Read an Oral Poem.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
                                eCompanion at http://oraltradition.org/hrop

Forsberg 1893   Vihtori Forsberg [Alava]. Kesämatkani Länsi-Inkeriin v. 1892. *Suomi*, II(7)
                                Keskustelemukset: 51-57.

Geertz 1973   Clifford Geertz. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.

Gomon 1977   A. Gomon. "Pesni ižor." In *Soome-ugri rahvaste muusikapärandist*. Ed. by
                                Ingrid Rüütel. Tallin: Eesti Raamat. pp. 282-91.

Gröndahl 1997   Satu M. Gröndahl. *Den ofullkomliga traditionen: Bilden av Ingermanlands
                                kvinnliga runotraditionen.* Studia Uralica Upsaliensia, 27. Uppsala: Universitas
                                Upsaliensis.

Haring 1988   Lee Haring. "Interperformance." *Fabula,* 29:365-72.

Harvilahti 1991   Lauri Harvilahti. "Milloin viime virren lauloin." In Nevalainen and Sihvo 1991: 205-21.

Harvilahti 1992a   _____. *Kertovan runon keinot: Inkeriläisen runoepiikan tuottamisesta.* Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran toimitteita, 522. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

Harvilahti 1992b   _____. "The Production of Finnish Epic Poetry—Fixed Wholes or Creative Compositions?" *Oral Tradition*, 7:87-101.

Harvilahti 1994   _____. "The Ingrian Epic Poem and its Models." In Siikala and Vakimo 1994:91-112.

Harvilahti 1998   _____. "The Poetic 'I' as an Allegory of Life." In *Epic: Oral and Written.* Ed. by Lauri Honko, Jawaharlal Handoo, and John Miles Foley. Mysore: Central Institute of Indian Languages. pp. 193-206.

Harvilahti 2004   _____. "Vakiojaksot ja muuntelu Kalevalaisessa epiikassa." In Siikala et al. 2004:194-214.

Heinonen 2005   Kati Heinonen. "Armas Launiksen fonogrammit Soikkolasta: laulutavan, runon ja laulutilanteen välisiä yhteyksiä kalevalamittaisessa runoudessa." Unpubl. M.A. Thesis, University of Helsinki. http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi-fe20051845.

Heinonen 2008a   _____. "Inkeriläisen runolaulun monta estetiikkaa." In *Kansanestetiikka: Kalevalaseuran vuosikirja*, 89. Ed. by Seppo Knuuttila and Ulla Piela. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura. pp. 251-72.

Heinonen 2008b   _____. "Tunne arkistonauhalla: äänensävyjä ja aukkoja." In *Ääniä arkistossa – haastattelut ja tulkinta*. Ed. by Outi Fingerroos and Tuulikki Kurki. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura. pp. 234-60.

Honko 2000   Lauri Honko. "Thick Corpus and Organic Variation: An Introduction." In *Thick Corpus, Organic Variation, and Textuality in Oral Traditio*n. Ed. by Lauri Honko. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura. pp. 3–28.

Hymes 1981   Dell Hymes. *"In vain I tried to tell you": Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

IRS   *Inkerin runosävelmät: Suomen kansan sävelmiä*, IV(1). Ed. by Armas Launis. (References to song numbers.) Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

Järvinen 1990   Irma-Riitta Järvinen. "Aili Laihon päiväkirja Viron Inkeristä kesällä 1937." In *Inkerin teillä: Kalevalaseuran vuosikirja*, 69-70. Ed. by Pekka Laaksonen and Sirkka-Liisa Mettomäki. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura. pp. 15-45.

Käppi 2007   Pekko Käppi. *"Kelpaisko lauluiks"—Musiikkianalyyttinen katsaus Marina Takalon Kalevalamittaisiin lauluihin*. Unpubl. M.A. Thesis, University of Tampere. http://tutkielmat.uta.fi/pdf/gradu01968.pdf

Kiuru et al. 1974   Eino Kiuru, Terttu Koski, and Elina Kjul'mjasu [Kylmäsuu], eds. *Narodnye pesni Ingermanlandii.* Leningrad: Nauka.

Koski 1974   Terttu Koski. "O napevah ingermanladskih pesen." In Kiuru et al. 1974:476-85.

Krjukov 1993   Aleksej Krjukov. "Ingermanland och ingermanländarna." In *Ingermanland—om land och folk.* Ed. by Sulo Huovinen. Kulturfonden för Sverige och Finland. pp. 19-32.

Kuusi 1994   Matti Kuusi. "Questions of Kalevala Meter: What exactly did Kalevala Language Signify to Its Users?" In Siikala and Vakimo 1994:41-55.

Laanest 1966   Arvo Laanest. *Izhorskie dialektnye teksty: Isuri murdetekste*. Tallinn: Eesti NSV Teaduste Akadeemia Keele ja Kirjanduse Instituut.

Laiho 1940   Lauri Laiho. "Viron Inkeri kansanrunouden maana." *Virittäjä,* 44:218-36.

Laitinen 2003   Heikki Laitinen. *Matkoja musiikkiin 1800-luvun Suomessa.* Tampere: Tampere University Press. http://acta.uta.fi/pdf/951-44-5707-2.pdf

Laitinen 2004   _____. "Anni Tenisovan Marian virsi." In Siikala et al. 2004:157-93.

Laitinen 2006   _____. "Runolaulu." In *Kansanmusiikki.* Ed by Anneli Asplund, Petri Hoppu, et al. Suomen musiikin historia, 8. Helsinki: Werner Söderström. pp. 14-79.

Lauerma 2002   Petri Lauerma. *Larin Parasken epiikan kielellisestä variaatiosta. Suomi*, 189. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

Launis 1904   Armas Launis. "Kertomus runosävelmien keräysmatkasta Inkerissä kesällä v. 1903." *Suomi*, IV(2) Keskustelemukset: 49-53.

Launis 1907   _____. "Kertomus sävelkeruumatkasta Inkerissä kesällä 1906." *Suomi*, IV(5) Keskustelemukset:103-16.

Launis 1910a   _____. "Alkulause." In IRS:i–vii.

Launis 1910b   _____. *Über Art, Entstehung und Verbreitung der Estnisch-Finniscen Runenmelodien*. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

Launis 1910c   _____. "Runosävelmistä." In *Kalevalan selityksiä*. Ed. by A. R. Niemi. Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran toimitteita, 126. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura. pp. 221–42.

Leino 1994   Pentti Leino. "The Kalevala Metre and its Development." In Siikala and Vakimo 1994:56-74.

Lippus 1995   Urve Lippus. *Linear Musical Thinking: A Theory of Musical Thinking and the Runic Song Tradition of Baltic-Finnish Peoples*. Studia Musicologica Universitas Helsingiensis, 7. Helsinki: Helsingin yliopisto.

Lönnrot 1835   Elias Lönnrot. *Kalewala taikka Wanhoja Karjalan runoja Suomen kansan muinosista ajoista*. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

Lord 1960   Albert B. Lord. *The Singer of Tales*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Lukkarinen 1911   J. Lukkarinen. "Inkeriläisten praasniekoista." *Suomi*, IV(11):35-91.

Nenola 2002   Aili Nenola. *Inkerin itkuvirret: Ingrian Laments*. Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran toimituksia, 735. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

Nenola-Kallio 1982   Aili Nenola-Kallio. *Studies in Ingrian Laments*. Folklore Fellows Communications, 234. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia.

Nettl 1983   Bruno Nettl. *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Twenty-nine Issues and Concepts*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Nevalainen and Sihvo 1991   Pekka Nevalainen and Hannes Sihvo, eds. *Inkeri: Historia, kansa, kulttuuri*. Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran toimituksia, 547. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

Niemi 1904   A.R. Niemi, ed. *Runonkerääjiemme matkakertomuksia 1830-luvulta 1880-luvulle*. Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran toimituksia, 109. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

Niemi 1998   Jarkko Niemi. *The Nenets Songs: A Structural Analysis of Text and Melody*. Acta Universitatis Tamperensis, 591. Tampere: University of Tampere.

Niemi and Lapsui 2004   _____ and Anastasia Lapsui. *Network of Songs: Individual Songs of the Ob' Gulf Nenets: Music and Local History as Sung by Maria Maksimovna Lapsui*.

Suomalais-Ugrilaisen Seuran toimitteita, 248. Helsinki: Société Finno-Ougrienne.

Nirvi 1971   R. E. Niemi. *Inkeroismurteiden sanakirja.* Lexika Societatis Fenno-Ugricae, 18. Helsinki: Société Finno-Ougrienne.

Oras 2004   Janika Oras. "Helmi Villa regilauluviisid—korrastatud mitmesesisus." In *Regilaulu—loodud või saadud?* Ed. by Mari Sarv. Tartu: Eesti Kirjandusmuuseum, Eesti Rahvaluule Arhiiv. pp. 89-121.

Oras 2008   _____. *Viie 20. sajandi naise regilaulumaailm: Arhiivitekstid, kogemused ja mälestused*. Eesti Rahvaluule Arhiivi toimetused, 27. Tartu: Eesti Kirjandusmuuseumi Teaduskirjastus.

Porkka 1886   Volmari Porkka. "Kertomus runonkeruu-matkasta, jonka v. 1883 kesällä teki Inkeriin Volmari Porkka." *Suomi*, II(19):149-69.

Reichl 2000   Karl Reichl. "Introduction: The Music and Performance of Oral Epics." In *The Oral Epic: Performance and Music*. Ed. by Karl Reichl. Intercultural Music Studies, 12. Berlin: Verlag für Wissenschaft und Bildung. pp. 1-40.

Rüütel 1977   Ingrid Rüütel. "Vadja rahvamuusika tüpoloogia ja stiilid." In *Soome-ugri rahvaste muusikapärandist*. Ed. by Ingrid Rüütel. Tallin: Eesti Raamat. pp. 216-81.

Rüütel 1998   _____. "Estonian Folk Music Layers in the Context of Ethnic Relations." *Folklore*, 6:32-69. www.ceeol.com/aspx/getdocument.aspx?logid=5&id=99eb5fd8-6677-4a40-abcf-309ab5bd3171.

Saarinen 1994   Jukka Saarinen. "The Päivölä Song of Miihkali Perttunen." In Siikala and Vakimo 1994:15-38.

Särg 2000   Taive Särg. "Vanemate rahvalaulutekstide ja -viiside seosed Karksi kihelkonna kalendrilauludes." In *Kust tulid lood minule . . . : artikleid regilaulu uurimise alalt 1990. aastatel*. Ed. by Tiiu Jaago and Ülo Valk. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus. pp. 277-327.

Salminen 1917   Väinö Salminen. *Länsi-Inkerin häärunot: Synty- ja kehityshistoriaa*. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

Salminen 1929   _____. *Tutkimus vatjalaisten runojen alkuperästä*. Offprint from *Suomi*, V(7). Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

Salminen 1931a   _____. "Keinu l. liekku ja liekkuvirret." In *Kalevalaseuran vuosikirja,* 11:23-39.

Salminen 1931b   _____. "Inkerin runonlaulajat ja tietäjät." In *Suomen kansan vanhat runot* V (3). Ed. by Väinö Salminen. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura. pp. 525-649.

Sarv 2008   Mari Sarv. *Loomiseks loodud: regivärsimõõt traditsiooniprotsessis.* Eesti Rahvaluule Arhiivi toimetused, 26. Tartu: Eesti Kirjandusmuuseum.

SibA   Sibelius Academy. Armas Launis (1903). Helsinki.

Siikala 1994   Anna-Leena Siikala. "Transformations of the Kalevala Epic." In Siikala and Vakimo 1994:15-38.

Siikala 2000   _____. "Body, Performance, and Agency in Kalevala Rune-singing." *Oral Tradition,* 15:225-78.

Siikala et al. 2004   _____, Lauri Harvilahti, and Senni Timonen, eds. *Kalevala ja laulettu runo.* Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

Siikala and Siikala 2005   _____ and Jukka Siikala. *Return to Culture: Oral Tradition and Society in the Southern Cook Islands.* Folklore Fellows Communications, 287. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia.

Siikala and Vakimo 1994   _____ and Sinikka Vakimo, eds. *Songs Beyond the Kalevala: Transformations of Oral Poetry.* Studia Fennica Folkloristica, 2. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

Simonsuuri 1972   Aili Simonsuuri [Laiho]. "La mie tantsin tapsuttelen, kenkiäni kuluttelen: Piirteitä eteläisten runoalueiden laulutavoista." *Vakkanen: Kalevalaisten naisten vuosikirja,* 1972:39-51.

SKS KRA   Folklore Archives of the Finnish Literature Society. Vihtori Alava (1891, 1892), A. A. Borenius (1877), Elsa Enäjärvi-Haavio (1936), Martti Haavio (1936), Aili Laiho (1937, 1938), Lauri Laiho (1937, 1938), Kaarina Salminen (1931), and Väinö Salminen (1930, 1931). Helsinki.

SKSÄ   Sound Archive of the Finnish Literature Society. Armas Launis (1906) and Lauri Laiho (1937). Helsinki.

SKVR III   *Suomen Kansan Vanhat Runot*, III–V. 1915–1924. Länsi-Inkerin Runot. Ed. by Väinö Salminen. (References to song numbers.) Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

SKVR XV   *Suomen Kansan Vanhat Runot*, XV. 1997. Runoja Henrik Florinuksen, Kristfrid Gananderin, Elias Lönnrotin ja Volmari Porkan kokoelmista. Ed. by Matti Kuusi and Senni Timonen. (References to song numbers.) Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

Tarkka 1996   Lotte Tarkka. "Transformations on Epic Time and Space: Creating the World's Creation in Kalevala-metric Poetry." *Oral Tradition,* 11:50-84.

Tarkka 2005   _____. *Rajarahvaan laulu. Tutkimus Vuokkiniemen kalevalamittaisesta runokulttuurista 1821–1921*. Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran toimituksia, 1033. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

Tedlock 1983   Dennis Tedlock. *The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Timonen 2000   Senni Timonen. "Thick Corpus and a Singer's Poetics." In *Thick Corpus, Organic Variation, and Textuality in Oral Tradition*. Ed. by Lauri Honko. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura. pp. 627-59.

Timonen 2004   _____. *Minä, tila, tunne: Näkökulmia kalevalamittaiseen kansanlyriikkaan*: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran toimituksia, 963. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

Virtanen 1968   Leea Virtanen. *Kalevalainen laulutapa Karjalassa. Suomi*, 113(1). Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

Virtanen 1994   Leea Virtanen. "Women's Songs and Reality." In Siikala and Vakimo 1994:330-42.

Västrik 2007   Ergo-Hart Västrik. *Vadjalaste ja isurite usundi kirjeldamine keskajast 20. sajandi esimese pooleni: Alliktekstid, representatsioonid ja tõlgendused*. Dissertationes Folkloristicae Universitatis Tartuensis, 9. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus.

This page is intentionally left blank.

Rethinking the Orality-Literacy Paradigm in Musicology

Francesca R. Sborgi Lawson

The literacy-orality problematic, which has been debated from Plato to Postman, has focused on how the visuality of the literary medium affects the aurality of the oral medium. Recent research by John Miles Foley has addressed the particular advantages in using the most modern technology of the Internet to simulate and explore the oldest technology of orality, thereby calling into question our continued reliance on textually based media in orality research when electronic media provide a more effective vehicle for scholarly investigations into oral forms.[1] But how does this discussion relate specifically to the act of music-making? Is there an interface between a musical orality and a musical literacy? Musicologists have treated the question of the musical dimension of orality in such works as Yoshiko Tokumaru and Osamu Yamaguti's *The Oral and the Literate in Music* (1986), Stephen Erdely's research on the musical dimension of Bosnian epics (1995), Bruno Nettl's collection of cross cultural research on the topic of improvisation (1998), Karl Reichl's compilation of music research in a wide-ranging number of oral epic traditions (2000), and Paul Austerlitz's work on the "consciousness" of jazz (2005), but less attention has been given to the link between the visual technology of notation and its effect on the oral-aural processing of music.[2]

Scholars of medieval music have been at the forefront in addressing the connection between oral performance and the emergence of notation. Leo Treitler's work during the latter half of the twentieth century that considered the visual-aural link in medieval music was groundbreaking, culminating in the recent collection of seventeen of his foundational essays on medieval chant (Treitler 2003). Seminal works by Susan Boynton (2003), Kenneth Levy (1998), Peter Jeffery (1992), and other medievalists have also contributed considerably to the discussion of orality and literacy in the music of the Middle Ages. In addition, Anna Maria Busse Berger's recent book, *Medieval Music and the Art of Memory* (2005), highlights the change in performance practice and composition with changes in medieval notation practices (250-51). Busse Berger asks why musicologists have been slow to address the role of memory and notation in music, and then follows with a thorough and thought-provoking analysis of the interaction

---

[1] This pioneering approach to the study of orality through Internet technology is explained in Foley 2002, 2004, 2005, and 2008. See further The Pathways Project, which consists of a forthcoming book, *Pathways of the Mind: Oral Tradition and the Internet*, and a website (http://pathwaysproject.org).

[2] While Ter Ellingson's research (1992a, b) brilliantly addresses the topics of notation and transcription, he primarily deals with the issues as they affect ethnomusicological research and not so much the act of music-making.

between literate and oral modes of communication as they functioned in medieval music, questioning previous assumptions about the performance practice and musical theory of the period.

Particularly interesting from the point of view of the emerging role of visual notation in oral-aural performance practice are her conclusions about the ramifications of the rhythmic dimension of notation in the isorhythmic motets. She explains (idem):

> Rhythmic notation led to a new way of composition. It led to what Jack Goody would call "visual perception of musical phenomena" . . . just as writing led to word games and crossword puzzles, notation led to notational games . . . . Thus mensural notation ultimately resulted in what we would consider a modern artwork, a composition where the composer would determine the pitch and rhythm of every part, where he would develop a sense of ownership.

Busse Berger's conclusions about the implications regarding visual notation on a musical performance tradition are significant because she pinpoints a change in performance practice and musical cognition that has continued to affect some of the basic conceptions we currently hold about music notation in Western European Art Music (WEAM) and the concept of "authorship"—ideas that are in many ways unique to the West. Her research highlights a shift in the representational aspect of decoding medieval notation whose earliest "prescriptive" features, using Charles Seeger's concept about music writing (1958), became increasingly more complex as visual documents, adding a visual component to musical performance. If, as Marshall McLuhan claims, a new medium typically does not displace or replace another as much as it complicates its operation (2003:xv), then what has been the significance of visual notation for the oral-aural aspects of music performance?

This paper poses questions regarding the implications of mainstream orality-literacy research on musicological perspectives, and the relevance of musicological research for orality-literacy studies. First, why has musical scholarship been ignored in the mainstream of orality-literacy studies? The two major schools of thought in orality studies offer two different springboards for discussion where musicology might have both contributed to and benefited from interdisciplinary exchanges. Second, what have been the casualties of lost connections with the academic mainstream discussions on orality and literacy? Finally, what are the possible unique contributions of musicological research to the overarching questions of the orality-literacy problematic, particularly in the electronic world? Issues raised in Birkerts' book, *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in the Electronic Age* (2006), exemplify the kinds of questions musicologists could be discussing with mainstream academia about the challenges we face regarding our multiple literacies—musical as well as literary.

Why Has Music Scholarship Been Ignored in Mainstream Orality-Literacy Studies?

Medieval music scholars have responded to the works of scholars like Albert Lord, Walter Ong, Ruth Finnegan, Mary Carruthers, and Goody; and their journeys into interdisciplinarity have not only encouraged musicologically driven analyses but have given

fresh focus to their fields. But why has the research of historical musicologists been ignored by scholars in orality-literacy studies? Even within an area of research where music scholarship might profitably have contributed to the academic discussion, the perspective of music scholars is often not sought. It appears that most scholars outside the field of music are reluctant to engage in interdisciplinary research that entails musicological analysis of any kind.

Nettl gives a clue to this reluctance by explaining why scholars outside the field of musicology (in this case, anthropology) tend to distance themselves from any kind of research that deals with music sound (2005:221):

> The typical American anthropologist has been much more inclined to deal with visual and verbal art than with music . . . This curious omission of music . . . may illustrate something . . . about the way Western urban society conceives of music. It is an art treated rather like science; only the professional can understand it properly . . . the academic musical establishment has made the lay public feel that without understanding the technicalities of musical construction, without knowledge of notation and theory, one cannot properly comprehend or deal with music.

Nettl's comment reveals two basic assumptions: first, the study of music is only possible by the trained specialist; and second, music may be studied separately from the other humanities. Certainly the evolution of the Western academy reinforces both those notions. Although one may try to justify the alienation of music as a necessity in researching the disciplinary peculiarities of WEAM, there is another possible approach: collaborative research would allow specialists from different disciplinary backgrounds to work cooperatively on topics of mutual interest that require their respective areas of expertise. Collaboration is common in the social and natural sciences, and could be a possibility in humanistic research as well.

The second assumption that music is "excisable" from the rest of humanistic expression problematizes the study of oral performance, since music is often the vehicle for oral performance. In addition, in virtually every other musical culture outside of WEAM, music is not easily separable from other forms of humanistic expression. I would like to explore some of the reasons for the perceived separation of music from the other humanities and music's invisibility in anthropological and humanistic research. The current approach to the study of music emerges from a problematic perspective, rooted in a conceptualization of sound that is based primarily on a model whose notation-oriented, literacy-based foundation has not been sufficiently examined.

The notation-centrism of WEAM parallels the development of literacy in Western Europe and its concomitant text-centrism in some strikingly parallel ways. Although there are many areas of potential collaboration between musicology and other humanistic disciplines, I have chosen the orality-literacy debate as a springboard because it illustrates clearly how musicological research can continue to benefit from as well as contribute to the academic mainstream. In order to avoid a premature leap into the next phase of musical discovery without due consideration of what was left behind,[3] I begin by reviewing the orality-literacy debate that

---

[3] I am reminded of Susan McClary's comment about musicology when feminist inquiry was threatened with being considered passé: "It almost seems that musicology managed miraculously to pass from pre- to post-feminism without ever having to change—or even examine—its ways" (1991:5).

has influenced research in a wide variety of fields and the questions that have been and continue to be relevant to the field of musicology.

The Birth of Orality Research

The collaboration of Milman Parry and Albert Lord in their groundbreaking work on oral epic song in Yugoslavia opened up the fertile field of "orality" for scholars in classics, medieval studies, English, cultural and social anthropology, psychology, and education (Lord 1960/2000). Parry and Lord demonstrate that almost every distinctive feature of Homeric poetry is due to the economy enforced on it by oral methods of composition. After demonstrating the need to shed some of the preconceptions that have been ingrained in our literate minds, Parry and Lord support their thesis by studying modern Yugoslavian epic singing. Since its publication in 1960, *The Singer of Tales* has engendered vigorous debates in many fields, ultimately raising questions that challenge the foundations of many areas of academic research. The issues raised about the alleged orality of Homer are still being debated today (Thomas 1999:4), and the discussions about orality and literacy have spilled over into literary and cultural studies in particular (Ong 2006:153-77; Finnegan 1977/1992:170-271).

Although the very title *The Singer of Tales* implies music,[4] discussions of music by music specialists have been curiously omitted from the mainstream literature. Instead, issues of orality, memory, and literacy have often been treated without the benefit of a musicological perspective.[5] Some of the issues that have plagued the study of orality would be of interest in musicological research.

The Two Approaches to the Study of Literacy and Orality

Looking at the bibliography of Walter Ong's classic, *Orality and Literacy*, published originally in 1982, one notices a dramatic increase in publications about the orality-literacy problematic since 1962. An excellent review of the implications of Parry and Lord's research and the articles that followed is given by Eric Havelock (1991:11-23). In addition, Rosalind Thomas evaluates the research on orality and literacy, concluding that there are two major trends in the research (Thomas 1999:15-16).[6] The first trend demonstrates the broad psychological and cultural implications of literacy, arguing that writing and literacy are forces for logical and scientific thought, bureaucracy, and the modern state. The second trend features detailed,

---

[4] Béla Bartók's masterful musical transcriptions of many examples from the Parry-Lord collection provide an important visual documentation to the sound recordings in the archive, allowing researchers to see as well as hear the complexities of the vocal tradition (1934; Bartók and Lord 1951). Bartók's work also contributed to further research on singing in the South Slavic tradition. See Stephen Erdely 1995, 2000 and Foley 2004 for examples of some of the subsequent scholarship on musicological issues in South Slavic epic singing.

[5] Foley 2004 is a significant exception to the omission of musicological discussions in mainstream orality research.

[6] For additional information about these two models, see Foley 2002:66-69.

culturally specific studies of the manifestations of literacy in a given society, often rejecting the wider claims made by scholars who represent the first trend. Brian Street goes a step further by referring to scholars of the first school as reflecting an "autonomous model" in which literacy is seen as a catalyst for societal change, a kind of technological determinism; and the second school as an "ideological model" in which the habits associated with literacy are determined by the ideology and cultural peculiarities of each society (1995:19-65). Clearly, both Thomas and Street espouse the second model, and, with the exception of the work by authors like Olson (1994) and Ong (2006), many other recent trends seem to support the second, ideological model.

The Ideological Model

One of the exemplary studies of the orality-literacy problematic according to the ideological model is Carruthers' *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (2008). This book explores the roles of memory, orality, and literacy in medieval Europe, demonstrating that the implications of orality and literacy are culturally determined and historically shaped. Carruthers begins her study by comparing the current view of creativity in contemporary Western society with the medieval European view (1):

> When we think of our highest creative power, we think invariably of the imagination. "Great imagination, profound intuition" . . . is our highest accolade for intellectual achievement. . . . Ancient and medieval people reserved their awe for memory. Their greatest geniuses they describe as people of superior memories, they boast unashamedly of their prowess in that faculty, and they regard it as a mark of superior moral character as well as intellect.

She discusses the vital importance of a good memory in medieval Europe by explaining that it is a thoroughly catalogued and indexed library of texts and reading that implied a "concentrated, thoughtful meditation [in order to] memorize, ruminate, and make one's reading one's own" (148). She goes on to explain the complexity of *memoria* in the following passage (153):

> *Memoria* unites written with oral transmission, eye with ear, and helps to account for the highly "mixed" oral-literate nature of medieval culture that many historians of the subject have remarked. Yet is it clear that the later Middle Ages, from the twelfth century onward, was a far more "bookish" culture than the earlier medieval centuries had been. *Memoria* was adapted to that change, without—as a set of practices—losing its central place in medieval ethical life.

Carruthers also stresses the difference in perception regarding the accuracy of the transmission of information. While in our modern society we consider written documentation to be the legal and ideological preference over oral memory, medieval Europe held a different view. M. T. Clanchy echoes this view about accuracy and memory in his study of England in the medieval world, adding the notion that distrust was associated with the writing process (1991:193):

> Writing anything down externalized it and—in that process—changed it and falsified it to some
> extent . . . . Writing was untrustworthy in itself, and furthermore its use implied distrust, if not
> chicanery, on the part of the writer. An honest person held to his word and did not demand written
> proof.

A major point in Clanchy's book is that the acceptance of literacy in England was a complex process in which people had to be persuaded of its value. In addition, the association of literacy with clerical power further complicated the process of developing literacy among the masses. The movement away from biblical literacy toward vernacular literacy in England was the key impetus for its development and acceptance. The shift from memory to written record "might alternatively be described as a shift from sacred script to practical literacy. . . . Practical business was the foundation of this new literacy" (333). This shift also prepared the way for the next technological move toward print culture.

In both Carruthers' and Clanchy's works, we see that the mentalities of the people studied actually changed over the centuries. By carefully studying and documenting the changing relationships between oral and literate processes, both authors underscore the complexity of the transformation. Literacy was not something introduced as a catalyst that immediately affected the literate capabilities of the culture in question. Both authors also challenge views about literacy and memory by demonstrating how differently orality and literacy were conceived of in the medieval period, involving a major shift in the ideologies of these cultures.

My most pressing question regarding this research is the following: why has there not been more discussion of musicological information with regard to orality, literacy, and memory throughout Western music history and in mainstream academic research? Both Carruthers and Clanchy intimate that contemporary text-centrism has negatively affected the ability to understand the greater reliance on orality and memory in the Middle Ages. Might notation-centrism in WEAM also similarly impede our understanding of musical orality throughout music history? One of the reasons for the lack of collaboration among scholars both within and outside of musicology who have areas of mutual interest stems in part from notation-centrism in WEAM, which has become an obstacle for the non-musicologist and an issue of territoriality for the musicologist.

Ignoring Musicological Contributions

Many scholars have done significant work on the question of orality and literacy in the music of the Middle Ages, but I will focus on two who have published books on this topic. One of the first scholars to address the orality-literacy paradigm in music scholarship is Leo Treitler. Although Carruthers' interactions with musicologists have not been infrequent, one wonders why there are so few references to musicological studies in the latest edition of her book. I do not want to place blame solely on Carruthers for musicological omissions; instead, I would like to suggest that the reluctance to address musicological topics may be due to the issues raised by Nettl. Since much of Treitler's research on orality in medieval music was originally published from the mid-1970s through the early 1990s, Carruthers would theoretically have had access to his work. While Treitler's latest book is cited in the 2008 edition of her book, none of his

research was mentioned in the earlier 1990 edition. Trietler's investigation of the complex relationship between orality and musical literacy in medieval music offers insights into cognitive processes that are particularly relevant to Carruthers' discussion about the workings of memory. Most of her book is devoted to models for memory, and yet she rarely mentions music either as an *aide-mémoire* or as part of the process of memory and visuality that she otherwise treats with great care and detail.[7]

Anna Maria Busse Berger's publication on memory in medieval music also makes a particularly strong case for showing how complex the interaction was between oral and written modalities in medieval music, lending support to Carruthers' arguments. Despite findings that support many of Carruthers' contentions about *ars memoria*, Busse Berger's work is mentioned only in a footnote in the 2008 revision of *The Book of Memory* (406-07). This is an interesting fact given that Carruthers made a point in the newest edition of having minimized the place of rote memorization in her previous edition, and a more prolonged discussion of Busse Berger's work on the construction of the memorial archive using tonaries (2005:45-84) might have contributed to Carruthers' expansion of her treatment of this area of memory (2008:xii-xiii). Could it be that because of our specialization as musicologists, we have, as Nettl implies, frightened off other scholars working in areas of related interest to the point that they don't even consider the possibility of collaborating or consulting with a musicologist?

In addition to the kind of culture-specific studies like the work by Carruthers, there are other instances of areas where musicological information might have been used and was not. For example, Ruth Finnegan, in *Oral Poetry,* recognizes that most oral poetry is in fact musically performed but makes the following disclaimer (1992:xii):

> I draw attention in particular to the absence of musicological analysis. This is a specialism which I
> am not competent to treat, and I have in any case chosen to concentrate on the literary aspects of
> oral poetry and its social context. Readers should be aware of this limitation; a full account of
> many instances of oral poetry would have to include musicological analysis.

Although no single scholar can expect to have expertise in a multiplicity of disciplines, one wonders why Finnegan did not consult with a musicologist in her research, given the importance she places on music as part of oral performance. The implicit assumption that music can be excised from the rest of humanistic and social science research problematizes the study of oral performance, resulting in a gulf between music and other disciplines that is ultimately detrimental to all scholarship in this area of research. But one should not simply criticize Finnegan for her disclaimer. As Nettl suggests, music scholars have implicitly helped to create a situation that has been less than encouraging to scholars outside the field of music.

Finnegan actually hints at the root of this problem in another book by observing that: "music as an art form is more than notated text, and . . . concentrating on written aspects to the almost complete exclusion of the very real oral elements gives a misleading account of music" (1988:123, 126). Her criticism of notation-centrism is certainly valid, reflecting a concern about undue emphasis on notation that has already been expressed by musicologists and

---

[7] For the references to music, see 20-21, 133-34, 406-07.

ethnomusicologists alike (cf. Ellingson 1992b). The problem with notation-centrism and ignoring the role of musical literacy in research and in performance practice, then, cuts both ways. It excludes non-musicologists from participating in discussions that would be of potential benefit to all, and it obscures the oral-aural elements that are always present in all musics by focusing so exclusively on notation.

The Autonomous Model

In addition to the way musicological research could contribute to many of the studies epitomizing the "ideological" model, in which the historical and humanistic detail could be amplified by musicological research, the study of music (and the study of notation in particular) also has potential for making significant contributions to research using the "autonomous" model of research on orality. Critics of the autonomous model focus on the generalizations that the model makes about literacy and orality that are not grounded sufficiently in the kinds of research presented by "ideological" scholars like Clanchy, Carruthers, and Finnegan. While I agree that scholars who epitomize the autonomous model can tend to oversimplify their theses, I have found some potent, provocative ideas that are particularly relevant to the study of musical literacy and its implications for the study of music cross culturally.

For example, McLuhan's views about the complications in moving from an oral-aural to a visual-literate perspective have profound consequences for the study of music (2002:93):

> The more fundamental reason for imperfect recall is that with print there is more complete separation of the visual sense from the audile-tactile. This involves the modern reader in total translation of sight into sound as he looks at the page. Recall of material read by the eye then is confused by the effort to recall it both visually and auditorially.

Are the aural skills of musicians who do not use notation fundamentally different from the skills of the musically literate musician in WEAM? The question of the nature of aurality in musics outside of WEAM is implied in Ong's *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. In this classic work, Ong takes a panoramic view of the orality-literacy problematic that includes insights that help us evaluate the role of notation in Western musical literacy. As he remarks (2006:7),

> language is so overwhelmingly oral that of all of the many thousands of languages—possibly tens of thousands—spoken in the course of human history only around 106 have ever been committed to writing to a degree sufficient to have produced literature, and most have never been written at all. Of the some 3,000 languages spoken that exist today only some 78 have a literature . . . . Even now hundreds of languages in active use are never written at all. . . . The basic orality of language is permanent.

The orality of language is further eclipsed by the overwhelming orality of music. While some musics have some form of prescriptive notation, WEAM has the most widespread and well-developed notational literacy of any musical culture. Nettl explains that (2005:74-75):

> Western urban society has a special view of music . . . . We think of a piece of music as existing in its truest form on a piece of paper. The academics among us can hardly conceive of discussing music without knowledge of a single, authoritative, visible version . . . . Given that in all societies music is created and transmitted—entirely or to a large degree—aurally, the culture of Western classical music seems to represent a serious departure from the norm. But departure or not, this central characteristic of Western academic musical culture has had a major impact on ethnomusicology. Concerned with a study of music that lives largely in oral tradition, ethnomusicologists have spent a great deal of their energy finding ways of reducing it to visual form.

Has a fixation with notation—and the almost instinctive ethnomusicological urge to transcribe that goes along with it—"blinded" us to its hegemony? Ellingson has addressed this issue at length in his discussions of transcription and notation (1992a, b), and several historical musicologists have also raised the issue of notation-centrism as well (Barrett 1997:55-56; Rankin 1987). Could this be the root of the problem in minimizing musics that are oral-aurally transmitted within a Western academic curriculum? Clanchy and Carruthers have demonstrated how concepts of literacy have changed over the centuries, showing us how deeply our contemporary ideas about memory, oral delivery, literacy, and creativity are rooted in a fundamentally different paradigm than they were in the Middle Ages. The same kind of historical study analyzing the changes in perception with regard to musical literacy over time would be instructive. If, as Goody suggests, the visual, spatial frame provided by writing allows for the study of grammar and logic in language (1993:186), how has the visual dimension of music sound affected music theory, composition, and performance practice in all periods, particularly in the present day?

The unspoken problem is that all scholarship is notation/writing-centered, with most of its most enduring cultural work in the literate media. The Parry/Lord research first unsettled the academic community by putting oral tradition at the forefront, but it was only through the literate media that they were able to make their point.[8] However, the hazards of trying to notate the musical aspects of an oral-aural tradition often lead the researcher into a epistemological quagmire because, as Ellingson states, "the very knowledge and concepts that open the door to our being able to understand music also open onto pathways towards misunderstanding it" (1992b:141). That misunderstanding arises in part from the fact that we fail to see the implications of using visual notation for the aurality of music.

Despite the ironies of discussing orality through the technology of literacy, the point remains that we must become aware of our notation-centrism for two reasons: to understand fully the relationship between musical cognition and performance practice in WEAM and to be able to research other musical systems that are not notation-centered. Ong, Clanchy, Carruthers, McLuhan, Goody, Foley, and many others have issued a call to examine literate biases in

---

[8] Foley has demonstrated how the use of the electronic media can actually ameliorate the problems associated with using literary-based technology to document and discuss the technology of orality. See "The Ideology of the Text" in the Pathways Project (http://www.pathwaysproject.org/pathways/show/Ideology_of_the_Text).

mainstream academic inquiry. Awareness of the orality of music has been raised by medievalists in historical musicology and by ethnomusicologists, who have taken an ideological approach to the topic. But the kinds of broader questions about orality and literacy that form the basis of the autonomous school have not been substantively addressed.

For example, the historical development of musical notation in WEAM is a unique phenomenon in world music. However, the complex theoretical traditions and performance practices emerging from WEAM notation dominate the way all musics are taught in Western music departments, regardless of their similarities to or differences from WEAM.[9] Since the majority of the world's musics are oral-aural, we are simply not equipped to deal with them in any serious way if we rely solely on a notation-centered paradigm. Ong points out our text-centrism in language, which gives us something to contemplate in our parallel musical universe. Trying to force the study of various genres of musics from around the world into a musical model created by the notation-oriented culture of WEAM is like Ong's description of trying to describe orality by framing it solely in terms of literacy (2006:12-13):

> Thinking of oral tradition or a heritage of oral performance, genres and styles as "oral literature" is rather like thinking of horses as automobiles without wheels . . . . No matter how accurate and thorough such apophatic description, automobile-driving readers who have never seen a horse and who hear only of "wheelless automobiles" would be sure to come away with a strange concept of a horse. The same is true of those who deal in terms of "oral literature," that is, "oral writing." You cannot without serious and disabling distortion describe a primary phenomenon by starting with a subsequent secondary phenomenon and paring away the differences. Indeed, starting backwards in this way—putting the car before the horse—you can never become aware of the real difference at all.

The Casualties of Ignoring Connections with Mainstream Orality-Literacy Studies

Ong's view that our written, text-centered view of linguistic expression has seriously compromised our ability to contemplate the oral dimension of language is analogous to my view that our notation-centered outlook regarding music is problematic for two reasons. First, notation-centrism affects one's ability to fully appreciate and understand musical cognition and performance practice in WEAM. As Clanchy puts it, "literacy is unique among technologies in penetrating and structuring the intellect itself, which makes it hard for scholars, whose own skills are shaped by literacy, to reconstruct the mental changes that it brings about" (1991:185). If literacy impedes our ability to reconstruct the cognitive changes it engenders, then musical notation might similarly affect music scholars and practitioners, obstructing our ability to fully comprehend the musical orality that underlies all musical traditions.

Second, the fact that the study of musical orality has been neglected in Western musicological scholarship (Nettl 1998:4) only compounds the problem of studying other musical

---

[9] While long ago Seeger warned us about the incongruity of using Western notation for the study of musics that do not use such notation (1958:186-87), we continue to disregard his concerns.

traditions that are even more unabashedly oral-aural and do not rely on notation in any substantial way. If a Western, notation-oriented perspective is used to evaluate all other musics—most of which do not rely on notation to the extent that WEAM does—then Ong's "wheelless automobile" becomes the standard for describing the vast majority of musical traditions. While a notation-centric theory and history is appropriate for WEAM in most instances (even though oral-aural components continue to be minimized), notation-centrism can be highly misleading and misrepresentative with regard to almost every other kind of music.

The Oral-Aural Aspects Underlying Notation

Even within musical traditions that use notation, a notation-centric view of musical performance frequently distorts an understanding of the culture in question. One example is the teaching of Japanese music. While Japanese *koto* music does utilize notation, it functions differently from notation in the West. Andreas Lehmann and his coauthors discuss the nature of this pedagogy, quoting from Patricia Campbell's evaluation of her research in Japan (Lehmann et al. 2007:188):

> The philosophical foundations behind traditional Japanese culture characterize music as being inexplicable in words . . . . Japanese culture also places great importance on young people showing respect for their elders, and this is clearly reflected in the demonstration-imitation processes of music lessons . . . . This premium placed on observation and emulation also dictates the absence of printed notation of music in lessons. Melodic and rhythmic content is transmitted from teacher to student aurally, either through exact demonstration on an instrument or through vocalized mnemonic syllables. "Because notation detracts from the observation of correct performance position, reading and writing are not permitted during instruction. In the music lesson the students' eye absorbs the subtleties of performance etiquette and execution while his or her ear attends to the sound."

Consequently, if we were to place undue emphasis on the notation used in learning the Japanese *koto*, we would overlook the primacy of the underlying oral-aural tradition that is the foundation of the educational process.

In the course of questioning notation-centeredness in cultures that are less reliant on notation, the significance of the oral-aural tradition within WEAM also begins to emerge. For example, when Isaac Stern made his historic trip to China in 1978, he discovered that the Chinese interpreted Western notation in a limited way because they had been closed off from the performance tradition of Western music for over a decade (1980). In particular, he noted the lack of expression in the musicians who had been trained during the Cultural Revolution; he later learned that all of Western culture had been banned during this period, resulting in limited exposure to Western music performance. The oral-aural element had been lost, and the musicians were seriously compromised because they lacked the appropriate training in learning to interpret the notation.

Because nuanced expression in performance is not fully describable, let alone notable, demonstration is always at the heart of musical skill, and Stern's trip provided a kind of demonstration that had been lacking for over a decade in China. It was not simply that he could now instruct these students through the spoken word; not only was there a language barrier, but simple verbal explanations would not have sufficed. Instead, he performed for and with the many students and teachers who were present during his tour of China. Hence, even though notation is central to WEAM and its theory, Stern's experience demonstrates the insufficiency of relying solely on notation. The inability of Chinese musicians to play from Western notation without the necessary oral-aural instruction during the Cultural Revolution underscores the problems implied by relying exclusively on a visual format to communicate musically.

As Jacques Derrida has questioned our perceptions regarding the differences between spoken and written language by challenging the way we have ignored the play of difference between them (1997:35), the same problem seems to manifest itself in musical orality and musical literacy: it is the play of their differences that makes musical communication possible in WEAM. Susan Boynton underscores the point that notation implied a complex relationship between orality and early forms of music writing as follows (2003:155):

> Oral and written traditions coexisted in a relationship more complex than can be expressed by a polarity opposing orality to literacy. A remarkable diversity of notational methods appears not only in different manuscripts produced at the same time, but within the same book and even on the same page, reflecting the various needs and purposes of singers in their roles as cantors, scribes, and teachers.

As notation eventually took on a life of its own with the development of *Ars nova* notation, the way in which aural and visual information was dialectically processed became minimized by the art of writing the notation, and the notation itself became symbolically the repository of musical knowledge. This shift is significant because it has since affected the way we privilege the visuality of notation and minimize the role of oral-aural processes in performance. Consequently, because of the way notation has infiltrated our musical thought processes, it is difficult for music scholars and practitioners, whose skills are shaped by notation, to comprehend the cognitive changes that notation engenders.

Future Possibilities

Despite the hidden casualties of notation-centrism in WEAM, I would like to make clear that notation itself is not the issue; rather, the crux of the problem is notation-centrism without a clear recognition and understanding of the way visual notation influences and affects the aurality of musical performance. A thorough examination of the notation-oriented way of viewing WEAM can provide a springboard not only for understanding unexplored areas of musical literacy as related to performance within WEAM, but also for re-examining overlooked music cultures taught within music departments.

From the perspective of the ideological school, expanding musicological research that investigates the relationship between notation and musical practice in particular historical and cultural circumstances would be highly beneficial. Ideologically oriented research, such as the many excellent studies done by medieval musicologists, provide period-specific views regarding the characteristics of the play of cognitive differences. Musicological research according to the autonomous school, on the other hand, would take a more diachronic view of changes in musical cognition with the development of the visual dimensions of musical literacy. Employing both ideological and autonomous perspectives would allow for the consideration of cultural and period specificity as well as the recognition of changes in the impact of visuality and literacy on musical cognition.

In addition, the role of notation in modern performance practice is itself an unexamined area with potential for a discussion of general issues in literacy and orality studies in the media-world of the twenty-first century. Given that the orality-literacy debate continues to challenge the academy in the electronic world, musicologists may profitably contribute to the discussion. For example, in *The Gutenberg Elegies*, Sven Birkerts poses questions about the way the changing electronic technologies are negatively affecting our sensorial and cognitive abilities with regard to the act of reading (2006:15):

> What is the place of reading, and of the reading sensibility, in our culture as it has become? . . . . In my lifetime I have witnessed and participated in what amounts to a massive shift, a wholesale transformation of what I think of as the age-old ways of being. The primary human relations—to space, time, nature, and to other people—have been subjected to a warping pressure.

Have these drastic changes in reading—from looking at symbols on a page to a signal on a screen—affected musical literacy and performance in WEAM? How have the electronic media affected the visual as well as oral-aural dimensions of music education and transmission in the twenty-first century? In 1999 Aaron Williamon conducted a study in which audience members were asked to comment on certain performances by a musician playing from memory and other performances by the same musician using notation. The results from that study point to enhanced communication as a possible advantage of performing from memory (1999:92). Although the results are tentative, Williamon suggests that Western audiences still hold to the ideal that memorized music is the standard by which musicianship is evaluated. If this is true, then it might be argued that even with a highly developed musical literacy, traditional musical performance in WEAM continues to maintain some degree of pre-modern standards of orality.

However, the digital age has already affected the performance of music in profound ways. Paul Auslander poses the following question (2008:xii):

> What, for example, is one to make of the Nashville Opera's providing a commentary track similar to the ones on DVD editions of movies to be listened to on an iPod as one watched its 2006 production of Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*? Partisans of traditional live performance (or of opera, for that matter) have good reason to be scandalized. I am neither scandalized nor surprised: this kind of development simply seems inevitable, given the current cultural standing of live performance and the continued domination of mediatized forms.

As our current world is experiencing a new wave of mediatization that further complicates the human sensorium, even as McLuhan predicted, a careful study of the original mediatizing of music through the use of visual notation is critical in establishing a foundation for understanding the new levels of oral, aural, and visual complexity in the current world of music, particularly in the art and popular musics of the West. Since many musical cultures outside of WEAM have not yet experienced this level of media complexity, however, it is important for music scholars to grasp all the issues involved with sensorial perception in music. In this way they will be in a better position to treat historically and currently the study of other musical cultures whose oral-literate paradigms are based upon fundamentally different ideological principles than those of the West. By expanding not only the musicological purview to include cultures outside of the Western tradition but also the disciplinary perspectives used in examining those cultures, the field of musicology may well be able to provide substantive insights into the study of orality and literacy in mainstream academia from the parallel universe of music.

Brigham Young University

References

Auslander 2008   Paul Auslander. *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge.

Austerlitz 2005   Paul Austerlitz. *Jazz Consciousness: Music, Race, and Humanity*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Barrett 1997   Sam Barrett. "Music and Writing: On the Compilation of Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 1154." *Early Music History*, 16:55-96.

Bartók 1934   Béla Bartók. "Notes to the Music." In *Serbo-Croatian Heroic Songs*, vol. I: *Novi Pazar: English Translations*. Ed. by Milman Parry and Albert B. Lord. Cambridge, MA and Belgrade: Harvard University Press and the Serbian Academy of Sciences. pp. 435-67.

Bartók and Lord 1951   _____ and Albert B. Lord. *Serbo-Croatian Folk Songs*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Birkerts 2006   Sven Birkerts. *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age*. New York: Faber and Faber.

Boynton 2003   Susan Boynton. "Orality, Literacy, and the Early Notation of Office Hymns." *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 56:99-168.

Busse Berger 2005   Anna Maria Busse Berger. *Medieval Music and the Art of Memory.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Campbell 1991   Patricia S. Campbell. *Lessons from the World: A Cross-Cultural Guide to Music Teaching and Learning.* New York: Schirmer.

Carruthers 2008   Mary Carruthers. *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Clanchy 1991   M. T. Clanchy. *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307.* Cambridge: Blackwell.

Derrida 1997   Jacques Derrida. *Of Grammatology.* Trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Ellingson 1992a   Ter Ellingson. "Notation." In *Ethnomusicology: An Introduction*. Ed. by Helen Myers. New York: Norton. pp. 153-64.

Ellinsgon 1992b   _____. "Transcription." In *Ethnomusicology: An Introduction*. Ed. by Helen Myers. New York: Norton. pp. 110-52.

Erdely 1995   Stephen Erdely. *Music of South Slavic Epics from the Bihać Region of Bosnia.* New York: Garland.

Erdely 2000   _____. "Music of South Slavic Epics." In *The Oral Epic: Performance and Music*. Ed. by Karl Reichl. Berlin: Verlag für Wissenschaft und Bildung. pp. 69-82.

Finnegan 1988   Ruth Finnegan. *Literacy and Orality: Studies in the Technology of Communication*. New York: Blackwell.

Finnegan 1977/1992   _____. *Oral Poetry: Its Nature, Significance, and Social Context.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Rpt. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992.

Foley 2002   John Miles Foley. *How to Read an Oral Poem*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. eCompanion at http://oraltradition.org/hrop

Foley 2004   _____, ed. and trans. *The Wedding of Mustajbey's Son Bećirbey as Performed by Halil Bajgorić*. Folklore Fellows Communications, Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica. eEdition at http://oraltradition.org/zbm/

Foley 2005   _____. "From Oral Performance to Paper-Text to Cyber-Edition." *Oral Tradition*, 20:233-63.

Foley 2008   _____. "Navigating Pathways: Oral Tradition and the Internet." *Academic Intersections*, 2. http://oraltradition.org/AI-article/1-Abstract.html

Goody 1993   Jack Goody. *The Interface Between The Written and The Oral*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Goody and Watt 1968   Jack Goody and Ian Watt. "The Consequences of Literacy." In *Literacy in Traditional Societies*. Ed. by Jack Goody. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 27-68.

Havelock 1991   Eric A. Havelock. "The Oral-Literate Equation: A Formula for the Modern Mind." In *Literacy and Orality*. Ed. by David R. Olson and Nancy Torrance. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 11-27.

Jeffery 1992   Peter Jeffery. *Re-Envisioning Past Musical Cultures: Ethnomusicology in the Study of Gregorian Chant*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lehmann et al. 2007   Andreas C. Lehmann, John A. Sloboda, and Robert H. Woody. *Psychology for Musicians: Understanding and Acquiring the Skills*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Levy 1998   Kenneth Levy. *Gregorian Chant and the Carolingians*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Lieberman 1975   Fredric Lieberman. "Some Contributions of Ethnomusicology to the Study of Oral Literature." *Chinoperl News*, 5:126-53.

Lord 1960/2000   Albert B. Lord. *The Singer of Tales*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 2nd ed., 2000 (with CD).

McClary 1991   Susan B. McClary. *Feminine Endings*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

McLuhan 2002   Marshall McLuhan. *The Gutenberg Galaxy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

McLuhan 2003   _____. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Ed. by W. Terrence Gordon. Corte Madera, CA: Gingko Press.

Nettl 1985   Bruno Nettl. *The Western Impact on World Music*. New York: Schirmer.

Nettl 1998
_____. "Introduction: An Art Neglected in Scholarship." In *In the Course of Performance: Studies in the World of Improvisation.* Ed. by Bruno Nettl and Melinda Russell. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pp. 1-23.

Nettl 2005
_____. *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-one Issues and Concepts.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Olson 1994
David R. Olson. *The World on Paper: The Conceptual and Cognitive Implications of Writing and Reading.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ong 2006
Walter Ong. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word.* New York: Routledge.

Parry and Lord 1954
Milman Parry and Albert Bates Lord, eds. and trans. *Serbo-Croatian Heroic Songs.* vol. 1: *Novi Pazar: English Translations.* With musical transcriptions by Béla Bartók and prefaces by John H. Finley, Jr. and Roman Jabokson. Cambridge, MA and Belgrade: Harvard University Press and the Serbian Academy of Sciences.

Rankin 1987
Susan Rankin. "Neumatic Notations in Anglo-Saxon England." In *Musicologie médiévale: Notations et Séquences.* Ed. by Michel Huglo. Paris: Champion. pp. 129-44.

Reichl 2000
Karl Reichl, ed. *The Oral Epic: Performance and Music.* Berlin: Verlag für Wissenschaft und Bildung.

Seeger 1958
Charles Seeger. "Prescriptive and Descriptive Music Writing." *Musical Quarterly,* 44:184-95.

Stern 1980
Isaac Stern. *From Mao to Mozart: Isaac Stern in China.* Videorecording. New York: The Hopewell Foundation.

Street 1995
Brian V. Street. *Literacy in Theory and Practice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sweeney-Turner 1993
Steve Sweeney-Turner. Rev. of *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship.* Ed. by Ruth A. Solie. Berkeley: University of California Press. *Musical Times,* 135:636-37.

Thomas 1999
Rosalind Thomas. *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tokumaru 1986   Yoshiko Tokumaru and Osamu Yamaguti, eds. *The Oral and Literate in Music*. Tokyo: Academic Music.

Treitler 2003   Leo Treitler. *With Voice and Pen: Coming to Know Medieval Song and How It Was Made*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Walker 1996   Jonathan Walker. "The Deconstruction of Musicology: Poison or Cure?" *Music Theory Online*. http://mto.societymusictheory.org/issues/mto.96.2.4/mto. 96.2.4.walker.html

Williamon 1999   Aaron Williamon. "The Value of Performing Music from Memory." *Psychology of Music,* 27:84-95.

Asian Origins of Cinderella:
The Zhuang Storyteller of Guangxi

Fay Beauchamp

Introduction and Overview

While a very early version of "Cinderella," printed in China in the ninth century, has been known to the world since the translations and commentary by R. D. Jameson (1932) and Arthur Waley (1947 and 1963), there has been no extended analysis of this Tang Dynasty text in the light of its Asian religious, historical, and literary contexts. The story of a young girl, Yexian, appeared in the miscellany of the Tang Dynasty Duan Chengshi (c. 800-63) (Reed 2003:3-5). Upon examination, the Yexian narrative is remarkably close to the story made most famous by the Frenchman Charles Perrault (1697) and the 1950 Walt Disney cartoon. A mistreated stepdaughter is kind to an animal; at the moment she is bereft of hope, an otherworldly person appears out of the blue; a marvelous dress for a festival and a shining lost shoe lead to identification through the fit of the shoe and marriage to a king (see Appendix A for a translation of the Yexian story).[1] Despite the fact that the Cinderella and Yexian stories are parallel in spirit and series of motifs, recent scholars interested in the story's diffusion, such as Graham Anderson, disregard the Asian roots of the story, and instead trace a few motifs back to other stories told by Greeks about Egyptians (Anderson 2000 and 2003). While the Tang Dynasty text adds a highly unusual fish with red fins and golden eyes to the story famous in the West, Yexian herself demonstrates familiar character traits: she is hardworking, virginal, kind, lonely, wishful, and willful. It is time for this heroine's Asian identity to be recognized and the evocative story motifs understood in their Asian contexts.

Focusing on Duan Chengshi's c. 850 CE text, this paper starts with the hypothesis that Yexian's story reflects the time and place of the informant, Li Shiyuan, cited by Duan. I concentrate on Li Shiyuan's possible identity as a member of the Zhuang ethnic group in Nanning, Guangxi Province, now within the People's Republic of China near the Vietnamese border. Victor Mair's 2005 translation and footnotes stimulated my interest in Guangxi, and

---

[1] The motifs I have listed here define Aarne-Thompson Type 510A of "Cinderella" versions, as will be explained later in this paper. Arthur Waley's translation is given in Appendix A; I have annotated that translation with some alternate interpretations given by Victor Mair, R. D. Jameson, and Carrie Reed. My intent in providing this translation is to help the reader follow my paper, but I do not attempt a variorum transcript, which would consistently give all the different word choices discussed in my paper.

Katherine Kaup, who studies contemporary Zhuang politics, enabled me to interview Zhuang folklore scholars in Nanning. With some observations in Guangxi Province, but more importantly analysis of literary texts and previous scholarship, I place the Yexian story in the context of Zhuang beliefs, creativity, and history.

Even in a preliminary study into Yexian's Asian origins, however, it is not sufficient to explore one subgroup; the Zhuang lived at a crossroads in the ninth century, absorbing and resisting Hindu and Buddhist influences from South and Southeast Asia, and Han Chinese political and cultural dominance from the north and east. Particularly in the Tang Dynasty, well established trade routes connected India, Southeast Asia, and East Asia, and ideas were exchanged along with silk and other material goods. The resonances in this c. 850 story of Hindu, Buddhist, and Han Chinese narratives, as well as local concerns, help to explain the story's symbolic power and ability to adapt to different world areas. The Yexian story is a composite of at least two narrative lines: one emphasizes the fish rescued by Yexian, and the other focuses on an untidy being who rescues the girl at a time of anguish. Both narrative strands have Hindu and Buddhist analogues.

The question then arises whether the Yexian story could have been completely composed almost anywhere with access to Hindu and Buddhist beliefs. Could it, for example, have arisen in India, Vietnam, Java, Tibet? Could Li Shiyuan simply be a conduit to Duan Chengshi? Since the Zhuang have crossed many borders, formation of the story in Vietnam is quite possible. There are also smaller distinctive ethnic groups within Guangxi such as the Dong, Yao, and Miao. My focus, however, is to understand the complexity of Zhuang ethnicity in the Tang Dynasty. The evidence I present does not support the conclusion that the story arrived on the shores of China complete as a ship in a bottle. The red color of Yexian's fish, for example, ties the story to Zhuang need and innovation during the Tang Dynasty in Guangxi when the raising of red fish literally rescued the Zhuang.

It is also necessary to examine the story in the context of Han Chinese narratives. Collectors of folklore, specifically Chinese folklore, often make up data about informants. Duan Chengshi, the Han Chinese collector, theoretically could have created this story from scratch or he could have added to the story any of its elements. Red carp today are a symbol of good luck throughout China and the Chinese diaspora; to the extent that Hindu and Buddhist narratives were accessible to the Zhuang in ninth-century Nanning, they were theoretically accessible to Duan. To consider the many possibilities of Duan Chengshi's contributions to the story, my approach has been to examine Chinese literature, art, and religious practices before, during, and after the ninth century. A basic reference point is Duan's miscellany, now accessible through Carrie Reed's introductions, translations, and annotations (2001, 2003).[2]

Looking at Chinese narratives earlier in the same century, I compare the Yexian story to that of an extremely popular 807 CE romantic poem describing the Tang Dynasty Yang Guifei, who rose in a "rags to riches" fashion to become the favorite consort of an emperor. One could

---

also explore resonances in the Han Chinese Daoist tradition before 800 CE, such as images of water and women in the Daodejing, the philosopher Zhuangzi's famous reference to the happiness of fish, and the utopian "Peach Blossom Spring" by Tao Qian (372-427 CE).

My research, however, has found that stories and traditions that develop in China *after* the ninth century are much more closely affiliated with the Yexian story than literature before it. For example, relatively soon after Duan's publication there are many stories describing a magical, kind, and poor girl who wants a husband and carries a fishbasket; statues of this "Fishbasket Bodhisattva" start appearing at the end of the tenth century at the same time as the spread of domesticated goldfish and Buddhist Ponds of Mercy where small red fish are released. In the sixteenth century, the *Journey to the West* was published with key anecdotes that are very similar to the Yexian story: the famous monkey-king is relegated to guarding fruit trees but runs off in disguise to a forbidden glamorous party; a small red fish grows to be a water dragon-king.

In Appendix C, I offer a summary of reasons to conclude that the Yexian story reflects Tang Dynasty Zhuang creativity, culture, and interaction with other Asian cultures. Even Anderson reflects the growing consensus that the "Cinderella" story exists around the world due to diffusion, not "polygenesis," a term akin to old ideas about universal archetypes developed by Carl Jung and promulgated by Joseph Campbell. The issue of diffusion is important in understanding global interaction; this particular story has tremendous influence on people's assumptions about ethics and life's possibilities, especially for women. Champions of any alternative source should not merely point to one or two motifs such as an eagle dropping a shoe onto a Pharaoh's lap, but be able to discuss how those motifs resonated in society. While Duan's printed story and its oral variants in sixteenth-century China could have led directly to the European versions, study of the variants recorded after 1500 is largely beyond the scope of this paper.[3] Instead, I hope my work leads others to develop further interpretations of the c. 850 story in its Asian contexts. To avoid Western ethnocentrism, should not this story at least be called the Yexian/Cinderella story?

---

[3] Fairy tale collections, including "Cinderella" in many variants, began appearing in Europe in the sixteenth century. I suggest later in this paper that these collections appeared with European merchants, Jesuit priests, and sailors bringing stories to Italy from Asia. Duan's miscellany was never lost; it was printed and popular in China in the sixteenth century. To the question of how the story got from China to Europe, I would repeat Phil Ochs' 1968 answer to the question of how to get out of Vietnam: by boat. Italy with its great ports seems to be the country where the European fairytale tradition begins with Gion Francesco Straparola, c. 1550, and Giambattista Basile, c. 1634 (Zipes 2001:vii). For many with a Western perspective, my speculation about transmission might be the most interesting or highly contested, but I hope to move the focus from Europe to Asia.

Even though Walt Disney credits Charles Perrault's version of the Cinderella story at the beginning of his famous cartoon, some aspects of his film seem to capture the spirit of Yexian's story more closely than most Western versions. For instance, Disney humanizes a mouse, Gus, much as Yexian's pet fish is humanized; Cinderella frees Gus as spontaneously and naturally as Yexian rescues the tiny fish. While Gus keeps escaping the fate of being eaten by the stepmother's cat, Yexian's friendly fish is eaten by the stepmother herself. Yexian is found with her arms around a tree; the animated Cinderella rushes out of the house to weep under a large, beautifully drawn tree. I do not ascribe these resemblances to the collective unconscious and universal archetypes; these theories deny the original contributions from Asia and halt interest in pursuing Asian interpretations. Instead, I offer the thought that Disney was somewhat of a scholar of folklore and that he might very well have read Arthur Waley's 1947 article translating and commenting upon Duan Chengshi's Yexian story before working on the cartoon in 1949.

A Brief Review of Research into Versions of "Cinderella"

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries interest in the origins of the "Cinderella" story was intense. By 1893 the work of European folklorists enabled Marian Roalfe Cox to categorize more than 350 collected variants including Indic and Vietnamese analogues. In 1932 R. D. Jameson brought attention to the version written in classical Chinese seven hundred years before any European record. Jameson used Cox's work to trace resemblances to Vedic, Egyptian, and Greek myths. In 1947 Arthur Waley published an article with a new translation and interpretations of the wording. In the 1950s Anna Birgitta Rooth analyzed 700 versions and concluded that dissemination was from the Middle East to Europe with perhaps a Chinese genesis since she knew the c. 850 version; after the 1961 Aarne-Thompson index, the sequence of motifs listed in my first paragraph became known as Type 510A as opposed to other closely related stories labeled Cat-skin or Cap o' Rushes versions; the variants existed in Asia, the Middle East, and Europe by the late nineteenth century (see Dundes 1982:vii-ix for charts and excerpts of the research of Rooth and Aarne-Thompson).

In 1974 Nai-Tung Ting analyzed approximately thirty "Cinderella" stories that had been collected from Han-Chinese, "Chuang" [Zhuang], Yi, Miao, Tibetan, Uigur, Korean, Cham, and Khmer informants in China and "Indo-China" in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These stories depart significantly from the Type 510A story, for example by having a sequel where the heroine dies or by emphasizing rivalry with a sister who is "pockmarked." Stories collected in North Vietnam in the twentieth century are the closest to the c. 850 Yexian version; they also feature fish, whereas other versions in China feature a cow or an ox. Ting (9) considers the "Viet" and Zhuang one "ethnic complex" and does not distinguish among the many North Vietnamese ethnic groups. While the national border between Vietnam and the People's Republic of China is now significant, in the ninth century forces from the capital in Chang'an (Xi'an) sought to secure the larger area within the Chinese sphere of influence. Ting tentatively concludes that the "Cinderella" story may have "risen first in the South Kwangsi [Guangxi] and North Vietnam region . . . although it was probably preceded by a rich tradition reaching back to antiquity" (39).

In 2005 Victor Mair ascribed Yexian's story to "fiercely independent non-Sinitic peoples" (362); his introduction and footnotes hint at origins in Roman, Anatolian, Syrian, Indian, Persian, Dvaravati, Mergui Archipelago, Middle East, and Thai sources, with routes across the Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal, and/or South China Sea. Mair builds upon Ting's references to the Zhuang, specifically detailing women's embroidery and the making of shoes, but his 2005 footnotes were based on linguistic analysis, not on direct knowledge of Zhuang culture in and around Nanning (Mair 2007).

This article goes beyond Ting's and other scholars' work in a number of ways. It presents how the Zhuang in 2007 expressed ownership of the story, how they interpreted the motifs, and how the story's details reflect Zhuang traditions in ninth-century Guangxi, based on other sources. Further, this article explores Indic sources that the Zhuang had access to, specifically in the ninth century, and suggests that the Hindu/Buddhist contexts are significantly important to the genesis of the story. Finally, it recognizes the information available about the collector Duan Chengshi and explores the elements in the story of likely Han Chinese derivation, whether

supplied by Duan in writing down the story or because the Zhuang had absorbed Han Chinese culture before the story's creation. The intent is not only to discern the different Asian strands within the story, but to appreciate the story's evocative power. In comparison to dozens of variants I have read from around the world, this c. 850 version stands out because of the tender beauty and humanity of the fish, Yexian's sorrow when the fish is killed and eaten, her isolation, her ability to out-trick her stepmother, her astonishing blue dress and golden shoes, and the positive end, where she becomes a king's first wife.

I hope my own article stimulates specialists in various fields and languages to develop, refine, and correct my evidence and conclusions, but more importantly I hope this article brings attention to the vision of the world offered by the Zhuang, even if only a utopia that disappears as a trail of peach blossoms floating on water.

Han-Chinese/Zhuang Interaction

Han Chinese and Zhuang are both problematic terms because they are categories encompassing large complex entities changing over time, yet they are useful because a distinction between two ethnic communities frames the Yexian story. The text begins with a reference to Yexian's father described with the Chinese characters that translate as a "Yongzhou cave-dweller" (Reed 2001:113). The text ends with Duan describing his informant Li Shiyuan using the same term, "cave-dweller," which has been less literally translated to mean an ethnic group. Victor Mair renders the description of Li Shiyuan as a "servant of my [Duan's] household and originally the member of a tribal community in Yongzhou (2005:366)." He identifies Yongzhou as "modern Nanning in the province of Guangxi . . . home of China's largest 'minority,' the Zhuang" (367).[4]

One has to begin with a skeptical attitude toward Duan Chengshi's statements. Duan Chengshi credited many stories with an ambiguous geographical location. In his miscellany, one fanciful story ostensibly concerns an envoy who travels toward Silla, but readers cannot assume they are learning anything reliable about this Korean kingdom. In the story, the traveler reaches a land where everyone has mustaches, male and female alike. Since this land is called Fusang, sometimes used as a term for Japan (Reed 2008), one might leap to the conclusion these are the so-called "hairy Ainu." At the end of the story, however, it is revealed that the traveler has reached an underwater realm, where the characters, as nice as they might be, stroking their whiskers, are all shrimp (Reed 2001:41-43). Drawn to the genres of joke, anecdote, and strange tale, Duan Chengshi makes it difficult to distinguish fictional elements from what could be valuable ethnographic material. On the other hand, Duan Chengshi's miscellany does not demonstrate a storytelling interest that makes Italian, German, French, and English fairy tale "collections" homogenous in tone, imagery, length, and sensibility. His miscellany juxtaposes many genres in a haphazard way; this particular story has a number of lacunae and abrupt transitions, noted in Appendix A, that support the idea that Duan jotted down a story he did not

---

[4] The history of Yongzhou/Nanning can be traced using Tang Dynasty records. For example, Jeffrey Barlow states: "In 742, the leader Huang Jinggao briefly submitted before again resisting the Tang. He seized Yongzhou with one thousand men, but when emissaries were sent to him, he again submitted" (2005:19).

totally understand. R. D. Jameson instead assumes the lacunae are indications that this is a "decayed myth," one retold over so many centuries that the coherence has been lost (1932:92); he holds Li Shiyuan responsible for retelling an old story that Li didn't understand, rather than believing that Duan Chengshi was the one creating gaps and ambiguity as he wrote down in Classical Chinese what he recalled hearing.

Steven Harrell calls the Han a "constructed category," one that can be delineated only in contrast with an "ethnic other" (2001:295). He further defines the Han Chinese as a "central culture, represented in the governmental and scholarly institutions of the Confucian elite" (306). This definition suits the collector Duan well. Reed has made available much information about Duan's distinguished family of scholar-literati-officials from the northern capital city of Chang'an (modern Xi'an). Because his life is well documented, we know that Duan lived in and near Nanning between 826 and 853 (Reed 2001:2). Duan could have used his imagination to begin and end a tale with reference to the ethnic group being displaced by the northern Han Chinese entering this southern area and ruling it economically and politically. Chinese narratives are often framed by prefaces that are as fictional as the story they introduce, such as the famous "Peach Blossom Spring" preface by Tao Qian (365-427 CE). But Duan shows no other interest in the "cave-dwelling people," and even that choice of Chinese characters mischaracterizes their lifestyle and has been seen as pejorative. Harrell includes as a striking attribute of the Han that they can "live their lives in almost total ignorance of minority society and culture" (301). It is more likely that Duan acquired a servant in Nanning, not an intimate knowledge of Zhuang concerns. Logically, therefore, the more the Yexian story reflects Zhuang skills, lifestyle, religious beliefs, folklore, or stories that the Zhuang might have had access to more readily than the northern Han, the more the attribution of this story to Li Shiyuan can be accepted, including the idea that the story was told not only by a Zhuang member, but by one who believed the story was created by his people and about them.

A Historical, Political Interpretation

My emphasis on the Tang Dynasty stems from an assumption that vivid descriptive detail often reflects the period when the story was collected and written down (see Dundes 1982:v). There seems to be no question that the story was recorded c. 850, sometime between 820 when Duan was a young man and 863 at his death. One approach that has not been pursued would interpret the story by focusing on the regional concerns of the Tang Dynasty between 618-863 CE, with an emphasis on the later years, which the storyteller Li Shiyuan would have known most about.

The story states that it has been "passed down from pre-Qin-Han times" (Mair 2005:364). More than the Western "once upon a time" or "long, long ago" that are timeless introductory phrases, the dating suggests "the good old days . . . before Qin-Han conquest" (Waley 1947:151). In the Qin Dynasty, Emperor Shi Huangdi (ruled 221-210 BCE) united China with his capital in Chang'an (Xi'an). This unification led to the 400-year Han Dynasty that gave its name to the dominant cultural group. More specifically, Shi Huangdi placed Nanning under the administration of Guilin Prefecture; Guilin, to the north of Nanning in Guangxi, was under

control of Chang'an by 207 BCE (Ferguson 2000:3). After 25 CE, "Chinese migration from the north began in earnest and the influence of Chinese cultural practices began to transform the area" (*idem*). Placing the story before the Qin Dynasty, therefore, makes it appear to be a story of a non-Sinitic people, the Zhuang in a "pure" state.

Yet the perspective reflects the vantage point of someone who knows about the Qin and the Han; the informant and/or collector looks back from a later time, in this case c. 850. To give a historical context, Waley discusses the history of 759 when "rebellious aborigines" were suppressed in the Guangxi area; this suppression occurred during the An Lushan Rebellion of 756-63 that caused the deaths of millions of people. Chinese particularly blamed An Lushan, a Turkic-Sogdian general, and endured the later actions of Uighurs and Tibetans, each of whom briefly took over the destroyed capital at different times. To the indigenous people of remote Guangxi, however, their local rebellion could be perceived as a justified protest against high taxation and enforced labor, including the sharply increased conscription of peasants into the military in the 750s (Backus 1981:73). According to Edwin G. Pulleyblank's 1955 analysis of the causes of the An Lushan Rebellion, the flow of wealth to the capital, including luxury goods from southern China, necessitated higher taxes and a greater military to collect them; the luxury items were also seen as corrupting influences on the imperial court. After 763 the Chinese empire was weakened, and a Buddhist kingdom of Nan Zhao even ruled in Yunnan and Chengdu, west and north of Guangxi. Charles Backus summarizes: "Throughout the T'ang Period, and particularly in the ninth century, there was a virtually unending series of insurrections against Chinese control by one or another of these aboriginal groups in the hinterlands of Kwangsi [Guangxi] and Annam [North Vietnam]" (1981:131).

From the Qin of 207 BCE through the later Tang Dynasty, therefore, the history of the Zhuang area—including Guangxi and Vietnam—includes local resistance to dominance from North China. From this historical context, the theme of displacement emerges from the story: Yexian, too, falls from power to powerlessness. Her father is a tribal leader, but first her mother and then her father dies; she acts as a servant in the household of her stepmother. She is "abused by her stepmother, who often ordered her to gather firewood in dangerous (steep) places and draw water from the depths" (Mair 2005:364). Her condition of servitude parallels that of the storyteller, Li Shiyuan, who became a "servant" in Duan Chengshi's household, but who "was originally a member of the tribal community" (366). Since both the Zhuang storyteller and the heroine share an original status higher than a servant, it is not surprising that the narration rewards the girl with transformation into a queen-like role. In one way, the story reveals the inherent dignity and worth of a minority person. The finery at the end of the story is not a foreign costume but the wonderful revelation of her native dress, her "true" identity.

What happens to the foreign king is equally interesting in that it deviates from the "happily ever after" Western norm. Once the king becomes "greedy," magic fishbones stop producing wealth. The king buries the fishbones at the seashore with "a hundred bushels of pearls and using gold for a boundary" (Mair 2005:366). Pearls and gold are certainly luxury items, and both pearls and gold were imported from South China to Chang'an. The extravagance of the wealth illustrates the corrupting abundance described by Pulleyblank. The story ends with a warning: "When the conscripted soldiers rebelled, he was planning to disburse [the pearls and gold] to provide for the troops, but one night they were washed away by the tide" (*idem*). The

pronoun "he" could refer either to the king or to a general, but there is no doubt that this version of the story ends on a note of political warning, not domestic harmony.

Because European and American "Cinderella" stories do not include rebelling soldiers, this ending may not appear integral to the story, but this Zhuang version is a coherent whole if interpreted politically: from the first mention of the Qin to the last sentence, the story concerns a government that had the power to enter an area and oppress ("conscript") the indigenes. The indigenous people view themselves as ethical and highly skilled, able to produce pure and beautiful objects from the land (pearls and gold) in astonishing abundance; the stepmother and king both become rapacious, and such unethical behavior leads to rebellion. That the stepmother and stepsister die in a hail of "flying stones" seems unsurprising; their neighbors may or may not have thrown the stones, but retributory violence is part of the story. Ninth-century China was barely recovering from the death and destruction of eighth-century rebellion, an insurrection in which the Guangxi clearly participated. This interpretation is quite fitting for a Zhuang storyteller presenting a veiled political story to a Han Chinese employer, part of the ruling elite that moved into Guangxi.

This historical/political interpretation follows the theories of Jack Zipes, who believes that fairy tales reflect the "socio-historical context in which the narratives were created"; furthermore, "the truth value of a fairy tale is dependent on the degree to which a writer is capable of using a symbolical narrative strategy and stereotypical characterization to depict, expose, or celebrate the modes of behavior that were used and justified to attain power in the civilizing process of a given society" (2001:845). Zipes also discusses the paradox of oral stories of an underclass being written down by ruling and educated classes. There is a "threatening aspect of wondrous change, turning the world upside-down" (847). His analysis fits this version that threatens both the stepmother and the foreign king with "wondrous change."

That the story's vivid details mirror Tang Dynasty concerns of the Zhuang in Guangxi does not mean that the narrative framework and the motifs familiar in the West also "originated independently" with the Zhuang and were not "importations" (to use Jameson's distinction, 1932:73). The historical-political interpretation I have given offers only one way to interpret the story; other features of the story become highlighted when different Asian cultural traditions are explored.

An Introduction to the "Zhuang"

In *Creating the Zhuang: Ethnic Politics in China*, Katherine Kaup describes the largest ethnic minority in China, with a population well over sixteen million in Yunnan and Guangxi alone. When the Communist government of the People's Republic of China established the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in 1958, the people termed Zhuang were given certain rights along with other minority groups (2000:2). Before the 1950s, the term was rarely used by ethnic groups who previously identified themselves within a local context (56). In the twenty-first century, a transnational identification is significant politically (3) and underlies the development of Nanning as a "Gateway City" of eight million. With the People's Republic of China now giving its minorities certain privileges, they are encountering problems in

establishing who is "Zhuang." I use the term for people who say they are Zhuang, who speak the language, or who continue customs and beliefs they ascribe to Zhuang heritage.

Intrigued by questions concerning the provenance of the Yexian story, I decided to travel to Guilin and Nanning in Guangxi Province in 2007. This trip allowed me to make observations in and around Guilin among the Zhuang who maintain practices, for example in aquaculture, dating to the Tang Dynasty; I drew upon the knowledge of a guide, Si Yu Chen, born and raised in Nanning and educated about the history of the area with its many Tang Dynasty sites. In addition, referrals from Kaup led me to three Zhuang professors from Guangxi University for Nationalities in Nanning who met with me throughout a day, giving their interpretations of Yexian's story and answering my many questions. The three scholars were Dr. Fan Honggui, who teaches Vietnamese and is interested in cross-regional Zhuang culture; his student Dr. Huang Xingqui, who is now a beginning language professor; and Dr. Nong Xueguan, professor of Zhuang folklore and literature.

Although the interviews were sequential, I summarize here the insights of Professors Fan and Nong together; Dr. Huang translated and added his ideas. Both Professors Fan and Nong are scholars of Yexian's story; they began by mentioning the innumerable versions, especially those in Vietnam and China both in the past and the present. They fully accepted it as a Zhuang story, and Dr. Fan was careful to say that the Vietnamese felt that their versions preceded the Nanning Tang Dynasty version. They brought to the interview their own copies of the story in classical Chinese. They were well aware of the collector Duan Chengshi and his c. 850 miscellany, *Youyang zazu.*

Analyzing the "Yexian" Text

My questions to the Zhuang professors about individual words and phrases drew upon three English translations of "Yexian" that are accompanied by meticulous introductions and footnotes highlighting ambiguities in the classical Chinese text: Jameson 1932, Waley 1963, and Mair 2005. Rather than seeking one definitive translation, my approach has been to compare and value multiple translations and interpretations that enrich the story from different perspectives. The Zhuang professors were familiar with Jameson's lecture, originally delivered in China. After discussing the meaning of the term "cave-dweller," the Zhuang scholars chose to focus on four story motifs (ones that Cox used to define the "Cinderella" story) and to root these motifs in Zhuang customs and traditions: 1) the guardian figure, the counterpart of the Western fairy godmother; 2) a marvelous blue dress; 3) a golden shoe that fits only Yexian's foot; and finally, 4) marriage to a foreign king. They were less interested in a distinctive motif in the Yexian narrative that concerns a gold-red carp, although my own research asserts that this motif ties together Hindu, Zhuang, and Han narratives and traditions.

Cave-dweller

As I have noted, the same terminology is used to describe Yexian's father and the story-teller Li Shiyuan. Duan identifies Li Shiyuan as a "cave man" from Yung Chow (Jameson

1932:77), "from the caves of Yung-chou" (Waley 1947:151); "servant of my household and originally the member of a tribal community in Yongzhou [Nanning]" (Mair 2005:366). In the story proper, Yexian's father is called a "chief of a mountain cave" (Jameson 1932:75) of the local "aborigines" (Waley 1947:149, Mair 2005:164) and a "tribal leader" (Mair 2005:164). The first point that both Zhuang professors Fan and Nong wanted to clarify was the term "cave-dweller." Since there are thousands of caves in the Guangxi limestone, I had taken the term literally. Near Guilin there had been many indications that the Zhuang had lived in caves and performed rituals there; inscriptions in the caves (in classical Chinese from the scholar-literati Han-Chinese class) date from the Tang Dynasty. Professors Fan and Nong explained that "cave" meant a sheltered location. Their desire to provide this clarification seemed puzzling until I reread Waley: "Sung times (tenth to thirteenth centuries) 'cave' had come simply to mean 'native settlement.' The *Sung History* enumerates eleven 'caves' (native settlements) near Nanning. It is evident from the story that Cinderella lived in a house, not a cave, and that the term 'cave-owner' is applied to her father in an ethnic, not a literal, sense" (1947:152). While it was important to the scholars that the Chinese character translated by Jameson as "a mountain cave" not be rendered literally, they assumed the term applied to the Zhuang.[5]

Even Waley's term "aborigine" and Mair's "tribal" have connotations of a people less technologically advanced than inhabitants of the ruling class. In the next section I will discuss the extensive evidence indicating a high level of sophistication in Zhuang culture during the Tang Dynasty, suggesting why the Zhuang scholars object to the implication that their Tang Dynasty ancestors were "cavemen."

The Person from the Sky

The next point of animated discussion concerned the being that appears after the girl weeps. Fan and Nong thought that this passage conveyed Zhuang belief in the power of ancestors (often oversimplified as ancestor worship). They thought that the being represents either the girl's dead mother or father; there are many versions of "Cinderella" that make this interpretation more explicit (Schaefer 2003:140). Mair's footnote makes clear that the word is not gender-specific. I asked about the unbound hair, and Professor Nong's reply was that it signified a "witch." That was the English term that he preferred after weighing alternatives, and he acknowledged that this word choice had complex gendered connotations.

Clothing for the Festival

Following the chronology of the story, the next motif we discussed involved the clothing that the girl wears to go to a "festival," which appears after the intercession of the guardian

---

[5] Barlow mentions that the word *dong* was used to designate "village structures" of the Zhuang and states that in mountainous areas "the term might have been confused with similar terms for 'cave'" (2005:27). His observation about this confusion is not related to the Yexian text (which he does not discuss), but does refer to the social structure of the Zhuang in the Tang Dynasty. In examining Tang Dynasty documents, Barlow used the Chinese character for Zhuang with a radical that literally translates as "dog"; the "dog" radical was changed to "person" in the twentieth century because it was considered pejorative (2005:43).

figure. Jameson translates the clothing in one sentence: She "dressed herself in bluish finery" (1932:76). Professor Nong brought with him photographs taken with Zhuang women in cloth of a sky-blue color. This color is prized among some Zhuang groups, along with the plants that produce its unusual brightness. The professors felt that the beauty of the cloth was a strong marker of identification between the Zhuang and the story. Different ethnic groups in the region distinguish themselves by a certain color in their textiles; the "Black-clothes Zhuang of Napo," for example, are known for their black head coverings, jackets, aprons, and so on (Xiao et al. 2006:78-83); the "White trousered Yao" are another example (92-93).

Waley and Mair differ from Jameson in their word choice for what the latter calls "bluish finery." Waley says that the girl was "wearing a cloak of stuff spun from kingfisher feathers" (1947:150), and Mair translates the phrase as "she wore a blouse woven of kingfisher feathers" (2005:365). The ambiguity lies with the word "kingfisher"; the bird's feathers can be of a bright blue iridescent color. Whether one takes the word literally or as a reference to color lies with the person receiving the story; the ambiguity is in the Chinese character whether one speaks Zhuang, Mandarin, or English. When asked about the bird, Professor Nong clearly stated that he did not believe the reference was to a bird. On the other hand, Professor Huang later brought in a photograph that seemed to depict dancers in feather headdress on Dong bronze drums, a motif that repeats on contemporary Zhuang textiles made for tourists. Kingfishers are native to watery Southwest China, including the Nanning area, and to Southeast Asia, where they were hunted in Cambodia to supply a Chinese market with feathers for jewelry. Paul Kroll (1984) gives evidence that robes and even curtains made of kingfisher feathers existed in the Tang Dynasty.[6] I will return to the most famous use of kingfisher feathers for a persecuted woman later in the "Han Chinese" section.

The Golden Shoe

In light of what has been said of the kingfisher-blue clothing, the ambiguity of the golden shoe becomes easier to understand. Jameson calls them "golden shoes" (1932:76), Waley "shoes of gold" (1947:150), and Mair "golden slippers" (2005:365). In a footnote Mair speculates that the slippers "were probably embroidered with gold thread" (366, see also Ting 1974:39). The word in Chinese can refer to the metal or the color. Both Fan and Nong interpreted the description of the shoes as meaning "of great worth or value." The mystery of the shoes also lies in the later descriptions of them: "light as a feather . . . making no sound on stones" (Mair 2005:365), "light as a hair" (Jameson 1932:76), and "light as down" (Waley 1963:150), descriptions that sound magical when combined with a metallic gold shoe in some English translations but actually support a reading of the shoes as made of cloth.

Professor Nong reported that Zhuang girls make and give pairs of shoes to young men they fancy. Embroidery is a treasured Zhuang art form. There are a number of legends about the origin of Zhuang brocade that involve a "Heavenly Palace" and a "Heavenly King." The legend "Da Ni Watched the Sun and Wove a Brocade" starts with lines describing "a smart young Zhuang girl Da Ni who was good at weaving. She was not satisfied with brocade as it was and

_____

[6] See also Schafer 1967:238-39 on the Tang Dynasty history of kingfisher feathers.

pondered day and night how to weave more beautiful cloth" (Xaio et al. 2006:74). This beginning parallels the start of the c. 850 story and reinforces Mair's interpretation that Yexian is very skilled in embroidery.

It should be noted that the story does not emphasize that the girl has an unusually small foot. In Mair's translation the shoe shrinks when other women attempt to put it on (2005:365), unlike Waley's translation in which the shoe is an inch shorter than the smallest foot of any other woman (1947:150). Ting mentions that in the Zhuang area, including Vietnam, a woman would make her own shoes to "fit her own feet to perfection" (1974:39). The Zhuang scholars did not mention the size of the shoe, but rather that it was richly and skillfully made.

Zhuang shoes displayed at the Nanning Provincial Museum in 2007 are made of cloth, rigid enough so that they either snugly fit or do not fit an individual's foot. They are indeed richly embroidered, with some threads that give a golden metallic glow. Despite the legitimate questions about using contemporary artifacts to bolster an interpretation of a literary text written down twelve hundred years ago, the existence of these shoes supports the interpretation that Yexian's shoes were embroidered with gold thread.

The Kingdom of Tuohan

Professor Nong suggested Sumatra as the island domain of the king who identifies Yexian through her shoe and marries her. Dr. Nong referred us to Jameson, who found a reference to Tuohan in the *Record of the Early T'ang*. Three months' journey from French Indo-China, Tuohan was an island country that sent embassies to Tang China in 645 and 648 (Jameson 1932:77-78). Waley believes that Tuohuan was "an Indianized kingdom on an island off the northern shore of the gulf of Siam, politically dependent upon the great Mon kingdom of Dvaravati" (1947:154). Mair also mentions Dvaravati in reference to Tuohan, adding that Dvaravati flourished from the sixth through thirteenth centuries (2005:366). Ting, however, sees no reason to associate Tuohuan with Dvaravati and makes the general comment that "place names mentioned in folk-narratives . . . cannot be used as reliable indicators of their primary home" (1974:8).

The geographical description of Tuohan is tantalizing: the "tribal community bordered on an ocean island, and on the island was a kingdom [that was] militarily powerful and ruled over scores of [other] islands" (Mair 2005:365). This description might fit the kingdom of Srivijaya in Sumatra, directly south of Nanning but closer to South Vietnam. During the Tang Dynasty there were trading connections between Srivijaya and China. In the seventh century, a Chinese Buddhist monk reported his study of Srivijaya; in the ninth century, rulers of Srivijaya may have had enough power in Java to build the great Buddhist temple of Borobudur (c. 825). Dr. Nong did not mention Srivijaya specifically; however, his interest in the Yexian story as a historical document is due to his interest in Tang Dynasty connections between Guangxi and Sumatra.

Wherever the foreign king comes from, that country is not the source of this story, which concerns a local woman who leaves home. The story tries hard to explain how the island king could have seen the wonderful shoe left at the festival, but there are many more links to the northern Chinese empire than to an empire across the southern ocean.

Reflections on the Zhuang Scholars' Interpretation

The importance of my 2007 interviews goes beyond the analysis of the discrete parts of the Yexian story. No record I could find before traveling to Guangxi in 2007 mentioned how the Zhuang felt about the Yexian story or whether even they believed the story stemmed from a Zhuang storyteller or from the Nanning area. In Nanning, it was quite evident that Zhuang professors Fang and Nong embraced the story as that of their own history and culture, especially when the term "Zhuang" is considered to be transnational, including subgroups in Vietnam.

The focus of the two scholars was to connect the story to Zhuang accomplishments. The girl was a member of a civilized group who lived in houses. A witch, a member of her own group, offered solutions that led to wealth and recognition. The girl was innovative and skilled at embroidery, making and using dye, and creating valuable slippers and a beautiful dress of an unusual bright blue. She was hardworking and kind. The story fits a culture where Zhuang women take an active role in selecting husbands and signal their preferences in a language of tokens, including embroidered shoes. They respond to the beauty of nature with aesthetic creation. Such artifacts could well attract the attention of a king from afar, and Zhuang festivals enhanced contact with foreign kingdoms.

From the point of view of the Zhuang who were interviewed, therefore, the Yexian story originated with an account of a Zhuang woman's life, including Zhuang religious belief. According to this view, much of the mystery occurs because of abrupt transitions, lost explanations, and transcription into the written form of classical Chinese.

Further Information about Zhuang Culture of the Tang Dynasty

Although intermarrying and intermingling resulted in a culturally complex group of Zhuang people by the time of the Tang Dynasty, it is appalling to leap over Asian cultural contexts to conclude, as Jameson does, the story comes from the "detritus of a myth by which our primitive ancestors described the rising sun" (1932:84). This story is not about the sun's rise and fall. Jameson takes the story out of its cultural context by aligning it with an Egyptian religious obsession. The word "primitive" is particularly objectionable. While the Tang Dynasty Zhuang did not have a writing system and struggled militarily against armies sent from Xi'an, historically their use of bronze drums, three-level wooden houses, textiles, and agricultural innovations indicates a high level of technological advancement, which was similar to related ethnic groups such as the Dong in South China.

The Yexian story is not one of a culturally impoverished heroine, but of a girl with cultural resources who subverts attempts to change her status to one resembling a household slave. Life was precarious for the Zhuang in the late Tang Dynasty. Children were sometimes used as household slaves by both Han Chinese and Zhuang households, and were "sold as commercial items" in export (Barlow 2005:22).[7] It is a defining characteristic of the "Cinderella"

---

[7] Barlow quotes a Tang Dynasty proclamation of 856 CE forbidding Zhuang slavery, which was blamed for political unrest (2005:23-24).

story, however, that rebellion against a slave-like status is told in terms of being under the control of one's father's second wife. According to Barlow, polygamy was practiced among the Zhuang in the late Tang Dynasty, and children were supposed to be treated equally; the literal translation makes it clear that Yexian's father married two wives, with the first one, Yexian's mother, dying. The term "stepmother" is therefore a translator's approximation that makes the story appear closer to its European counterparts. In recent centuries, however, the Zhuang have been described as monogamous. The story includes seeds that suggest an ideal relationship in which one woman and one man uniquely match one another and live happily ever after: the shoe, of course, fits only one woman; the woman becomes the king's "first wife." Competition among sexual partners and among siblings does appear to be a universal problem, and Bruno Bettelheim's 1976 analysis of the "Cinderella" story in the light of Freudian theories helps to explain the psychological power of this c. 850 story. In its own terms, the story is one of successfully overcoming obstacles and regaining a positive identity, in which one is cherished by others (236-77).

Further, Zhuang women of the Tang Dynasty had exceptionally high status and freedom of movement. In his comprehensive review of primary material, Barlow explicitly concludes that Zhuang women had higher status than Han-Chinese women of the same period (2005:24). Zhuang were not constrained by arranged marriages and dowries as Han Chinese women were; they mingled with men, especially on festival days, where they formed and signaled their preferences in a number of ways. Barlow reports that there were female as well as male "sorcerers" (28); this statement supports the scholars' interpretation that the figure who responds to Yexian's grief was female. Barlow speculates that women's high status derived from their highly valued weaving, a major source of Zhuang economic prosperity (26) and a cultural marker that the Zhuang scholars described with much pride.

A puzzling sentence at the beginning of the Yexian narrative can be understood by reference to this Zhuang expertise in embroidery. Yexian is introduced in the story by saying she was good at a skill, either "(sifting gold?)" (Jameson 1932:75) or "making pottery on the wheel" (Waley 1963:149). Mair comments that the verb is uncertain and makes a key suggestion that she is "spinning gold thread" (2005:366). Barlow states that the Guangxi prefecture was wealthy, with one gold mine being a "truly significant producer," and he refers to a Song Dynasty source that indicates that alluvial gold, found in stream beds, was sifted under the control of Zhuang headmen (22-23). These facts would support Jameson's word choice. But a woman's skill lies in embroidery, not in the work of sluicing for gold that was done by "labor gangs." Many sources about the Zhuang extol women's embroidery, which is displayed on balls created by women to demonstrate their unique skill. These are tossed in a courtship ritual in which men identify women by their embroidery. This practice seems to have been extant in the Tang. Barlow mentions that this practice is depicted on bronze drums; he witnessed the practice in Nanning in 1984 (2005:33). In 2007 excellent new examples of these balls were available for sale at the Nanning Anthropological Museum. They include delicate designs of birds, butterflies, and other forms from nature in minute stitches against a silk background. I therefore agree with Mair's interpretation that Yexian was quite capable of creating shoes of gold thread that appeared astonishing and magical to those coming from afar.

My discussion of Zhuang embroidery reveals the difficulties of trying to illuminate a ninth-century literary text using later descriptions of an ethnic group's customs and traditions, and as a whole this is not my approach. Barlow's work is valuable because it specifically concerns the Zhuang people of Guangxi Province in the late Tang Period. The more recent the ethnographic evidence, however, the more uncertain that it applies to the Tang Dynasty. One story collected in 1984 is a version of what has been called the Zhuang "epic" featuring a Thunder God. Because I discern Hindu influences in it, I discuss the story later in this article after I discuss Hindu/Buddhist parallels.

With other narratives, it is clearer what type of contemporary bias influences a story's retelling. An example involves the story of "Liu Sanjie" ("Third Sister Liu"), which is believed to be a Zhuang story set in the Tang Dynasty of a young girl born into a family of fishermen (Zhang and Zeng 1993:287). One version has her killed at "Little Dragon Pond" and carried up to the sky on the back of a carp (*idem*). In 2007 and 2008, audiences of up to two thousand gathered nightly to watch a performance of "Third Sister Liu," featuring hundreds of male and female Zhuang actors living in an area around Yongshuo up the Li River from Guilin, Guangxi Province. The producer and director of this tourist extravaganza was the great film director Zhang Yimou; he was inspired by a 1961 film about Third Sister Liu, who leads Zhuang men and women against Confucian scholars and Han-Chinese landlords who force the Zhuang away from their riverbanks in a remote time period.

One well-documented Zhuang custom that the 1961 film illustrates is called the "Singing Contest," where women and men court and challenge each other (Barlow 2005:25; Zhang and Zeng 1993:285 for a full description of this custom). The contest is less about musicality than about wit, courage, and presence of mind in debating issues, attacking, and counterattacking through words. Third Sister Liu is a young, beautiful, and talented protector of her people. She is a successful leader of her community and is not killed in the film. Because of the 1961 production date, it would be easy to consider the film Communist propaganda; it foreshadows the Cultural Revolution of 1966-76, when Mao Zedong sent middle class urbanites to live with and learn from rural peasants; women's liberation was a major goal of Chinese reform since 1919. While it is easy in this case to assume that the heroine was created to illustrate twentieth-century rather than ninth-century concerns and values, it is interesting that the 1961 director, Su Li, turned to the Zhuang for a feminist heroine. At the end of the 1961 film, the Zhuang Sister Liu dives into the river—a spirit incarnate returning to her element with a froggy, fishy leap.

The association of Liu Sanjie with a supernatural carp and Little Dragon Pond supports the hypothesis that Yexian is also a Zhuang heroine. A comparison between the two heroines also supports the argument that Yexian's dominant characteristics are talent and resilient determination to resist authority, not passive suffering and wishful thinking (as some interpret the Western "Cinderella" story). The woman's element is water; her natural ally is a fish. The image of the red carp needs to be examined carefully in the Yexian c. 850 text and in the context of ninth-century Guangxi Province.

The Red Carp and the Watery World of South China

In the c. 850 story there is a key symbol of human interaction with the natural world central to the Yexian story. This story element begins with Yexian's discovery of a very small unusual fish. After Yexian loses her mother and father to death, as well as the clothes that define her identity, she first rescues and then loses this fish. Her story is of loss so profound that the narrative moves to metaphor. The discovery of a gold-red carp and the knowledge of how to raise such fish transformed the literal landscape and way of life of the Zhuang in Guangxi; on a figurative level the Yexian story transforms into a deeply evocative text of loss after loss, then recovery—a story with universal resonance.

Yexian is not passive; driven by her "stepmother to gather firewood in dangerous (steep), places and draw water from the depths" (Mair 2005:364), Yexian, spontaneously and without motivation, saves and protects a vulnerable, small creature—her counterpart. The description of how Yexian raises the fish is very precise. The story reads that "she caught a fish a little over two inches long with a dark red dorsal fin and golden eyes [in her bucket], whereupon she put it in a bowl of water and raised it. Day by day it grew, causing her to change the bowl several times. It grew so big that no bowl could hold it; consequently she threw it into the pond out back. Whatever extra food the girl got hold of, she right away submerged it [in the pond] to feed the fish" (*idem*). While Mair's translation says the fish grows to ten feet long, Jameson gives the less fantastic and more human figure of five feet (1932:75). The fish befriends her; when she goes to the pond, "the fish would be sure to stick its head out of the water and pillow it on the bank" (Mair 2005:364). What happens next is pivotal in the story. The stepmother tricks Yexian and puts on her "shabby" clothing, killing the fish with a knife and eating its flesh, which she finds "tasty" (365). It is this death that leads Yexian to "cry in the wilderness" (*idem*), causing a person from the sky to appear.

The Zhuang Scholars' Interpretation of the Fish

Professors Fan and Nong focused only on the bones of the fish after it is killed by the stepmother. The Yexian text says that a person from the sky tells the girl to retrieve the fishbones from the place where things are thrown away and to keep them in her room and pray to them. Independently, however, both Fan and Nong talked as if the fishbones had been placed into a bowl and buried where a tree had grown. Thus the fish more readily represents the departed parent, whose bones are figuratively buried, and the resulting tree and the "person from the sky" represent the continued life of the parent. Fan and Nong's departure from the text here is, in a way, their interpretation of the text and is in accord with what Professor Fan said were the basic

beliefs of the Zhuang: "animism and ancestor worship."[8] This discrepancy with the Tang Dynasty written text makes one wonder what redeems fishbones specifically from being thrown away and why not throwing them away might lead to wealth and good fortune.

Evidence from Guangxi Province

In turning to a fish with the red fin and golden eyes, one sees an animal now valued widely in East and Southeast Asia. The red carp has been embraced as a good-luck symbol by Chinese throughout the PRC and Taiwan. It is linked to a story about a sturdy river fish, able to swim upriver and overcome waterfalls, a symbol of fortitude for male scholars (Ball 1927:189). A happy baby holding a red fish and sitting on a lotus blossom appears in statues, calendars, and pictures large and small. Red carp kites fly. Culturally, the red-gold carp is also related to the ubiquitous and hardy goldfish (Williams 1976:184-85). Neither goldfish nor Koi (I use the more widely known Japanese word) is eaten, taboo partly because of the monetary value of the human-manipulated variants and partly because the pet is a companion. Biologically, both Koi and goldfish have their genesis in the South of China. But no scholarship I have found has linked the history of these real red-gold fish to the c. 850 story of a fish befriended by a young girl who weeps when it is killed.

Why a story told by the Zhuang would highlight a carp becomes very clear when one visits the Guilin area where the Zhuang still work primarily as fishermen. Guangxi is a watery countryside, with many springs, streams, and rivers among beautiful hills with thin soil over limestone; even the city of Nanning contains many lakes.

That something novel and significant occurred involving red carp in the Tang Dynasty is reinforced by scientific, historical, literary, and pictorial records. The economic implications suggest that Yexian was a "Culture Bearer," associated by Anne Birrell with a type of myth concerning those who first teach "the techniques and arts of culture and civilization" (1993:41). Birrell highlights that "in Chinese mythology the origin and production of food and the cultivation, reclamation, and nurture of the land are major mythological themes" (*idem*). There is much scientific literature about the cultivation of carp because aquaculture feeds so many in the world, and integrated rice-fish farming systems in China have been recognized as "one of the globally important ingenious agricultural heritage systems" (Lu and Li 2006:106). Pottery models found in East Han Dynasty tombs (25-220 CE) in Sichuan Provinces show carp in flooded rice fields (*ibid.*:108). When the Zhuang adopted this farming technique and the use of large fishponds, as opposed to catching river fish, is a question relevant to this paper.

That raising carp in ponds spread from South China to India, Java, Japan, and elsewhere after the Tang Dynasty supports the hypothesis that the Yexian story was also exported from

---

[8] One Internet source with little documentation states that "the Zhuang believe the dead enter a netherworld where they have influence over the living. Corpses are buried three days after death with some favorite possessions while mournful songs are sung. The corpse is disinterred after the three years. The bones are placed in an urn that in turn is placed in a cave." This description suggests that Professors Fan and Nong were interpreting the story to conform with Zhuang burial practices. One wonders if the word "cave" is accurate here. The same source also states that Zhuang religion "incorporates elements of ancestor worship, Buddhism, and Taoism. Zhuang ancestor worship differs in that it embraces kings and mythical and historical heroes and heroines." (http://factsanddetails.com/china.php?itemid=185&catid=5&subcatid=30

Zhuang territory, even though there are earlier instances of raising fish in ponds, for example in Egypt. Chinese aquaculture techniques spread into India around 1127 (Costa-Pierce 1987:321); the raising of carp in fishponds was introduced to Java in the sixteenth century and spread into Indonesia from Java. Multi-colored Koi were developed in Japan only two centuries ago, but they were bred from Chinese carp—a fact that has been challenged but verified by DNA testing that demonstrated that Koi are descended from Oujiang red color carp found in the Oujiang River in southeast China (Wang and Li 2004). Koi are now associated both with religion and with secular wealth, and displayed in Buddhist temple grounds (Japan), Hindu sacred locations (Bali), and luxury hotels in Japan, Bali, and around the world. Balon (2004:4) distinguishes carp raised in China from the domesticated carp raised in Italy of the Roman Empire and in medieval Europe. True to the Yexian story, early Chinese carp were not technically "domesticated animals" because they needed "wild fish . . . frequently added to breeding stocks" (*idem*). A Song Dynasty book of 1243 CE describes how live carp fry were transported and traded in bamboo baskets (3).

For a child to find a two-inch fish and bring it home is not an unusual story for ninth-century China, but this is an unusual fish in its behavior, color, and ability to grow. Yexian's fish "shows its head using the bank as a pillow. It would not show itself as others came" (Jameson 1932:75). This trait is familiar to those who have fed Koi; their gaping mouths appear above water, and they come to the clap of those with whom they are familiar. Certain breeding of red carp, such as "Cyprinus carpio var. color," produces unusual body weight and length, with some up to one hundred pounds (Wang and Li 2004:abstract). Further, the size of the growth will, like goldfish and Koi, be governed by the size of the body of water in which they are kept. Outside Guilin, Zhuang have large fishponds, often the length and breadth of a small house. With a fishpond of this size, carp grow large and provide a stable and secure source of protein. Fish in fishponds can also be privately owned and can be a source of great wealth where fishing in rivers and lakes is a communal activity.

The story here sounds didactic: teaching others exactly how to raise very big fish. Therefore, on one level this story is that of a highly significant "culture bearer," to use Anne Birrell's term. The girl is an innovator because she has discovered the way to cultivate carp that are not true domesticates and do not breed in captivity. It makes sense that a child who is encouraged to forage far away from home would be attracted to an unusual red fish and would carry it to a place where Oujiang red carp are not found. Then, because she hides and feeds the fish, she discovers ways to make this kind of fish grow spectacularly.

This literal interpretation leads to a reconsideration of the person who finds Yexian crying after the fish is killed and eaten. This person has key advice, which is to take the fishbones from the dung heap. I formed a hypothesis that the fishbones should be put to use as fertilizer. Above Yongshuo, in the terraced rice fields where fish in the summer months are still raised in the flooded rice paddies, we asked Zhuang fishermen what they did with fishbones. They laughed and said that they used burnt fishbones as fertilizer—burned them because otherwise the bones stuck in their feet as they worked in the terraces. One can object that peoples all over the world use fishbones as fertilizer, as American Indians are said to have done when growing maize. But the Yexian story indicates that the Zhuang people had not done this; the story has the stepmother

---

[9] All the photographs in this article were taken by the author in November 2007.

throwing the bones into the garbage where the girl has to retrieve them.

If the girl is therefore an intelligent innovator and "culture bearer," does this mean that the story belongs to a misty mythic past? For China, the answer seems to be no; significant changes occurred in Chinese aquaculture in the Tang Dynasty when "Emperor Li banned the culture, fishing, sale and consumption of the common carp because its Chinese name was the same as the Emperor" (Costa-Pierce 1987:321). Yet this

Figure 1. Fishponds outside Guilin, Guangxi Province, identified as created by and belonging to the Zhuang.

proscription has been an unexpected boon to all Chinese since that time. Four other types of carp were developed that were not red and not taboo; these other types eat different grubs among rice plants and provide a model for raising rice before pesticide. During the Tang Dynasty, therefore, significantly better aquaculture perhaps became associated with a taboo against eating colored carp. Since Koi are not eaten, the Yexian story seems to explain the evolution of dinner into a sacred and taboo aesthetic object.

This taboo gains an ethical dimension. On one level, the girl's grief is caused by the contradiction between the need to eat and the need for companionship; eating pets appears to be a universal taboo. In the context of rural impoverishment, an interpretation could be that the stepmother eats the fish because she is indeed very hungry, for it is when the woman wears rags resembling Yexian's that she kills the fish. As in European fairy tales, such as "Hansel and Gretel," the older woman with her knife threatens Yexian on a symbolic level; the fish could also represent a baby growing to be a child that the older girl has been nurturing. This interpretation gives the story an urgent poignancy. The children of famished people die; neglect and infanticide are worldwide phenomena.

I believe the Zhuang storyteller has combined various narrative motifs to form an evocative whole that captured significant aspects of Tang Dynasty Guangxi, at a time when the Zhuang felt threatened by Han dominance. But to understand fully the Yexian story as a Zhuang story, it is also crucial to acknowledge that many of the key story motifs existed earlier in Hindu narratives, and that the story marks a pivotal time and place when these stories were transformed into secular tales that lost their specific religious and social meaning, reemerging and surviving in stories considered Buddhist.

Yexian's Gold-Red Carp and the Hindu Story of Manu and the Fish

Compare the Yexian story motif of the rescued carp with the Hindu story of Manu from the Satapatha Bhramana (Eggeling 1882:216-17):

> In the morning they brought to Manu water for washing, just as now also they (are wont to) bring (water) for washing the hands. When he was washing himself, a fish came into his hands. It spake to him the word, "Rear me, I will save thee!" "Wherefrom wilt thou save me?" "A flood will carry away all these creatures from that I will save thee!" "How am I to rear thee?" It said, "As long as we are small, there is great destruction for us: fish devours fish. Thou wilt first keep me in a jar. When I outgrow that, thou wilt dig a pit and keep me in it. When I outgrow that, thou wilt take me down to the sea, for then I shall be beyond destruction." It soon became a *ghasha* (a large fish); for that grows largest (of all fish) . . . . Thereupon it said, "In such and such a year that flood will come. Thou shalt then attend to me (i.e. to my advice) by preparing a ship; and when the flood has risen thou shalt enter into the ship, and I will save thee from it." After he had reared it in this way, he took it down to the sea.

Why are these elements similar to the Yexian story in detail and also in symbolic meaning? Saving the fish is a three-step process; the fish has to be gradually moved to bigger containers of water ending in a man-made pit or pond; both fish grow to such a size that they appear supernatural; both fish end up being released into a large body of water. Manu and Yexian demonstrate their virtue by saving the fish, and in both stories kindness is reciprocal: a human saves the fish; the fish saves the human. In the Yexian story, the red-gold carp, while unusual in color, friendliness, and ability to change size, remains a fish and does not talk. In the Hindu Manu story, the fish is an incarnation or avatar of Vishnu, Lord of the Universe (Ball 1927:200).[10]

The Yexian story ends with the gold, pearls, and fish bones being "washed away by the tide" (Mair 2005:366). In the Yexian story, this loss punishes the moral lapse of the foreign king who is greedy and conscripts soldiers; the rising water, while not necessarily the "flood" that becomes the focus of the Manu story, provides a similar function. The comparison makes one realize anew the integrity of the Yexian story as a whole. From the beginning Yexian is an ethical person; she demonstrates her morality by saving a fish; her morality is signified through royal status achieved through marriage; the royal status is signified by the accoutrements of wealth: jewels, dress, and shoes. Throughout the story, Yexian's morality is contrasted with the immorality of others: the stepmother, stepsister, and king are all punished for not caring about others and for excessive desire; Yexian is rewarded with riches.

Although Gilgamesh and Noah share the flood story, the Yexian narrative motifs do not draw directly from a Mesopotamian story recorded in cuneiform nor from Judeo-Christian-Muslim flood stories, but from the Indian world so closely in contact with China throughout the Tang Dynasty. Wendy Doniger (2009) describes the changing significance of the story of "Manu and the Fish" from the Brahamas (c. 800 BCE) to later times; she acknowledges that flood stories are told all over the world where there are floods, and she argues that one should accept a

---

[10] Doniger gives a version in which Manu realizes the large fish "must be Vishnu" (2009:58).

connection among Gilgamesh, Genesis, and "Manu and the Fish" without trying to trace a chronology of influence (54-59). The flood story is one example of the principle that Doniger articulates: that ideas spread and "take root only when they become important to people at a particular time, when they hitch on to something that those people care about" (21). South China frequently suffered from floods; one flood created a lake in Nanning during the Tang Dynasty, according to a 2007 sign posted in a Nanning park; another flood killed a child and forced "328,400 people [to be] relocated in Guangxi" in July 2009 (*China Daily* 2009).

That the Zhuang were aware of the Hindu stories is reinforced by an analysis of the story most identified with Zhuang culture, "Bubo and the Thunder God." One might question, as I certainly did for many years, whether the water that washes away Yexian's pearls and gold and washes the fish bones to the sea has anything to do with a mythic flood. Jameson, Waley, and Mair all use the word "tide" rather than "flood." The main plot of Bubo, however, leads to a flood that Bubo's children survive because they have kindly and spontaneously rescued the Thunder God; their goodness (and fertility) enables humanity to continue. This recent Bubo version, recorded in 1984 and identified as a Zhuang story from Guangxi Province, could have been influenced by Christians, Jews, or Muslims bringing the Genesis story to East Asia, but the Yexian date of c. 850 CE makes it much less likely that the Zhuang Bubo story was influenced by these religious traditions. As the next section explains in detail, the ninth century is the time when Hindu stories swept across Southeast Asia, a period when there was no political boundary between North Vietnam and Guangxi Province.

It seems a Zhuang storytelling characteristic, therefore, to combine some Hindu narrative motifs with their own value systems. The Bubo "epic" has no wrathful, lofty, righteous God; Bubo and the Thunder God seem equally energetic, funny, and accident-prone. Bubo's children are the saviors even though they, like Yexian, do not obey their parents. Zhuang heroes and heroines seem to delight in challenging hierarchy; Bubo dislikes "paying rent" to the Thunder God who acts as a landlord who likes to "stuff his stomach" (Miller 1995:137-38); parents, landlords, and gods alike threaten life itself. Like the "Third Sister Liu" story, "Bubo and the Thunder God" endorses rebellion against the landlord class through the weapons of satire: humor, wit, and exaggeration. Eurocentric commentators from Andrew Lang[11] to Graham Anderson have supposed that fairy tales became moralistic in modern French or English hands. But it seems to be a Zhuang characteristic to describe female children as saviors, not, I would argue, because Zhuang were telling stories to children, but rather because they value the spontaneous freedom of youth. This is very unlike the world of the Old Testament, unlike the Confucian world view with filial piety and male authority at its center, and unlike the central Hindu tradition with its caste system where women defile sacred texts by reading them (Doniger 2009:105).

Before leaving the Bubo story, I would like to analyze one other telling detail. After Bubo swipes off the Thunder God's feet, the god does not slow down but kills a chicken for its claws, "so from then on, Thunder God had a pair of claws for his feet" (149). In China, the image known as Leigong the Thunder God remains with little wings on his back as described in this Zhuang story (Miller 1995:137); the muscular human body has arms and legs ending in talons.

---

[11] For example, see Lang's introduction to Cox 1893.

When one compares this image to images of Garuda, the Hindu avatar of Vishnu, they appear identical and equally similar to images of the eagle Garuda depicted in ninth-century Java and in later times throughout Tibet, Indonesia, and Thailand. Changing an eagle's talons to chicken feet is comical; the sympathy of the story lies with the underdog, not with a mighty eagle.[12]

Connecting Zhuang stories with Hindu motifs will be explained further in a chronological/geographical context in the next section. In the ninth century, when the Yexian story was recorded, Hindu narratives, not just Buddhist texts, crossed borders that would later divide South, Southeast, and East Asia. The *Ramayana,* not "Manu and the Fish," was the dominant Hindu story transmitted. Like Manu's fish, Rama is an avatar of Vishnu, or Vishnu in bodily form. While the resemblance of either the Rama-Sita-Hanuman or the Manu-fish Hindu story to Yexian's story can be dismissed (as it has been ignored in the past), its resemblance to two stories of Vishnu's avatars supports the idea that one major source of the Yexian story is Hindu.

A Hindu-Buddhist Context of South and Southeast Asia

Tying Western fairy tales to Indic sources is neither new nor currently fashionable. As early as 1859, the German scholar T. Benfey held that fairy tales spread from India to both the East and the West, but Mary Brockington begins by stating "No longer is it a truth universally acknowledged that all fairy tales are of Indic Origin" (2003:239, 246). Her Austen-inspired irony is mild next to the scorn for this belief summoned by Stuart Blackburn: "The textual precision and ethnographic depth of [recent] studies, not to mention the increasing number of folktale indexes, have taken us far beyond the naiveté of those nineteenth-century claims for a Buddhist or mytho-poetic origin to virtually all folk narrative" (1996:494). Yet it is hardly naive to consider Hindu-Buddhist sources for a story told by the transnational Asian Zhuang in the ninth century.

Considering chronology, geography, and narrative, I suggest that the *Ramayana* provides a key cultural context to understanding the Yexian story recorded in China near the Vietnamese border c. 850. The full story of Sita, in continuous circulation in many forms since Valmiki's c. 500 BCE poem, and Yexian's story share key aspects of the "Cinderella" story: 1) rivalry among multiple wives and step-siblings; 2) a girl sent into exile and deprived of clothing signifying true identity; 3) a supernatural helper/messenger who appears in animal form to aid the woman; 4) the role of golden shoes; and 5) marriage to a king.

The spread of the Hindu *Ramayana* throughout Southeast Asia in the sixth through ninth centuries CE has been extremely well documented. Southern Vietnam had a temple dedicated to Valmiki in the seventh century. Northern Vietnam (Annam) considered itself the kingdom of Rama's father, Dasaratha (Desai 1970:9). In Cambodia, Khmer sculptors knew the story as early as the eighth century (Mehta 2004:323). Thailand's arts, religion, and kings have focused on the *Ramayana* since the Dvaravati Kingdom of the fourth to eighth centuries (Desai 1970:11). In the

---

[12] See Appendix B for a fuller discussion of the story of Bubo and analysis of this transformation of Garuda.

ninth century, transmission of the *Ramayana* extended to Java, culminating in the great Prambanan Hindu temple complex with its extensive set of *Ramayana* panels built c. 850 CE; an Old Javanese rendering of a Sanskrit version was recorded c. 870. *Ramayana* dance traditions in Thailand and Hindu Bali focus on Sita, and performances end with her being happily reunited with Rama.[13]

Part of the cultural difference between Southeast and East Asia has been routinely explained by the difference between Hindu and Buddhist religious/political/social thought spreading and evolving from Indian roots. That the Hindu *Ramayana* was known within the current boundaries of the People's Republic of China before the sixteenth century has been highly contested; the debate has focused not on Sita but on the monkey-king Hanuman who comes to her rescue. This scholarly debate (Dudbridge 1970:160-64, A. Yu 1977, and Mair 1989) has provided a wealth of information regarding the spread of the story of Sita's exile, recognition, and rescue in China.

The *Ramayana* story changed and spread through many genres. I suggest that the Yexian/ Cinderella story can be usefully compared to the "Dasaratha-Jataka" version of Sita's story. I first became interested in this Jataka story when I read "The Slippers of the King" in Florence Griswold's 1919 *Hindu Fairy Tales*. Griswold's version is a close paraphrase from E. B. Cowell's translation from the Pali Jataka (1957:78-82), yet Griswold's use of the terms "fairy tale" and "slippers" highlights the resemblance to "Cinderella." Jataka stories usually describe Buddha in a former life as a Bodhisattva appearing as an animal; the stories move quickly to resolution with the generous and compassionate rewarded and the greedy decisively punished. Unlike Valmiki's sprawling poem, Jataka stories have the length, ethics, and unity of the "Cinderella" fairy tale. It seemed possible that this particular Jataka story about Sita had circulated in China before c. 850 because other Jataka are illustrated on the Buddhist Dunhuang walls. This was confirmed in Mair's 1989 article where he translates a Chinese version of the "Dasaratha-Jataka" into English and explains that this story was first translated into Chinese from Sanskrit in 472 CE by Kimkarya and Tan Yao. Besides emphasizing a persecuting stepmother figure and symbolically identifying royal slippers, the Dasaratha-Jataka story of Sita departs from Valmiki's canonical poem by ending "happily ever after" with Sita and Rama's marriage, the norm of any Western "Cinderella" story.

The point, however, is not that this one translation written in 472 influenced the Yexian story recorded four hundred years later. Mair's discovery simply illustrates that the spreading *Ramayana* stories did not abruptly stop at the current border between North Vietnam, with its identification with Rama's father, and Guangxi Province, China. My hypothesis has been that the c. 850 Yexian story is an original creation of the Zhuang who combined ideas from their own traditions and experiences with motifs from more widely circulated stories. Beyond the Zhuang, the most powerful source of these shared motifs is Sita's story, conveyed primarily through oral storytelling or performance. Valmiki's version, c. 500 BCE, drew upon older stories that could have included a story that ends happily for Sita, as this Jataka story does. It is known that in Southeast Asia, an area that includes the transnational Zhuang, many oral versions and ritual performances of the *Ramayana* were circulating and transforming societies such as Java's in the

---

[13] See Mackerras 2007:49-51 for a summary of the early spread of "Hinduized states" in Southeast Asia.

ninth century. Mair supplies the evidence that the Jataka version of Sita-Rama-and-the-golden-slippers was translated into Chinese from Sanskrit in the 400s. The evidence, therefore, is much stronger that the Yexian motifs come directly from Hindu Indian narratives, perhaps via Vietnam, as opposed to coming indirectly from Egypt or Greece.

The following analysis considers the motifs that Sita and Yexian/Cinderella have in common and what basic differences are revealed. Note that I pay attention to different aspects of the story from those focused on by the Zhuang scholars. Embroidery, a blue dress, feathers, and a red fish, for example, disappear.

Multiple Wives

In the *Ramayana* the wicked stepmother figure is motivated by rivalry between first and secondary wives. Because the story concerns children of a king, the stakes are high; the mother of the heir gains prestige, power, and comfort while the other wife is much diminished along with her progeny. The Jataka story distills the story of how King Dasaratha has rashly promised his much younger secondary wife that her child Bharata will inherit the throne instead of his first wife's eldest son, Rama. Rama accepts exile and goes into a forest with Sita because he honors his father's promise. Yexian's father has two wives; the second wife has generally been translated as "stepmother." Earlier I interpreted the Yexian story as representing an indigenous people displaced by rash promises, secondary alliances, and greed, but here Yexian, like Rama, could represent any rightful heir when primogeniture is contested by human weakness.

The Helpful Animal

The story of Sita as it spread through Southeast Asia emphasizes the role of Hanuman (Mehta 2004:328, Kam 2000:123-64). In one of the most scholarly analyses of Hanuman, Robert Goldman and S. J. Sutherland Goldman argued that "the deepening atmosphere of despair and the cathartic joy of Hanuman and Sita are related slowly, lovingly, and with consummate skill by the poet; for they constitute the . . . emotional center of the epic itself" (1996:48). Hanuman is a god incarnate in animal form; as such, he can rescue the woman in her hour of need, when she is "beyond human help" (32). Hanuman constantly identifies himself as the "son of the wind-god Maruta" and has a supernatural ability to change size, but he also retains a monkey nature and a twitchy tail. Hanuman, not Rama, finds Sita after her abduction by Ravana, identifies her by an exchange of jeweled talismans, comforts her through human speech, and arranges for her deliverance. Hanuman's purpose is to unite a still virginal Sita with King Rama. Hanuman's role in the Yexian story can be said to be split between a "person with hair splayed across the shoulders and wearing coarse clothing who came down from the sky" (Mair 2005:365) and the small red carp. Only this rough-looking person can speak and give instructions to Yexian concerning the significance of the fishbones. As with Hanuman, this helper is an ambiguous mixture of human, animal, and divine. The unbound hair places the helper outside the boundaries of civilized society and even makes the gender unclear. Because the role of Hanuman seems to be filled with the person "who came down from the sky," the role of the red carp in the story

seems redundant. My analysis leads to the conclusion that there are two separate Hindu stories converging here, as has been stated.

The Tree

To keep Yexian away from the Festival, the stepmother orders her to guard "the fruit trees in the courtyard" (Mair 2005:365).[14] Later in the story, when Yexian returns from the Festival, the stepmother finds her asleep with her arms "wrapped around one of the fruit trees" (*idem*). In a pivotal *Ramayana* scene, Hanuman finds Sita in the grounds of Ravana's palaces in a garden "full of fruit that blossomed all year around" (R. and S. Goldman 1996:153); Hanuman talks from the branches while Sita sits under a flowering asoka tree.

Again, a quick comparison to Han Chinese literary tradition and to Zhuang realities in Guangxi is fruitful. The character famous for being ordered to protect fruit trees is the Monkey King of the sixteenth-century Chinese *Journey to the West*; to keep Monkey in his place the gods assign him to guard the "Garden of Immortal Peaches." Monkey resists hierarchy, takes off his "cap and robe," climbs trees and eats the peaches, then dresses himself and repeats "this device" for two or three days (A. Yu 1977:135-36). In Yexian's story, it is extraordinary that a young girl, not a monkey king, represents a disruptive force that successfully challenges hierarchy; with a change of clothing, Yexian disguises herself (or reveals her true identity) in order to pursue her desires.

While adherents to Jungian theories of archetypes, such as Joseph Campbell, would object to this diffusionist model and refer to ubiquitous symbolic trees associated with women, including Eve and the apple tree (1990:193-204), I would point out how much closer in spirit Yexian's story is to the *Ramayana* than to *Genesis*. Sita and Yexian escape a captive status; unlike Eve, these Asian women demonstrate an inner incorruptible goodness. For Sita and Yexian, the tree, offering shelter and comfort, is part of a benevolent universe; sex and fecundity are not blamed for sorrow and death in the world. On the other hand, within Asian traditions, there are basic distinctions to be made between Sita and Yexian. For instance, in the ninth century, the Zhuang story rewards the virtuous but law-breaking female protagonist while the Hindu worldview values most highly the male king who adheres to dharma.

Shoes and Identity

The most salient connection between *Ramayana* and the Yexian story lies with the symbolism of golden slippers. In his 1893 introduction to Marian Roalfe Cox's work, Andrew Lang penned the immortal line that no barefoot race could have invented the "Cinderella" story, a funny as well as condescending statement (Schaefer 2003:138-39). However, feet as the site of royal power and identity form a motif even in the full Indian Valmiki version of the sixth century BCE; Lakshmana, who does not gaze at Sita fully, identifies her through her anklets. In "Anklets Away: The Symbolism of Jewellery and Ornamentation in Valmiki's *Ramayana*," Sutherland Goldman notes that when Ravana carries Sita away, her "jewel-studded anklet was shaken from

---

[14] Other translators use the word "garden" instead of "courtyard" (Waley 1963:150, Reed 2001:112).

her foot and gently tinkling it fell like an arc of lightning," and Sutherland Goldman suggests that Sita deliberately lets her anklet fall so that Rama can trace her (2003:160).

The Jataka story puts slippers in a central position. The story has its peaceful resolution when Rama's half-brother, Bharata, seeks him in exile; Rama refuses to return before the term of his exile expires, and Bharata returns only with Rama's slippers: "For three years the slippers ruled the kingdom. The courtiers placed the straw slippers upon the royal throne, when they judged a cause. If the cause were decided wrongly, the slippers beat upon each other" (Cowell 1957:82). Thus the slippers stand for Rama's identity and for his royal status, supernaturally affirmed. While the Jataka version doesn't call Rama's sandals "golden," Valmiki's *Ramayana* has Bharata say, "My brother himself gave me the kingship as a trust—it is these gold-trimmed slippers that will guarantee its welfare and security . . . . O that I might soon see the feet of Rama Raghava placed within these slippers, tying them on once again with my own hands" (Pollock 1986:314).[15] The story of Rama's golden shoes suggests one interpretation of why the identifying slipper remains such a key talisman of the "Cinderella" story. Identification of the "true ruler" reestablishes a positive universal balance and equilibrium.

Contrasting the Jataka and Yexian Stories

While I am suggesting that the similarities among the Asian stories I discuss stem from cultural interaction and transformation, the process of comparison also highlights significantly different world views involving class, politics, gender, and conceptions of self. While Yexian's father was a leader to his group, the family appears marginalized economically, and Yexian's menial work seems a harsh extension of a child's workload. The *Ramayana* story about the high stakes of political decisions of a powerful king has been adapted to a different scenario of extreme poverty where the stakes are those of survival. The story rewards Yexian by making her the first wife of a king, but it seems ambivalent about the founding of a divinely sanctioned royal line, and it does not value hierarchy, obedience, and duty. These conflicting messages allow the story to flourish later in both monarchies and democracies.

The other striking difference, of course, has to do with gender. In Valmiki's Hindu version of the *Ramayana,* Sita is strong-willed and smart but needs to prove her innocence by a trial through fire, and she leaves the world of the living after further accusations. Even in the "Dasaratha-Jataka" story, where Sita ends up as queen, the focus is on the males, King Dasaratha and his sons, Rama and Bharata. Many of the hundreds of Jataka stories are misogynistic; wives and daughters are put in their place after revealing false pride and a desire to change class (Cowell 1957:iii, no. 306:13-15 and no. 309:19). The story of Yexian is much different. Before help appears out of the blue, Yexian seems totally alone in the universe; unlike Sita's situation, there is no one who cares and searches for her. Yet out of this desolation come new connections, initiative, and hope. When Sita ventures beyond a circle of male protection, she is snatched away, threatened, and hidden. When Yexian moves into the wilderness, she discovers ways to improve

_____

[15] Robert Goldman has also given a lecture showing artistic representations of Rama's "golden" slippers (2007).

her own life and the lives of her people. The figure with the disheveled hair and torn clothes is her own image, and it is with a female identity, heritage, and knowledge that she rescues herself.

Studies of Asian concepts of selfhood in relationship to political ideology should contemplate Yexian's story. In parts of Asia outside of Guangxi, stories such as Sita's were maintained in kingdoms that re-created the palace walls, the courtyards, and the gardens that contained as well as protected women whose role it was to perpetuate a royal, divinely sanctioned lineage. In India, China, and Japan, elite women became held within iron boxes of social expectation. In the Hindu and Confucian worlds, identity still resides in multiple family roles and obligations. But in Tang Dynasty Zhuang territory, there seemed to be a space for a different type of woman, a different type of person. This girl finds a creature of beauty and independently nurtures it herself, hidden from others; she demonstrates kindness; she finds new ideas "out of the blue," demands to go to a festival, leaves home to travel to an island kingdom beyond the sea, becomes the first wife of a powerful king, and there we leave her in this version of this story. In the Greek world, there is no one like her: in contrast, the walls of Troy, Ithaca, and Thebes enclose and entomb Helen, Penelope, and Antigone.

There are additional resonant narratives from India, China, and Southeast Asia, including those from various minority groups, more than can be commented upon here. I consider Sita's and Manu's stories, however, the most significant ones because Hindu texts brought cultural and political change throughout Southeast Asia in the ninth century. China's resistance to the *Ramayana* narrative is part of China's resistance to becoming a Hinduized/ Buddhist state in the later Tang Dynasty; in the eighth and ninth centuries, politically powerful Sogdians, Uighurs, and Tibetans were Buddhist; Han Chinese resistance to theocracy culminated in the destruction of Buddhist temples and monasteries in the 840s.

Yexian's story is full of motifs that the story does not explain, a quality quite compatible with a Zhuang storyteller who is not Hindu and a Han Chinese story-collector who writes down the story after hearing it once.The story appears strange and mysterious because it is so crowded with fish, slippers, gold, pearls, and trees; like the flying stones, we do not know what direction they are coming from. It becomes dreamlike in its quick juxtaposition of sharp resonant images. But the spirit of this story and the dreams for women are quite different from the Indian and Chinese worlds described in earlier epics and later prose fiction. This paper suggests that the Zhuang experience in the Tang Dynasty made the difference in this interval of time and space.

The Han Chinese World

The Han Chinese world is full of its own explorations of ethical dilemmas, fantasies, persecuted heroines, and even marvelous red fish. One needs to consider the Han Chinese context because the Zhuang informant Li Shiyuan lived in an area dominated by Han culture and Duan Chengshi had to choose Chinese words to write down the story. Some believe all folklore collections are powerfully shaped by the collector-writer (Philip 1989:1), yet the linguistic evidence and jumps and gaps in the story make it appear that Duan wrote the story down as it was told rather than shaping it to suit his own literary goals. Carrie Reed characterizes the sum of the tales collected by Duan Chengshi as belonging to the Tang *chuanqi* genre due to their

"language style, literary embellishments or flourishes, particular kinds of standard introductions and conclusions, complicated narrator viewpoint, dramatic irony, stock character types, complexity of the treatment of time passage, common plot patterns, and their primary benign or benevolent human-like supernatural element" (2003:6). In my view, much of this characterization fits the Yexian story, and analyzing the Yexian story in the context of the "Nuogao ji" sections of Duan's miscellany should be the focus of further study.

Within the Han Chinese literary world involving riches, waywardness, and romantic love, there is a very famous poem that extends into East Asia a genre concerning an emperor who falls in love with a young beautiful woman and breaks tradition by elevating her quickly above all other wives; this genre would include tales of King Dasaratha and Yexian's king, but also stories of the real Emperor Xuanxong of the Tang Dynasty and a fictional Emperor of Japan. In 806 Bai Juyi (Po Chu-i, 772-846) wrote "Song of Lasting Pain" (Stephen Owen's 1996 translation of the title; Waley (1929/1993) uses "Song of Everlasting Sorrow"); the poem was so immediately and widely popular that Duan Chengshi and his servant Li Shiyuan could easily have known it. The poem imaginatively tells the history of Emperor Xuanxong's Prized Consort, Yang Guifei, who was blamed for the An Lushan Rebellion of 755 and executed. She had risen through the ranks of court women in rags-to-riches fashion to the position of *guifei* ("prized consort"), which would be the equivalent of Yexian's status of "primary wife"; her quick rise upset the established order among the Emperor's women. Angela Palandri, writing about Bai Juyi's friend Yuan Chen, reports that in 806 the problem of women being sought out in China and "snatched from their homes" to be part of the Emperor's harem was an issue that scholar-literati-bureaucrats such as Yuan Chen were attempting to redress through political poetry (1977:8). While such a detail may explain why a poor local woman gets sent to a court, the Yexian story is romanticized and not a complaint. Yexian's marriage to the king, in itself, rewards rather than hurts her.

For Bai Juyi, a key identifying symbol is Yang Guifei's "kingfisher wing" hair ornament that falls when she is killed, kingfisher quilts that covered her and the emperor; her leitmotif melody is "Coats of Feathers/Rainbow Skirts" (Owen 1996:442-47).[16] Bai Juyi's poem ends by treating Yang Guifei as a local semi-divine deity.[17] If one accepts the translation of kingfisher feathers, the Yexian story becomes one of a "heavenly maiden" revealed, not a Zhuang girl with a heavenly blue dress created from her group's expertise in dying and sewing. The kingfisher image comes out of the Han Chinese tradition; by the second century the kingfisher was "symbolic of all gentle but persecuted beings" (Kroll 1984:240). While the *Ramayana* establishes a template for the story of a beloved royal consort—Sita, beset by difficulties—the romantic Yang Guifei legend flourished in China after 807, creating room for a new genre.

---

[16] T. H. Barrett gives evidence of an association between this melody, Bai Juyi's poem, and performances of the "Cinderella" story (1999:5). The kingfisher hairpin became so identified with Yang Guifei that Murasaki explicitly refers to Yang Guifei's kingfisher pin in the c. 1000 *The Tale of Genji* (Waley 1929/1993:15). When my guide from Nanning, Si Yu Chen, read the Yexian story, she associated the "kingfisher feathers" with Yang Guifei and told me about a local tradition from a village near Nanning; Yang's apocryphal craving for lichee nuts was attributed to lichee nuts from this village. Although histories contradict this idea about Yang Guifei's birthplace, her notorious relative, Yang Guozhong, was blamed for losing the southwestern territories. Lady Yang's execution during the An Lushan was due to her historical intercession to keep Yang Guozhong in charge of the area including Guangxi (Backus 1981:72-77).

[17] See Stevens 1990 on the Chinese process of deification.

The second resonant story, to which Jameson (1932:91) refers, is told in the famous sixteenth-century *Journey to the West* where Kuangji releases a golden carp for sale when it blinks its eyes in a strange manner (C. Yu 2001). Later the River Dragon King states: "As the common saying goes, 'Kindness should be repaid by kindness.' I must save his life today so that I may repay the kindness of yesterday . . . . The golden carp that you released was myself and you are my benefactor" (202). The resemblance is not only that the small golden carp grows into the mighty River Dragon King, but that the moral of the story supports reciprocal kindness. Later the Emperor "Tai-tsung" is involved with the River Dragon King and also tries to repay kindness with kindness.

When one looks for pictorial witness within the Han tradition, again evidence surfaces after the Tang Dynasty. There is a beautiful extant scroll from 1075 by Liu Cai, now called "Fish Swimming and Falling Flowers." The painting has been described as follows: "Suddenly, a brilliant orange goldfish appears, then jade green leaves and more goldfish, as the composition comes to a close with the appearance of the patriarchal figures in this watery world, several huge carp who appear to the lesser fishes we have seen as kings to their kingdom" (Xin et al. 1997:118). The painting comes from a series called "Dragons and Fish," but the authors comment that no dragon pictures are extant before the thirteenth century. I would suggest that there are dragons in this picture, and they appear as the "huge" carp that resemble kings. The setting appears to be an artificial pond with lily pads floating on top. Liu Cai is called the first painter of fish as "living, moving forms" (118). The painting is 150 years after the Yexian story was recorded c. 850, and from the Southern Song; it testifies to the early history of fish as protected aesthetic objects in the broader Han Chinese culture after, but not before, the Tang Dynasty.

When one compares the extent to which the Yexian story may have grown out of Han Chinese sources or Hindu sources, the evidence gathered here demonstrates that the Hindu cultural realm is the more important source. Bai Juyi's story of Yang Guifei, a persecuted royal heroine discovered by a leaping supernatural being and identified by a jewel after her death (as Hanuman identifies Sita), resonates with Sita's story more than Yexian and Yang Guifei resonate with one another. Kingfisher feathers are associated with Yang Guifei and Yexian, but this could be because Duan Chengshi in c. 850 knew the Bai Juyi poem of 806 and chose the Chinese character for kingfisher to describe a shade of blue. Duan's miscellany does include one anecdote about Yang Guifei, but that is about chess rather than kingfisher feathers (Reed 2003:81). One notes that the cape/blouse/dress of feathers is not part of other Asian "Cinderella" stories that Ting, for example, prints or summarizes, nor does it appear in European versions. The resemblance between Yexian's story and stories embedded in the later Han Chinese *Journey to the West* also is connected to Hindu sources; Yexian's story may be a stepping stone to stories in the much later *Journey to the West,* but because the Han literary tradition has been scoured for precedents to stories of "Monkey," we know that before 850 CE there were virtually no similar Han Chinese indigenous stories. In sorting out the strands of Hindu, Han Chinese, and Zhuang contributions to the Yexian story, one other cultural tradition needs to be explored, that of Buddhist-Han Chinese tradition.

A Buddhist Interpretation

My return to Buddhism after the Han Chinese section is deliberate. By the ninth century, Buddhism had evolved, diversified, and been "Sinicized" for approximately seven hundred years. The *Lotus Sutra* was first translated into Chinese in 406 and contains the story of the "Daughter of the Dragon-King," which demonstrates that a woman can reach enlightenment, and a section that has been called the "Guanyin Sutra" (de Bary and Bloom 1999:453-55). A possible connection between Yexian and an evolving worship of a feminine Guanyin enriches the Yexian story. I should note, however, that the Zhuang scholars I interviewed quickly cut off a discussion of such a Buddhist interpretation.

The Zhuang retain their own animist and ancestor beliefs as part of their non-Sinitic identity. In addition, Buddhism has been attacked in waves since the Chinese government's destruction of monasteries in 841-46; both Confucian and Communist ideology have maintained antipathy to Buddhism, with many Buddhist artifacts being destroyed during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). Nonetheless, a Buddhist interpretation is fruitful because of the story's values, the history of Buddhism in Guangxi, and the development of Buddhism both during the Tang Dynasty and in the tenth-century Song Dynasty, after this story was collected. The Dunhuang caves show gracefully feminine Bodhisattvas in the eighth century (Tan 1994:151),

Figure 2. A niche with a statue identified as a Tang Dynasty Guanyin. The niche is at the base of Elephant Hill, which has the remains of a Buddhist pagoda on the top. The statue was said to be moved to this location after the original Tang Dynasty statue was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76).

before Duan Chengshi collected the Yexian story. Duan Chengshi's miscellany was full of both Buddhist and Daoist lore and legend, and he was sympathetic to both traditions (Reed 2003:48).

There are clear signs in and around Guilin that Buddhism centered on Guanyin had been strong and is re-emerging. In Guilin, public parks preserve sacred ground; in Seven-Star Park there is now a rebuilt Buddhist temple. Another famous enclave is Elephant Hill, which has an old (but not Tang Dynasty) stone pagoda at the top. There is an altar cut into the hill and in the altar stands Guanyin.

This statue was said to have been moved to this location from another site to replace a Tang Dynasty statue smashed in the Cultural Revolution. What was most interesting was the small pool set among rocks directly under Guanyin. In the pool swam small bright red goldfish.

Figure 3. Directly below the Guanyin statue in Figure 2 is a "Pond of Mercy" where small red fish are currently released to acquire good luck.

The guide Si Yu Chen explained that this was "A Pool of Mercy" and that Buddhists currently bought the fish to release here to gain the compassion of Guanyin. Si Yu Chen reported that her mother followed this practice in her village outside Nanning; Ms. Chen was also aware of a "Pool of Mercy" at Hangzhou.[18]

A related artifact was discovered while walking up to the Zhuang terraced rice paddies of Yangshuo where the Zhuang have raised fish for 1200 years, that is, since the time Yexian's story was told c. 850. In a vendor's stall an amulet was for sale, a small red carp. The amulet opened, and carved on one side was a figure of the compassionate Bodhisattva Guanyin. Carved into the

---

[18] For an account of the beginnings of the Buddhist "Pools of Mercy" in the tenth century, see Balon 2004:17.

Figure 4. Amulets bought on the steps leading up to the Yongshuo terraced rice paddies. The seller explained that one carving inside shows a Bodhisattva Guanyin figure; the other side shows a child. The current amulets are made of inexpensive plastic, but a magnifying glass shows a feminized Guanyin figure.

inside of the other half of the fish was a small child that the Guanyin was said to protect (Figure 4).

It is difficult for me not to connect this talisman with the interpretation of the Yexian fish as an embodiment of Guanyin. The Jataka tales, as we have seen, tell the story of a bodhisattva entering an animal to help humankind. One might be particularly grateful to a fish, when, living on hills that seem able to produce nothing, raising and eating fish from terraced pools allows one to safely bear, nurse, and rear healthy children.

After forming a hypothesis that the Yexian story evolved in China into stories of a feminine Guanyin because of these artifacts viewed in 2007, I read Chun-Fang Yu's *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokitesvara* (2001). In searching for the origins of this feminine Bodhisattva, Yu finds that the earliest stories of the feminine Guanyin are found in China with "a woman carrying a fish-basket" (419-38). It should be remembered that children carried carp "fingerlings" in " bamboo baskets," as I have noted (Balon 2004:3). The story recorded in tenth-century China tells of a beautiful but humble young woman who asks her suitors to learn the Lotus Sutra and who dies before consummating any marriage; by the end of the story the people realize she was the Bodhisattva Guanyin. A version told in Japan keeps the

story closer to the Yexian/Cinderella narrative: "Originally a girl of T'ang China, who was selling fish on the market. She asked Kannon Bosatsu to grant her a wish for a good husband. The wish was granted and later the girl itself was seen as an incarnation of Kannon Bosatsu" (Daruma Museum website). During the Ming Dynasty, a story published between 1573 and 1615 associates a Fishbasket Guanyin with a goldfish in a pond that can turn into a monster, which Guanyin turns back into a fish (C. Yu 2001:432).

What do we learn from Chun-fang Yu's research that enriches our understanding of the Yexian story in Asian contexts? Yu's interpretation of the Fishbasket Guanyin story emphasizes that the girl is humble; anyone could be a savior in disguise, and therefore one should be kind to everyone. The Buddhism evolving from the Lotus Sutra preaches universal salvation very different indeed from the Hindu caste system that considers wealthy men to be closer to salvation than poor or low-status people such as menial workers and women. In one strand of Buddhism, a simple woman's compassion is more valuable than a king's righteous rule. Again, as with the examination of other stories and images circulating in Han China, it is striking that stories and statues of Fishbasket Guanyin flourish *after* the ninth century, not before the Yexian story. If the story draws upon Hindu religious stories such as "Manu and the Fish" and "Rama and Sita," it develops in China and spreads to Japan in a Buddhist context.

The Yexian story illustrates the ethics of the Buddhist "Great Compassion Dharani Sutra," whose popularity spread in the Tang Dynasty along with belief in the Guanyin Bodhisattva (C. Yu 2001:273-75). The following evocative passage illuminates the Yexian story: "If the Mantra-holder dwells and sleeps alone in an uninhabited mountain or wilderness, those virtuous gods will guard him by turns to eliminate misfortunes. If the Mantra-holder loses his way deep in the mountain and recites this Mantra, the virtuous gods and dragon-kings will transform themselves into virtuous people and tell him the correct way" (Chen Silfong 2007:9). The Yexian story gives narrative form to the symbolic connection between the human and the divine at a time of anguish. Mair translates the key phrase in the Yexian story as "she wept in the wilderness" (2005:365), a word choice that sounds Biblical (see Isaiah 40) but also evokes the language of this sutra, for Yexian figuratively dwells alone in an uninhabited "wilderness." In the Zhuang world, gods and dragon-kings interact, and if in the story of Bubo gods and dragons get chased and their whiskers pulled, in the Yexian story gods and dragons appear as a rough person from the sky and a very small fish and offer solace in the midst of the terrors and loneliness life may offer.

It should not be necessary to emphasize that the Lotus Sutra and the Great Compassion Dharani Sutra are Asian texts; the evidence here supports the contention that the origins of the Yexian/Cinderella story lie in Asia, defined as east of Afghanistan, not in Biblical lands or texts further west. To say that the Yexian story resonates with stories of a female Guanyin who rewards compassion is not to deny resemblances to other religious traditions. Chun-fang Yu notes that eventually the female Guanyin is pictured in statues that resemble Madonna and child; these statues are taken back to Italy in the sixteenth century by Jesuits because of the resemblance. Both Christianity and Mahayana Buddhism spread their religious messages through parables; the narratives spread widely because the hope they offer is not restricted to the lucky or the strong. Buddhism and Confucianism both value reciprocal kindness; the Confucian term "ren" is traditionally translated as benevolence. But the conclusion is not warranted that the

Yexian/Cinderella story could have emerged from any world religion regardless of time and place.

The Zhuang Yexian and the European Cinderella

Since my intent is to put the Yexian story in an Asian context, I am hesitant to turn from Yexian to her many younger "Cinderella" sisters in the West. I do hope this Asian analysis will provoke more research into the Zhuang context and history. Yet because many readers may be primarily curious about the connections, I offer the following:

First, it should be reiterated that the Yexian story has been accepted as a complete example of "Cinderella" Type 501A; this paper has demonstrated that the Zhuang story contains the motifs Cox (1893) and Aarne-Thompson (in Dundes 1982:vii) delineated for a story to be in this category: ill-treated stepdaughter, fairy godmother, fancy dress, banquet, identification through a shoe, and triumphant marriage. Further, after Anna Birgitta Rooth's work there is growing acceptance that connections among stories with this degree of shared motifs are ones of diffusion (*ibid.*:xv). One of the earliest "Cinderella" Type 501A stories to be recorded in Europe is Giambattista Basile's, published between 1634 and 1636 in Naples. Basile's story begins as a doting father hires a tutor to teach his daughter "small chain work, open sewing, hem work and fringes" (Zipes 2001:444). Part of the otherworldly aspect of the European story is that such details seem random, for sewing is never mentioned again; Yexian's golden shoe, no longer soft as dawn, becomes for Basile "iron drawn to a magnet" when it flies to the girl's foot (449). Another transformation occurs when the reference to a kingfisher, commonly translated as "halcyon" (meaning peaceful) in Europe, appears as a dove in Basile's story. In both cases, words that could signify simply colors (gold and blue) are taken literally as metal and bird by the European storyteller, as they are by many translators of the Yexian story into English. These parallels in motifs, narrative arc, and odd detail (such as the need to have a heroine who can sew) make it very likely that the Zhuang version influenced the European stories. It is not a single transmission, however, because details in Yexian's story (the golden slipper, for example) appear in the later Grimm version but not in Basile, and so on.

The question then becomes, if the seminal version was written down in China c. 850, why does "Cinderella" Type 501A begin to spread in Europe after the 1650s? In the 1580s there was a new woodblock printing of Duan Chengshi's miscellany, *Youyang zazu* (Reed 2003:40 and 2001:3-4); because the *Youyang zazu* contained many fantastic stories of the "strange," the book was popular in China and many copies are extant from the 1580s onward, including a 1608 copy in Tokyo (Reed 2003:32). Chieko Irie Mulhern believes that the upsurge in "Cinderella" stories in Japan can be traced to Japanese-speaking Italian Jesuits between 1570 and 1614 (Mulhern 1985:2). Mulhern even guesses that they might have spread the story from the Duan Chengshi version. Jesuits were clearly in China as early as 1552 when the Spanish Jesuit St. Francis Xavier lived a year on the Chinese island of Shangchuan off the south coast of China. Matteo Ricci and other Italian Jesuits, who read Chinese well, were in China after 1582. I do not believe, however, that Jesuits alone could have told the Yexian story to Basile, since in his hands it loses the theme of compassion and becomes bawdy (iron to magnet, indeed). This chronological evidence,

however, does suggest one simple and possible answer as to how a Tang Dynasty story could have reached Europe by the 1630s: by boat. By the early seventeenth century, many Italian sailors, merchants, and other travelers, including Jesuits, could easily have had access to these tales from a coastal area or from the Chinese capital via printed versions. The transmission to a port such as Venice or Naples, with the story retold in many different ways, is a totally logical surmise.

Concluding Reflections

This paper suggests that the Yexian/Cinderella story has resonated in many cultures around the world because it draws upon symbols, motifs, and narrative actions honed by a number of Asian cultures over centuries. The story is from a borderland, a dividing point between China and Vietnam, between East Asia and Southeast Asia, and between areas that adopted, adapted, or resisted Buddhist or Hindu religious and political ideology. Northrop Frye (1974) has discussed the power of "secular scriptures," a term he created to convey the power of popular narratives, specifically fairy tales, to shape beliefs, attitudes, and actions in the West. In order to recognize its powerful Eastern origins, the Yexian story should be considered a secular sutra. But I am not simply concluding that the story embeds the different Hindu, Zhuang, Han Chinese, and Buddhist traditions equally.

It is true that the Asian contexts provide alternate possibilities: problems with rivalries among wives and their children could come from the culturally dominant *Ramayana* or from stories of the displaced and impoverished Zhuang or from the Han Chinese court of Yang Guifei; the lost golden slipper could be taken either from stories of Sita's lost anklet and Rama's golden sandals or merely from the excellent slippers made by Zhuang women with their golden thread; the red-finned carp with golden eyes is either a variant of stories of Manu, Hanuman, Buddhist, and Jataka stories of a Bodhisattva incarnate, or it is simply a small fish caught by a young Zhuang girl who changed a region's economy through her nurture. The lovely blue dress is either made of flashing kingfisher feathers described in famous Han-Chinese romantic narratives of imperial love, or it is simply the product of superlative Zhuang dying techniques. Wherever the king came from—a mythical land such as Ravana's Lanka, a local Chinese island, or across the South China Sea—there is no reason to consider this king not an integral representative of Asia's literary/religious tradition or its geographical realm.

It is possible that these interpretations fit together as pieces in one puzzle rather than as competing interpretations, giving different perspectives that enrich the story. At the center of this puzzle, I place the Zhuang storyteller. My hypothesis holds that there are three or four separate story strands combined in the Yexian story. The first two, I believe, have roots in Hindu religious narratives: the *Manu* story emphasizes a fish, reciprocal rescue of those who are compassionate, and a flood washing away the hard-hearted. The second *Ramayana* story concerns a stepmother who prefers her biological child over the husband's first child; the stepchild's neglect is marked by a loss of clothing except for golden footwear that leads to recognition by a god in the form of an animal, and to royal marriage. Both of these stories justify monarchy by demonstrating that the king or queen are both moral and divine. These two Hindu stories could have combined

before entering Zhuang territory; they are at least one thousand years older than the Yexian Tang Dynasty story.

What is missing from this combined story that the Yexian ninth-century story provides, giving the "Cinderella" story such popularity and power? A third story entails a poor girl reaching maturity who wants to go to a festival to gain a good husband and have a full, enjoyable life. She is told to do chores at home, but she produces a beautiful blue dress, tricks her parent, runs off, and stuns everyone in sight. This satisfying story, I suggest, is not from India or from Han China. What are the crucial components that the Zhuang contributed? These contributions are more significant than the details of sewing, blue dye, golden thread, fit of shoe, or festival that the Zhuang claim as cultural markers. The Zhuang contributions are essential to the story's popularity, especially in counterpoint to dominant world religions, whether Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian, or Judeo-Christian.

The first significant Zhuang contribution would be to make the Yexian/Cinderella story secular. There are no direct references to Bodhisattva or a god. That the Zhuang scholars immediately dismissed Buddhist interpretations is a strong indicator that the loss of an explicit religious tradition occurred in Zhuang territory among a people who have resisted hegemonic religions and maintained animist and ancestor beliefs for the past few thousand years. Something we call magic replaces institutionalized religion in this story—the supernatural elements are surprising, puzzling, odd, entertaining, delightful, and gratifying. They are not explained by a coherently structured ideology within the story.

The second point is that the Yexian story ends with royal marriage but does not justify royal government—the kingdom is elsewhere, the king and queen do not rule over the home territory, and the king is greedy. The Zhuang of Guangxi not only resisted Hindu and Buddhist religions; they also resisted imperial, divine rule justified by ideologies backed by the Chinese "Mandate of Heaven" or Rama's dharma. Marriage to the "king" in the Yexian story serves only to rescue the girl from poverty and loneliness and to recognize her goodness. Rama, Sita, and Manu are royal by birth; Yexian may have been a tribal leader's daughter, but this story values the working class more than the aristocracy.

The third major point that recurs in my paper relates to gender. Manu and Rama are exemplars of morality and the centers of their Hindu stories (regardless of how fascinating Sita may be to many). Here the point of view shifts to a woman's worldview—it is a woman's loss of parents, her goodness, her sorrow, her rescue, her resourcefulness, her willful refusal to stay home, her activity, and her triumph. In the same time period that the Bodhisattva figure becomes female in the larger East Asian region, here the guardian figure who comes out of the blue, the "witch" as the Zhuang scholars would have it, appears to be female and perhaps a real living person with some pragmatic counsel about fishbones. The reciprocal compassion that the story endorses is generational; the "Cinderella" of today becomes the "fairy godmother" of tomorrow. The possibility of being a cruel stepmother is countered by another female role—that of generous, benevolent caregiver—not because she is the biological mother or even grandmother, but because she responds to the sorrow of another just as a child responds spontaneously and saves a small animal. Among many Zhuang stories women seem to be the protagonists, the moral center, the singers, and the storytellers.

The fourth point is the optimism in this story. I recently heard a presenter at an academic conference confidently overgeneralize that significant world "myths" explain human suffering, the tragic human condition. This story, however, is comic rather than tragic, of spring rather than winter, and of youth instead of maturity or old age. For the girl the story ends triumphantly; the story affirms joy of living—joy in clothing, festival, or husband. The Zhuang live along Peach Blossom River; their stories seem utopian; they play as well as work; they valorize fishing and farming. They value the aesthetics of their landscape and their visual arts.

My final point has to do with the delight in the beauty of the little fish with golden eyes and a red dorsal fin. The Zhuang live in a natural world where the border between human and animal is blurred, especially in creatures of the water. These precious fish represent the girl, her dead mother, and her god-mother (shaman or witch), who comes to her rescue. The fish is the symbol of female fertility with the baby inside it. The importance of semi-domesticated red carp emerged in Zhuang territory, and in the century when this story was told, certain red carp became taboo. The Manu story supplies the narrative sequence of raising the fish, but Manu's fish is not lovely.

I suggest that these five points have much to do with the popularity of the Yexian/ Cinderella story: the protagonist is secular, everyday, female, adolescent, virginal, lonely, kind-hearted, a lover of animals and of beautiful things. To be Cinderella she must live happily ever after in this world, not in an afterlife. Such a story can retain its popularity on the margins of any culture because it does not ostensibly threaten a dominant religion, but what kind of culture would have created it? Regardless of what analogues might have existed and been on the move in other parts of the world, the Zhuang of the Tang Dynasty fit the requisite attributes. My thesis is that it is time that we acknowledge the Zhuang as primary creators of the "Cinderella" story as the world now knows it.

What might be more controversial than my account of the genesis of the Yexian/ Cinderella story is the indication that various Buddhist and Han Chinese beliefs, stories, and practices prominent after the ninth century in China incorporated motifs from this Zhuang tale. In the many scientific articles of aquaculture, scholars associate the Zhuang's raising of red Oujiang carp with Buddhist Ponds of Mercy and with the raising of Koi and goldfish. No aquaculturalist, however, associated Zhuang's techniques of raising red carp, Ponds of Mercy, Koi, and goldfish with the Yexian story, nor has any folklorist or literary critic. The Zhuang scholars of Nanning did not make this association, perhaps because they are university professors in a city and are not Buddhist and do not associate Buddhism with being Zhuang. Han Chinese do not associate the lucky red carp with any Indian religion; they refer to the story of Yangzi River sturgeon or Yellow River carp struggling upstream—red is a lucky *Chinese* color. Han Chinese stories of a dragon becoming a little fish and then returning as a jovial Dragon King, as in *Journey to the West*, are seen as quintessentially Chinese, with some dragons symbolizing the Emperor. I don't think it will be easily accepted that the story of Yexian transformed into stories of the Fishbasket Guanyin.

I suggest two different trajectories for the Yexian story in China. The first trajectory follows a written text. It is clear from Carrie Reed's research that the c. 850 version remained intact because Duan Chengshi recorded it in classical Chinese, and one printed copy led to another. In the second, oral trajectory, I conclude that the story diverges into many paths. One

oral tradition leads to stories of the Fishbasket Guanyin, eventually old, unattractive, and willing to maim herself to benefit others.[19] A different oral tradition leads to the youthful, egotistical, mischievous Monkey-King. In the sixteenth century Yexian's story and the Monkey-King's *Journey to the West* were both available throughout China in published books with wide circulation. The Yexian version written in Chinese maintained the "Cinderella" Type 501A at the same time as other versions, labeled Catskin or Cap o' Rushes, diverged and developed other themes through oral transmission in Asia and/or Europe. Type 501A remains more of a morality tale: if one acts humanely, spontaneously, and simply, even when the world seems a desolate wilderness, one will be rewarded with all the beauty the world can bestow. Regardless of what happened to the story after the Tang Dynasty, the evidence I have analyzed supports Duan Chengshi's assertion that his source was Li Shiyuan, and I believe that the c. 850 story reflects the history, concerns, and cultural interactions in Guangxi Province during the Tang Dynasty.

If any ethnic group, however, has lived in isolation, it was not the Zhuang of Guangxi in the Tang Dynasty; they were connected to cultural centers north, south, east, and west by routes well traveled by traders, armies, bureaucrats, poets, and monks. My theory is that the Zhuang created this story out of their values, needs, experiences, and delights, weaving a tapestry with story-threads that reached their shores directly or indirectly from India by the ninth century. Tang Dynasty politics—including women such as Yang Guifei becoming consorts at the Tang Dynasty capital of Xi'an and the economic stresses emanating from a wealthy powerful court—made the story relevant. I further suggest that much later in the sixteenth century a Westerner on board a ship learned this story at a time when Chinese were talking about a new, printed edition of the ninth-century written Yexian story. After that boatload of European sailors, Jesuits, or merchants reached home, the story quickly embarked to new destinations, spreading from Italy throughout Europe and the world. "Fairy tale" is now used pejoratively to mean something that is false. How different is a world view where acts of compassion lead to happiness? Paraphrasing Zhuangzi, it is only when we stand on the bank of the river that we know the happiness of fish. "Cinderella" may be a story of universal appeal, but we should be able to see Yexian from the point of view, from a riverbank, of the Zhuang.

Community College of Philadelphia

References

Anderson 2000   Graham Anderson. "The Cinderella Story in Antiquity." In *Fairytale in the Ancient World*. Ed. by Graham Anderson. London: Routledge. pp. 24-42.

---

[19] The "Fishbasket Guanyin" stories diminished in popularity; I accept Ting's conclusion that the Duan Chengshi version led to the variety of oral stories collected in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries throughout Asia; transmission of these variant oral stories could have moved gradually through the Middle East to Europe as Rooth concluded, but this does not explain why there are no written "Cinderella" stories in any of its variants written down in the Middle East and Europe between the hints in Strabo's first-century version and Basile's "La Gatta Cenerentola" of 1634. This paper cannot encompass the study of all the European and Middle Eastern versions that Anna Birgitta Rooth mapped so rigorously in the 1950s (see Dundes 1982:129-47), but I would suggest that a proliferation of "Cinderella" variants spread from European ports after 1550.

Anderson 2003   _____. "Finding the First Fairy Tales." In Davidson and Chaudhri 2003:85-98.

Backus 1981   Charles Backus. *The Nan-chao Kingdom and T'ang China's Southwestern Frontier.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ball 1927/2004   Katherine M. Ball. *Animal Motifs in Asian Art: An Illustrated Guide to Their Meanings and Aesthetics.* Rpt. Mineola, NY: Dover.

Balon 2004   E. K. Balon. "About the Oldest Domesticates among Fishes." *Journal of Fish Biology*, 65:1-27.

Barlow 2005   Jeffrey Barlow. *The Zhuang: A Longitudinal Study of Their History and Their Culture*. http://mcel.pacificu.edu/as/resources/zhuang/index.html

Barrett 1999   T. H. Barrett. "Edwardian Theatre and the Lost Shape of Asia: Some Remarks on Behalf of a Cinderella Subject." Sixtieth George Ernest Morrison Lecture on Ethnology. http://ips.cap.anu.edu.au/psc/ccc/morrison/morrison60.pdf

Beauchamp 2004   Fay Beauchamp. "East Asian Attitudes toward Court Women: The Legend of Yang Guifei." Expanding East Asia Project Website, Columbia University. http://www.exeas.org

Bettelheim 1976   Bruno Bettelheim. *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales.* New York: Knopf.

Birrell 1993   Anne M. Birrell. *Chinese Mythology: An Introduction.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Blackburn 1996   Stuart Blackburn. "The Brahmin and the Mongoose: The Narrative Context of a Well-Travelled Tale." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, 59.3:494-507.

Bose 2003   Mandakranta Bose, ed. *Ramayana Culture: Text, Performance and Iconography.* New Delhi: D. K. Printworld.

Bose 2004   _____, ed. *The Ramayana Revisited.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brockington 2003   Mary Brockington. "The Fairy Tale in South Asia: The Same Only Different." In Davidson and Chaudhri 2003:239-52.

Campbell 1951/1990   Joseph Campbell. *The Flight of the Wild Gander: Explorations in the Mythological Dimensions of Fairy Tales, Legends, and Symbols.* Rpt. New York: Harper.

Silfong Chen 2007   Silfong Chen, trans. "Great Compassion Dharani Sutra," Tripitaka No. 1060.

Si Lu Chen 2007   Si Lu Chen. Personal guide in the Guilin area, November 7-12, 2007.

China Daily 2009   "Rains Kill 21, Leave 700,000 Homeless in China." *China Daily*. July 7, 2009.

Costa-Pierce 1987   Barry A. Costa-Pierce. "Aquaculture in Ancient Hawaii." *BioScience*, 37.5:320-31.

Cowell 1957   E. B. Cowell, ed. *The Jataka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*. Trans. by H. T. Francis and R. A. Neil. 6 vols. London: Luzac.

Cox 1893   M. E. R. Cox. *Cinderella: Three Hundred and Forty-Five Variants of Cinderella, Catskin, and Cap O'Rushes*. Intro. by Andrew Lang. London. http://www.surlalunefairytales.com/cinderella/marianroalfecox/index.html

Cullen 2003   Bonnie Cullen. "For Whom the Shoe Fits: Cinderella in the Hands of Victorian Illustrators and Writers." *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 27.1:57-82.

Daruma Museum 2007   http://Darumamuseumgallery.blogspot.com/2007/08/kannon-with-fish-basket.html

Davidson and Chaudhri 2003   Hilda Ellis Davidson and Anna Chaudhri, eds. *A Companion to the Fairy Tale*. Cambridge: Brewer.

de Bary and Bloom 1999   William Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom, eds. *Sources of Chinese Tradition from Earliest Times to 1600*. 2nd ed. New York: Columbia University Press.

Desai 1970   Santosh N. Desai. "Ramayana—An Instrument of Historical Contact and Cultural Transmission between India and Asia." *Journal of Asian Studies,* 30.1:5-20.

Doniger 2009   Wendy Doniger. *The Hindus: An Alternate History*. New York: Penguin Press.

Dudbridge 1970   Glen Dudbridge. *The Hsi-yu Chi: A Study of Antecedents to the Sixteenth-Century Chinese Novel.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dundes 1982   Alan Dundes. *Cinderella: A Folklore Casebook*. New York: Garland.

Eggeling 1882   Julius Eggeling, trans. *Satapatha Brahmana, Part 1*. Sacred Books of the East, 12. http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/sbr/sbe12/sbe1234.htm

Fan et al. 2007   Hunggui Fan, Xing Qiu Huang, and Xueguan Nong. Interviews held in Nanning, People's Republic of China, November 13, 2007.

Ferguson 2000   James Ferguson. "Nanning and Guangxi: China's Gateway to the South-West." *Culture Mandala: The Bulletin of the Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies,* 4:1-22.

Frye 1974   Northrop Frye. *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

R. Goldman 2007   R. P. Goldman. Unpublished lecture at Community College of Philadelphia, May 2007.

R. Goldman and S. Goldman 1996   _____ and Sally J. Sutherland Goldman. *Ramayana: Sundara Kanda.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Griswold 1919   Florence Griswold. *Hindu Fairy Tales.* London: Harrap.

Harrell 2001   Stevan Harrell. *Ways of Being Ethnic in Southwest China.* Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Jameson 1932/1982   R. D. Jameson. "Cinderella in China." In Dundes 1982:71-97.

Kam 2000   Garrett Kam. *Ramayana in the Arts of Asia.* Singapore: Select Books.

Kaup 2000   Katherine Palmer Kaup. *Creating the Zhuang: Ethnic Politics in China.* Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

Kaup 2007   _____, ed. *Understanding Contemporary Asia Pacific.* Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

Kroll 1984   Paul W. Kroll. "The Image of the Halcyon Kingfisher in Medieval Chinese Poetry." *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 104.2:237-51.

Levy 2002   Michael M. Levy. "What if Your Fairy Godmother Were An Ox? The Many Cinderellas of Southeast Asia." *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 24.2:173-87.

Li 1961   Su Li (Director), Qiao Yu (Screenplay). *Third Sister Liu.* (Pinyan: *Liu San Jie*). Changchun Film, China.

Lu and Li 2006   Jianbo Lu and Xia Li. "Review of Rice-fish Farming Systems in China—One of the Globally Important Ingenious Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS)." *Aquaculture,* 260:106-13.

Mair 1989   Victor H. Mair. "Sun Wu Kong = Hanumat? The Progress of a Scholarly Debate." In *Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Sinology, Section on Literature*. Taipei: Academia Sinica. pp. 659-752.

Mair 2005   _____, trans. "The First Recorded Cinderella Story." In *Hawai'i Reader in Traditional Chinese Culture*. Ed. by Victor H. Mair, Nancy Steinhardt, and Paul R. Goldin. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. pp. 362-67.

Mair 2007   _____. Conversation. December 19, 2007.

Mackerras 2007   Colin Mackerras. "The Historical Context." In Kaup 2007:33-75.

Mehta 2004   Julie B. Mehta. "The *Ramayana* in the Arts of Thailand and Cambodia." In Bose 2004:323-34.

Miller 1995   Lucien Miller, ed. *South of the Clouds: Tales from Yunnan*. Trans. by Guo Xu, Lucien Miller, and Xu Kun. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Mulhern 1985   Chieko Irie Mulhern. *"*Analysis of Cinderella Motifs, Italian and Japanese*." Asian Folklore Studies*, 44.1:1-37.

Owen 1996   Stephen Owen, ed. and trans. "Interlude: Xuanzong and Yang the Prized Consort." In *An Anthology of Chinese Literature*. New York: Norton. pp. 441-57.

Palandri 1977   Angela C. Y. Jung Palandri. *Yuan Chen*. Boston: Twayne.

Philip 1989   Neil Philip. *The Cinderella Story: The Origins and Variations of the Story Known as "Cinderella."* London: Penguin.

Pollock 1986   S. I. Pollock. *Ramayana: Ayodhya Kanda*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Pulleyblank 1955   E. G. Pulleyblank. *The Background of the Rebellion of An Lu-shan*. London: Oxford University Press.

Reed 2001   Carrie E. Reed. *Chinese Chronicles of the Strange: The "Nuogao ji."* New York: Peter Lang.

Reed 2003   _____. *A Tang Miscellany: An Introduction to Youyang zazu*. New York: Peter Lang.

Reed 2008   _____. March 25. E-mail exchange.

Schaefer 2003   Pat Schaefer. "Unknown Cinderella: The Contribution of Marian Roalfe Cox to the Study of the Fairy Tale." In Davidson and Chaudhri 2003:137-47.

Schafer 1967   Edward H. Schafer. *The Vermilion Bird: T'ang Images of the South.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Stevens 1990   Keith G. Stevens. "Chinese Local Semi-Divine Deities: Deification in Chinese Folk Religion." *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 30. http://sunzi.lib.hku.hk/hkjo/view/44/4401686.pdf

Sutherland Goldman 2003   Sally J. Sutherland. "Anklets Away: The Symbolism of Jewelery and Ornamentation in Valmiki's Ramayana." In Bose 2003:139-74.

Tan 1994   Chung Tan, ed. *Dunhuang Art Through the Eyes of Duan Wenjie.* New Delhi: Abhinav Publications.

Ting 1974   Nai-Tung Ting. *The Cinderella Cycle in China and Indo-China.* Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica.

Tyler 2001   Royall Tyler, trans. *The Tale of Genji*. By Murasaki Shikibu. New York: Viking.

Waley 1947   Arthur Waley. "The Chinese Cinderella Story." *Folklore*, 58:226-38.

Waley 1963   _____, trans. and ed. "The Chinese Cinderella Story." In *The Secret History of the Mongols and Other Pieces*. London: George Allen. pp. 147-62.

Waley 1929/1993   _____, trans. *The Tale of Genji,* by Lady Murasaki Shikibu. New York: Modern Library.

Walker 1998   Hera S. Walker. "Indigenous or Foreign? A Look at the Origins of the Monkey Hero Sun Wukong." *Sino-Platonic Papers*, 81.

Wang and Li 1974   Cheng-hui Wang and Si-fa Li. "Phylogenetic Relationships of Ornamental (Koi) Carp, Oujiang Color Carp and Long-fin Carp Revealed by Mitochondrial DNA COII Gene Sequences and RAPD analysis." *Aquaculture*, 231:1-4 (March): 83-91.

Williams 1976   C. A. S. Williams. *Outlines of Chinese Symbolism and Art Motives: An Alphabetical Compendium of Antique Legends and Beliefs, as Reflected in the Manners and Customs of the Chinese.* 3rd ed. New York: Dover.

Xiao et al. 2006   Xiaoming Xiao et al. *Guangxi: Land of Wonders and Beauty.* Beijing: Foreign
                             Languages Press.

Xin et al. 1997   Yang Xin et al. *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting.* New Haven: Yale
                             University Press.

A. Yu 1977   Anthony C. Yu, trans. and ed. *The Journey to the West.* Vol. 1. Chicago:
                             University of Chicago Press.

C. Yu 2001   Chun-fang Yu. *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara.* New
                             York: Columbia University Press.

Zhang and Zeng 1993   Weiwen Zhang and Qingnan Zeng. *In Search of China's Minorities.* Beijing:
                             New World Press.

Zhang 2007   Zhang Yimou, director and producer. *Third Sister Liu,* a folk musical based on a
                             1961 film *Liu San Jie*.

Zipes 2001   Jack Zipes. *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition: From Straparola and Basile to the
                             Brothers Grimm.* New York: Norton.

Appendix A[20]

Among the people of the south there is a tradition that before the Ch'in and Han dynasties there was a cave-master called Wu. The aborigines called the place the Wu cave. He married two wives. One wife died. She had a daughter Yeh-hsien, who from childhood was intelligent and good at making [pottery on the wheel]. Her father loved her. After some years the father died, and she was ill-treated by her stepmother, who always made her collect firewood in dangerous places and draw water from deep pools.

She once got a fish about two inches long, with red fins and golden eyes. She put it into a bowl of water. It grew bigger every day, and after she had changed the bowl several times she could find no bowl big enough for it, so she threw it into the back pond. Whatever food was left over from meals she put it into the water to feed it. When she came to the pond, the fish always exposed its head and pillowed it on the bank; but when anyone else came, it did not come out. The stepmother knew about this, but when she watched for it, it did not once appear. She tricked the girl, saying, "Haven't you worked hard! I am going to give you a new dress." She then made the girl change out of her tattered clothing. Afterwards she sent her to get water from another spring and reckoning that it was several hundred leagues, the stepmother at her leisure put on her daughter's clothes, hid a sharp blade up her sleeve, and went to the pond. She called to the fish. The fish at once put its head out, and she chopped it off and killed it. The fish was now more than ten feet long. She served it up and it tasted twice as good as an ordinary fish. She left the bones under the dung-hill.

_____

[20] The following translation of the Yexian story is from Waley 1963:147-62.

Next day, when the girl came to the pond, no fish appeared. She howled with grief in the open countryside, and suddenly there appeared a man with his hair loose over his shoulders and coarse clothes. He came down from the sky. He consoled her, saying, "Don't howl! Your stepmother had killed the fish and its bones are under the dung. You go back, take the fish's bones and hide them in your room. Whatever you want, you have only to pray to them for it. It is bound to be granted." The girl followed his advice, and was able to provide herself with gold, pearls, dresses and food whenever she wanted them.

When the time came for the cave-festival, the stepmother went, leaving the girl to keep watch over the fruit-trees in the garden. She waited till the stepmother was some way off, and then went herself, wearing a cloak of stuff spun from kingfisher feather and shoes of gold. Her stepsister recognized her and said to the stepmother, "That's very like my sister." The stepmother suspected the same thing. The girl was aware of this and went away in such a hurry that she lost one shoe. It was picked up by one of the people of the cave. When the stepmother got home, she found the girl asleep, with her arms round one of the trees in the garden, and thought no more about it.

This cave was near to an island in the sea. On this island was a kingdom called T'o-han. Its soldiers had subdued twenty or thirty other islands and it had a coastline of several thousand leagues. The cave-man sold the shoe in T'o-han, and the ruler of T'o-han got it. He told those about him to put it on; but it was an inch too small even for the one among them that had the smallest foot. He ordered all the women in his kingdom to try it on; but there was not one that it fitted. It was light as down and made no noise even when treading on stone. The king of T'o-han thought the cave-man had got it unlawfully. He put him in prison and tortured him, but did not end by finding out where it had come from. So he threw it down at the wayside. (Here the text is corrupt, and the tale becomes unclear.) Then they went everywhere through all the people's houses and arrested them. If there was a woman's shoe, they arrested them and told the king of T'o-han. He thought it strange, searched the inner-rooms and found Yeh-hsien. He made her put on the shoes, and it was true.

Yeh-hsien then came forward, wearing her cloak spun from halcyon feathers and her shoes. She was as beautiful as a heavenly being. She now began to render service to the king, and he took the fish-bones and Yeh-Hsien, and brought them back to his country. The stepmother and stepsister were shortly afterwards struck by flying stones, and died. The cave people were sorry for them and buried them in a stone-pit, which was called the Tomb of the Distressed Women. The men of the cave made mating-offerings there; any girl they prayed for there, they got. The king of T'o-han, when he got back to his kingdom, made Yeh-Hsien his chief wife. The first year the king was very greedy and by his prayers to the fish-bones got treasure and jade without limit. Next year, there was no response, so the king buried the fish-bones on the sea-shore. He covered them with a hundred bushels of pearls and bordered them with gold. Later there was a mutiny of some soldiers who had been conscripted and their general opened (the hiding-place) in order to make better provision for his army. One night they (the bones) were washed away by the tide.

This story was told me by Li Shih-yuan, who has been in the service of my family a long while. He was himself originally a man from the caves of Yung-chou and remembers many strange things of the South.

Appendix B: The Zhuang Story of "Bubo": Yexian and "Manu and the Fish"

An episodic long story of "Bubo" labeled a "Zhuang Myth from Guangxi Province" concerning a thunder god and a flood is translated by Guo Xu, Lucien Miller, and Xu Kun from a version originally published in *Zhuangzu minjian gushi xuan*, vol.1, 1982, 8-19, collector and redactor: Lan Hongen (Han) (Miller 1995). The story has ties to the fish subplot of the Yexian text, not to the elements most associated in the West with the "Cinderella"

story: there is no stepmother, stepsister, neglected child, festival, animal, supernatural helper, shoe, dress, or royal marriage. This is primarily a male story with a male thunder god, a male headman called Bubo trying to control the god, and a pair of children, with the son receiving slightly more attention than the daughter, although they act in unison.

What is most germane in the story comes at the end: "When the Dragon King had his beard pulled out, he ran back into the lake. Since then, his children have only two scraps of beard on their faces. You've all seen carp, haven't you? Don't they have two little beards?" (Miller 1995:150). The story of small carp growing into the water Dragon King therefore appears to be well known to the Zhuang. The story takes place in a watery world, where Bubo tries to bring rain to his fields, crops, and cattle, but ends by causing a catastrophic flood instead.

This flood myth reinforces the interpretation of the Yexian story that a "flood" rather than a "tide" wipes away the gold and pearls, and also supports the legitimacy of comparing the Yexian story to the Hindu "Manu and the Fish." The survivors of the Bubo flood are the two children whom the Thunder God spares "to repay you for kindly saving my life." The boy and his sister escape in a boat cleverly made from a large gourd. The reciprocal act of rescue defines both "Manu and the Fish" and the Yexian story (and separates the story from that of Noah, who does not first rescue "God"). The two children (after a few objections that sound modern) marry. Their child is a fleshball with no eyes, mouth, hands, or feet. Once minced up as a monster, the pieces become the world's men and women. I would compare this Zhuang egg-like homunculus with the P'an Ku creation myth that Anne Birrell states "originated in south-west [China] and is probably of non-Chinese origin" (1993:307).

The Zhuang description of the Thunder God ties him to other Asian gods. He "had a pair of wings on his back" and carries a "broad ax and a chisel," and with these he goes around "splitting and cutting, whenever his anger flared" (137). The Thunder God in Japan is called Raijin. Raijin is a widely popular Japanese figure and has humorous aspects like his character in this Zhuang story. In Japan's Sanjusangendo Temple there is a thirteenth-century statue that includes Raijin figured clutching a hammer with the talons of a bird attached to human arms and legs. The statue (along with a wind god) is described in the following way in the temple's literature: "These two gods are based on Hindu deities (Skt. = Vayu and Varun) and Chinese deities (Fengshe 風神 and Leigong 雷公) (http://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/f/fuujinraijin.htm).

The Zhuang story explains that Bubo swipes off the feet of the Thunder God, and that the Thunder God replaces them with chicken feet and keeps on stomping around; this resembles Raijin's feet. While the notes in Miller's book say that "Leiwang" is "absent from both Han and other southwestern minority cultures, the god of thunder is a semidivine, semihuman ancestor of the Zhuang" (1995:150), he is known in Chinese folklore as the Thunder God Leigong. Leigong has a hammer and a chisel and is sometimes described as a woodcutter; he splits wood by hitting the metal chisel, a sound resembling thunder.

How does this story of Bubo support the interpretations of the c. 850 Yexian story offered in this article? 1) It reinforces the conclusion that the Yexian story is deeply concerned with morality; in both cases a usurping, greedy landlord class is punished while ordinary, spontaneously compassionate children are rewarded. 2) In both cases, in the ninth and twentieth centuries, the collector as redactor is "Han" Chinese; there is veiled satire in the stories. 3) The flood in "Bubo" reinforces the interpretation that Yexian derives from the "Manu and the Flood" story because both have the motifs of a small carp that grows into a large water Dragon King; this is a Hindu story because there is no small fish/large fish motif in Noah. 4) The similarities between the Zhuang "Bubo" story and the Yexian story also support the conclusion that the Yexian story is a product of the Zhuang. Zhuang people have adapted Hindu stories that have entered their territory so that it is difficult to see the Hindu origin; in other words, it is a Hindu story told by a non-Hindu.

Appendix C

The following is a summary of reasons for concluding that the Yexian story reflects Tang Dynasty Zhuang creativity, culture, and interaction with other cultures (Hindu, Buddhist, and Han Chinese literary traditions). My investigations support the hypothesis that Duan Chengshi's statement that he received the story from a member of a tribal community of Nanning is accurate and not fictional. The reasons 1-7 below summarize why the informant should be considered Zhuang.

1. The c. 850 text says that the storyteller Li Shiyuan was from Nanning. Since the Tang Dynasty, the Zhuang have been the great majority of the ethnic peoples in and around Nanning and in Guangxi Province. (The proportion of Zhuang to any other single minority ethnic group in Guangxi is now roughly thirteen million to ten thousand.)

2. The collector Duan lived in and near Nanning for periods of his life.

3. Because of Han Chinese dominance in Nanning by the Tang Dynasty, it is logical that the Han Chinese collector would have a servant who was of the subordinated minority group.

4. There is a cluster of related arguments about the term "cave-dweller" used to describe Li Shiyuan, Yexian, and Yexian's father; Waley and Mair agree that the term means a tribal or aborigine group; Barlow explicitly (and independently) says the Chinese character "cave" was confused with the term used for Zhuang native settlements.

5. The term Zhuang has been used for Tai speakers and there is evidence in the story of linguistic terms from the Tai language group, according to Mair.

6. The Zhuang associate themselves (linguistically, culturally, and politically) with some minority groups (Nong/Nung) in Vietnam, and Vietnam has been cited as a source of the "Cinderella" story since Cox's nineteenth-century world research. Vietnamese versions have also been emphasized by the Chinese scholar Ting. As noted, South Vietnam had a temple dedicated to Valmiki in the seventh century; Northern Vietnam considered itself the kingdom of Dasaratha, Rama's father (Desai 1970:9).

7. In addition to all these factors, the Zhuang scholars in Nanning claimed the story as their own and emphasized the blue clothing, women's traditions courting with shoes, fishbones placed in a bowl, and so on. They took great pride in the story. (I should add here that a group of six guides, who identified themselves as Han Chinese from Guangxi Province, when asked about the Yexian story in 2007 and shown a picture book with the text in Chinese, all said they had never heard of the story, even from Disney's version.)

A main point of my paper, however, is that in analyzing evidence that ultimately supports Duan's statement that the storyteller was from an ethnic group native to Nanning, and that the group is Zhuang, I am not saying the Yexian story was produced by uniquely "Zhuang" customs, beliefs, traditions, narratives, and history. Instead, my main point is that the story draws upon Zhuang, Hindu, Buddhist, and Han Chinese elements. 1) The Zhuang had absorbed Han Chinese culture for many centuries by the ninth century, and the story also reflects that the Han Chinese Duan Chengshi wrote the story down. 2) The Zhuang, with their links to related groups in Vietnam, were well positioned to transform Hindu narratives, specifically the *Ramayana,* which we know was revered in North and South Vietnam in the seventh century. 3) In the ninth century, Zhuang were also in an area where Buddhist stories of the Guanyin Bodhisattva inspired ritual practice. Regardless of these influences, the story is Zhuang in the same way a Shakespeare play is English even though it may draw upon Greek, Roman, Celtic, or French sources and traditions. The Yexian story itself is not Hindu or Buddhist, even though I believe its greatest value is that of compassion; it is a secular story that does not explain occurrences with reference to any religious system.

I. Hindu

A. Motifs and plot coming from the Hindu *Ramayana:*

1. A father's second wife mistreats the first wife's first child, who is the protagonist.
2. A child of the second wife is unfairly preferred.
3. The protagonist lives in a state of exile marked by tattered clothing.
4. The protagonist is moved to despair.
6. Supernatural animal helpers intervene.
7. The protagonist is identified through a talisman.
8. A royal wedding/ascension to throne resolves the story.

B. Motifs and plot coming from "Manu and the Fish":

1. Hero saves fish.
2. Fish grows immense.
3. Fish saves hero.
4. Flood happens.
5. Bad people are destroyed.

II. Han Chinese words/concepts

A. Words/concepts likely to be attributed to Duan Chengshi's recording of the story:

1. Identification of the storyteller as a "servant."
2. "Before the Qin and the Han" used in "Peach Blossom Spring," and so on.
2. "Cave-dweller" used to signify a non-Han Chinese ethnic group.
3. "Kingfisher" used to describe a blue color and/or draw upon the Han storytelling tradition of neglected/mistreated beautiful women being compared to a bird.
4. "Golden" used as a color or thread; confused with "gold shoes," where the entire shoe can be thought to be made of the metal.
5. Language indicates that the foot is uniquely small.
6. Gaps in the story make transitions seem magical.

B. Other Han beliefs:

1. The Yang Guifei story, with strong "kingfisher" motif, features rivalries at court and a woman who becomes the primary wife of an emperor.
2. Red is a Chinese lucky color; carp and red carp become lucky in Han tradition.
3. In one story the Yangzi River sturgeon going upstream are symbols of perseverance.
4. Tang Dynasty Emperor "Li" forbade the eating of red carp because of Han Chinese linguistic confusion regarding the character for "li."

5. Raising goldfish became a widespread Han activity (after the Tang Dynasty, however).

6. Stories surface in the Han Chinese *Journey to the West* of a small red fish who is or becomes a water dragon; there is also a story of a monkey who is supposed to guard fruit trees.

III. Buddhist Contributions

A. Buddhist Jataka stories:

1. Bodhisattva (or Buddha) enters an animal.

2. An ordinary person reveals compassion (moral goodness) by saving the animal.

3. A person is saved and others are summarily punished by various methods, including stoning.

4. A good person is revealed as a bodhisattva.

5. The form is short and in prose.

6. If the *Ramayana* story was available as a Jataka story ("Sandals of a King"), then other Jataka stories were also likely to be available to the storyteller, who could be either Zhuang or Han Chinese.

B. Buddhist practices surfacing in South China after c. 850 date of Yexian story:

1. Ponds of Mercy appear where small red fish are released to gain merit.

2. The feminine Guanyin (Bodhisattva) is associated with Ponds of Mercy and with women's wishes for healthy children.

3. "Fishbasket Guanyin" is associated with the Lotus Sutra and with a story where a woman wishes for a "good husband" and gets her wish.

C. Buddhist beliefs that were strong in China during the Tang Dynasty:

1. Lotus Sutra tells a parable where the Sea Dragon King's daughter achieves enlightenment. This is a striking departure from other Hindu attitudes toward women. (Also, like Jataka, this is spreading faith through storytelling.)

2. Status of women in general was higher during the Tang Dynasty than at any other time in Chinese history. This is often ascribed to influences from Central Asian ethnic groups rather than Zhuang influence. Uighurs, for example, were Buddhist during the Tang Dynasty.

III. Zhuang Contributions

A. Motifs:

1. *Red Fish.* The Zhuang specifically learned how to raise red Oujiang Carp in the Tang Dynasty; the practices in the terraced wet rice fields was a significant contribution to their ability to survive. This happened in Guangxi Province. (Note: The fish in "Manu and the Fish" is not red.)

2. *Fish bones*

a. The Zhuang fertilize the rice terraces with fishbones.

b. The Zhuang burial practice is to collect the bones of their dead after three years and put them in urns.

(Note: Fishbones are not mentioned in Manu story; the fish explicitly is alive and well at the end of the story.)

3. *Blue Dress*

a. The Zhuang in or near Nanning pride themselves in producing an iridescent blue dye, and it is the signature color for their distinctive clothing.

(Note: No other tradition—Hindu, Buddhist, or Han—tells a story where a woman's dress marks her transformation/triumph).

b. Zhuang women are well known for creative and skilled embroidery and brocade.

4. *Slippers*

a. Zhuang women make slippers that fit their own feet; these have soft soles yet are stiff.

b. Slippers are embroidered/decorated with gold thread.

c. Zhuang courting rituals involve shoes (other minority groups in Guangxi also have courting games where a man matches one shoe with another that the woman owns).

(Note: The shoes in the *Ramayana* are usually translated as sandals, a type of shoe that does not work in a story that pivots on a tightly-fitted closed shoe. One should also note that the fetish of small feet and the practice of foot-binding surfaces in China *after* the Tang Dynasty.)

5. *Festival*

a. The driving desire of the woman in the story is to go to the festival. Many minority groups in Guangxi and elsewhere have large, significant festivals where men and women mingle.

b. The desire to go to a festival in beautiful clothing is not from the *Ramayana,* any Jataka story, or any Han Chinese story that I have encountered.

B. Underlying Zhuang values:

a. Women were valued for being artistically creative and for standing up to domineering authority (*Third Sister Liu*, myths about brocade).

b. The beauty of the natural world is revered. Yexian's fish has not only red fins, but also golden eyes. She responds to beauty; she is rewarded for spontaneously protecting the natural world.

c. Marriage between two people is desired as a primary source for happiness; wanting a wife primarily for economic reasons is wrong.

d. Satire through language—wit, humor, inventiveness, criticism—is valued (song contests).

A Bibliography of Publications by Albert Bates Lord

Morgan E. Grey, Mary Louise Lord, and John Miles Foley

Note: All items listed here can be found in Ellis Library at the University of Missouri, Columbia, either in Special Collections (Ellis 401) or in open stacks (see the affixed call numbers below). Many journals are available online to University of Missouri faculty, staff, and students, and of course through other institutions as well. A full collection of article-length items is maintained in hard copy and on CD in Special Collections.

1936. "Homer and Huso I: The Singer's Rests in Greek and Southslavic Heroic Song." *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 67: 106-113.

1938. "Homer and Huso II: Narrative Inconsistencies in Homer and Oral Poetry." *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 69: 439-445.

1948a. "Homer and Huso III: Enjambment in Greek and Southslavic Heroic Song." *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 79: 113-124.

1948b. "Homer, Parry, and Huso." *American Journal of Archaeology* 52: 34-44.

1950. "The Oral Epic." In *Conference on the Defense of Poetry, August 14-17*, pp. 158-165. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University.

1951a. "Composition by Theme in Homer and Southslavic Epos." *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 82: 71-80.

1951b. "Yugoslav Epic Folk Poetry." *Journal of the International Folk Music Council* 3: 57-61.

1951c. Ed. and trans. with Béla Bartók, *Serbo-Croatian Folk Songs*. New York: Columbia University Press. Location: Despository, 780.9 C723s 7

1953a. "Homer's Originality: Oral Dictated Texts." *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 84: 124-134.

1953b. "Opening Statement, Symposium IV, Fourth Session." In *Four Symposia on Folklore*, ed. Stith Thomspon, pp. 305-311; discussion, pp. 311-323. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. Location: GR40.T45

1953-54. Coll, ed., and trans. with Milman Parry, *Serbocroatian Heroic Songs* (*Srpskohrvatske junačke pjesme*), vols. 1-2: *Novi Pazar*. Cambridge, Mass. and Belgrade: Harvard University Press and the Serbian Academy of Sciences. Location: M1704.P3 S4 6

1954. "Notes on *Digenis Akritas* and Serbo-Croatian Epic." *Harvard Slavic Studies* 2: 375-383. Location: PG13.H3

1956a. "Avdo Medjedović, Guslar." *Journal of American Folklore* 69: 320-330.

1956b. "The Role of Sound Patterns in Serbo-Croatian Epic." In *For Roman Jakobson,* ed. Morris Halle, Horace G. Lunt, Hugh McClean, and Cornelius H. Van Schooneveld, pp. 301-305. The Hague: Mouton. Location: 404 H152f

1956c. Ed., *Slavic Folklore: A Symposium.* Bibliographical and Special Series, 6. Philadelphia: American Folklore Society. Location: GR138.L6 1956

1959. "The Poetics of Oral Creation." In *Comparative Literature: Proceedings of the Second Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association*, ed. Werner P. Friederich, pp. 1-6. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

1960. *The Singer of Tales*. Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature, 24. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. Location: PN1303.L62

1961. *Beginning Serbocroatian*. The Hague: Mouton. Location: PG1231.L6 1961

1962a. "Homeric Echoes in Bihać." *Zbornik za narodni život i običaje južnih slavena* 40: 313-320.

1962b. "Homer and Other Epic Poetry." In *A Companion to Homer*, ed. Alan J. B. Wace and Frank H. Stubbings, pp. 179-214. London: Macmillan. Location: PA4037.A5 W3

1962c. "The Epic Singers." *Atlantic* 210: 126-127.

1962d. "A Comparative Analysis." In *Preface to Umbundu: Folk Tales from Angola*, pp. xiii-xxix. Boston: Beacon Press. Location: GR360.A5 E5

1962e. *Beginning Bulgarian*. The Hague: Mouton. Location: PG835.L6

1964. "Ivo Andrić in English Translation." *Slavic Review* 23: 563-573.

1965a. "Beowulf and Odysseus." In *Franciplegius: Medieval and Linguistic Studies in Honor of Francis P. Magoun, Jr.*, ed. Jess B. Bessinger, Jr. and Robert P. Creed, pp. 86-91. New York: New York University Press. Location: PN681.B42

1965b.   "Oral Poetry."   In *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. A. Preminger, pp. 591-593. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. Location: PN1021.E5 1974

1967. "The Influence of a Fixed Text." In *To Honor Roman Jakobson: Essays on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday (11 October 1966)*. Janua Linguarum, Series Maior, 2, pp. 1199-1206. The Hague: Mouton. Location: P26.J32 2

1968a. "Homer as an Oral Poet." *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 72: 1-46.

1968b. "Igra riječi i značenja u Držićevu 'Plakiru'." *Forum* [Zagreb] 6(xiv): 591-598.

1968c. Ed. with David E. Bynum, *A Bulgarian Literary Reader*. The Hague: Mouton. Location: PG1020.L6

1969a.   "The Theme of the Withdrawn Hero in Serbo-Croatian Oral Epic." *Prilozi za književnost, jezik, istoriju i folklor* 35: 18-30.

1969b. With David E. Bynum. "Folklore and Ethnomusicology." In *Language and Area Studies: East Central and Southeastern Europe,* ed. Charles Jelavich, pp. 333-358. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Location: DR34.8.L33

1970a.   "Tradition and the Oral Poet: Homer, Huso, and Avdo Medjedović. In *Atti del Convegno Internazionale sul Tema: La Poesia epica e la sua formazione,* ed. Enrico Cerulli, pp. 13-28; discussion, pp. 29-30. Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. Location: AS222.R53 139

1970b. Ed., *Russian Folk Tales.* Avon, Conn.: Heritage Press. Location: PZ8.1.L944 Ru

1971a.   "An Example of Homeric Qualities of Repetition in Medjedović's 'Smailagić Meho'." In *Serta Slavica Aloisii Schmaus: Gedenkschrift für Alois Schmaus,* ed. Wolfgang Gesemann, pp. 458-464. Munich: Rudolf Trofenik.

1971b. "Homer, the Trojan War, and History." *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 8: 85-92. Location: GR1.J6

1971c. "Some Common Themes in Balkan Slavic Epic." In *Actes du premier congrès international des études balkaniques et sud-est européennes*, pp. 653-662. Sofia: Editions de l'Académie Bulgare des Sciences.

1972a. "The Effects of the Turkish Conquest on Balkan Epic Tradition." In *Aspects of the Balkans: Continuity and Change*, ed. Henrik Birnbaum and Speros Vryonis, Jr., pp. 298-318. The Hague: Mouton. Location: DR1.5.I57 1969

1972b. "History and Tradition in Balkan Oral Epic and Ballad." *Western Folklore* 31: 53-60. Location: GR1.C26

1974a. Trans., *The Wedding of Smailagić Meho, by Avdo Medjedović*. *Serbo-Croatian Heroic Songs*, vol. 3. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. Location: ML54.6.M4 S6 1974

1974b. Ed. with David E. Bynum, *Ženidba Smailagina sina, kazivao je Avdo Medjedović*. *Serbo-Croatian Heroic Songs*, vol. 4. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. Location: ML54.6.M4 S6 1974

1974c. Ed., *The Multinational Literature of Yugoslavia*. New York: St. John's University. Location: PN2.R44 v.5 no.1

1974d. "The Nineteenth-Century Revival of National Literatures: Karadžić, Njegoš, Radičević, the Illyrians, and Prešeren." In Lord 1974c: 101-111.

1974e. "Perspectives on Recent Work on Oral Literature." *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 10:187-210. Rpt. 1975 in *Oral Literature: Seven Essays,* ed. Joseph J. Duggan, pp. 1-24. Edinburgh and New York: Scottish Academic Press and Barnes & Noble. Location: PB1.F63 10

1974f. "The Relationship Between Songs and Traditional Epics in Balkan Oral Tradition." *Revue des études sud-est européennes* [Bucharest] 12: 243-253.

1976a. "The Traditional Song." In *Oral Literature and the Formula*, ed. Benjamin A. Stolz and Richard S. Shannon, pp. 1-15. Ann Arbor, Mich.: Center for Coordination of Ancient and Modern Studies. Location: PN1341.O7

1976b. "Formula and Non-Narrative Theme in South Slavic Oral Epic and the O[ld] T[estament]." In *Oral Tradition and Old Testament Studies*, a special issue of *Semeia*, ed. Robert C. Culley, 5: 93-105.

1976c. "The Heroic Tradition of Greek Epic and Ballad: Continuity and Change." In *Hellenism and the First Greek War of Liberation (1821-30): Continuity and Change*, ed. Nikiforos Diamandouros, pp. 79-94. Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies. Location: DF801.H45

1976d. "Studies in the Bulgarian Epic Tradition: Thematic Parallels." In *Bulgaria Past and Present: Studies in History, Literature, Economics, Music, Sociology, Folklore, and*

Linguistics, ed. Thomas Butler, pp. 349-358.   Columbus, Ohio: American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies. Location: DR55.I532 1973

1976e. "Folklore, 'Folklorism,' and National Identity." *Balkanistica: Occasional Papers in Southeast European Studies* 3: 63-73. Location: DR1.B34

1976f. With Chad Walsh. "Poem at the Moment of Creation: A Modern Poet and the Homeric Tradition." *Oral English* 2(iii): 2-16.

1977. "Parallel Culture Traits in Ancient and Modern Greece." *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 3: 71-80. Location: DF541.B9

1978a. "The Gospels as Oral Traditional Literature." In *The Relationships among the Gospels: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, ed. William O. Walker, Jr., pp. 33-91. San Antonio, Texas: Trinity University Press. Location: BS2555.2.R43

1978b. "The Ancient Greek Heritage in Modern Balkan Epic." *Slavjanskie kul'tury i Balkany* [Sofia] 2: 337-355.

1978c. With Béla Bartók. *Yugoslav Folk Music*, ed. Benjamin Suchoff, 4 vols. Columbia University Studies in Musicology, 7.   New York Bartók Archive Studies in Musicology, 9-12. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press. Location: ML3590.B32 1978

1979-80. "The Opening Scenes of the *Dumy* on Holota and Andyber: A Study in the Technique of Oral Traditional Narrative." *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 3-4: 569-594. Location: DK508.A2 H33

1980a. "Interlocking Mythic Patterns in *Beowulf*." In *Old English Literature in Context: Ten Essays*, ed. John D. Niles, pp. 137-142, 178. London and Totowa, N.J.: Boydell & Brewer and Rowman & Littlefield. Location: PR181.O4 1980

1980b. "The Mythic Component in Oral Traditional Epic: Its Origins and Significance." *Proceedings of the Comparative Literature Symposium* [Texas Tech University] 11: 145-161. Location: PN855.C62 11

1980c. "Memory, Meaning, and Myth in Homer and Other Oral Epic Traditions." In *Oralità: Cultura, Letteratura, Discorso (Atti del Convegno Internazionale, Urbino 21-25 Iuglio 1980)*, ed. Bruno Gentili and Giuseppe Paioni, pp. 37-63. Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo.

1980d. "Tradition and Innovation in Balkan Epic: From Heracles and Theseus to Digenis Akritas and Marko." *Revue des études sud-est européennes* [Bucharest] 17: 195-212.

1981a. "Memory, Fixity, and Genre in Oral Traditional Poetries." In *Oral Traditional Literature: A Festschrift for Albert Bates Lord*, ed. John Miles Foley, pp. 451-461. Columbus, Ohio: Slavica. Location: PN1341.O74

1981b. "Comparative Slavic Epic." *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 5: 415-429. Location: DK508.A2 H33

1982. "Béla Bartók as a Collector of Folk Music." *Cross Currents: A Yearbook of Central European Culture* 1: 295-304.

1983. "Aspects of the Poetics of Bulgarian Oral Traditional Narrative Song." In *Literaturoznanie i folkloristika: V čest na 70-godišninata na akademik Pet'r Dinekov*, pp. 353-359. Sofia: Bulgarskata Akademija na Naukite. Location: PG1003.L54 1983

1984. "The Battle of Kosovo in Albanian and Serbocroatian Oral Epic Songs." In *Studies on Kosova*, ed. Arshi Pipa and Sami Repishti, pp. 65-83. New York: Columbia University Press.

1985. "Béla Bartók and Text Stanzas in Yugoslav Folk Music." In *Music and Context: Essays for John M. Ward*, ed. Anne D. Shapiro, pp. 385-403. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Department of Music. Location: ML3795.M77 1985

1986a. "Perspectives on Recent Work on the Oral Traditional Formula." *Oral Tradition* 1: 467-503. Location: http://journal.oraltradition.org

1986b. "The Merging of Two Worlds: Oral and Written Poetry as Carriers of Ancient Values." In *Oral Tradition in Literature: Interpretation in Context*, ed. John Miles Foley, pp. 19-64. Columbia: University of Missouri Press. Location: GR72.O69 1986

1986c. "Oral Poetry." In *The Princeton Handbook of Poetic Terms*, ed. Alex Preminger, pp. 175-179. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Location: Reference PN1042.P75 1986

1986d. "Preface." In *Oral Tradition and Literacy: Changing Visions of the World*, ed. Richard A. Whitaker and Edgard R. Sienaert, pp. ix-xii. Natal, South Africa: University of Natal Oral Documentation and Research Centre. Location: P211.O7 1986

1986e. "Words Heard and Words Seen." In *Oral Tradition and Literacy: Changing Visions of the World*, ed. Richard A. Whitaker and Edgard R. Sienaert, pp. 1-17. Natal, South Africa: University of Natal Oral Documentation and Research Centre. Location: P211.O7 1986

1986f. "Narrative Themes in Bulgarian Oral-Traditional Epic and their Medieval Roots." *Byzantino-bulgarica* 8: 102-111.

1987a.   "The Nature of Oral Poetry."   In *Comparative Research on Oral Traditions: A Memorial for Milman Parry*, ed. John Miles Foley, pp. 313-349.   Columbus, Ohio: Slavica. Location: Ellis Library

1987b.   "Characteristics of Orality."   In *A Festschrift for Walter J. Ong, S.J.*, a special issue of *Oral Tradition* 2(i): 54-72. Location: http://journal.oraltradition.org

1987c.   "The *Kalevala*, the South Slavic Epics, and Homer."   In *The Heroic Process: Form, Function, and Fantasy in Folk Epic*, ed. Bo Almqvist, Séamas Ó Catháin, and Pádraig Ó Héalaí, pp. 293-324. Dublin: Glendale Press. Location: PN56.E65 I58 1985

1987d.   "Kalevala, eteläslaavien epiikka ja Homeros."   In *Kalevala ja maailman eepokset*, ed. Lauri Honko, pp. 239-260. Kalevalaseuran vuosikirja, 65. NIF Publications, 16. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

1987e.   "Central Asiatic and Balkan Epic."   In *Fragen der mongolischen Heldendichtung* (Part 4, Vorträge des 5. Epensymposiums des Sonderforschungsbereich 12, Bonn 1985), ed. Walter Haessig, pp. 288-300. Asiatische Forschungen: Monographien zur Geshichte, Kultur und Sprache der Völker Ost- und Zentralasiens. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.

1988.   "Some Characteristics of Oral-Traditional Poetics."   In *Oral and Written/Literate in Literature and Culture / Usmeno i pisano/pismeno u književnosti i kulturi*, ed. Svetozar Petrović, pp. 15-29. Novi Sad: Vojvodjanska akademija nauka i umetnosti.

1989a.   "Theories of Oral Literature and the Latvian Dainas."   In *Linguistics and Poetics of Latvian Folk Songs: Essays in Honour of the Sesquicentennial of Kr. Barons*, ed. Vaira Vīķis-Freibergs, pp. 35-48.   Kingston, Ontario: McGill-Queen's University Press.   Location: PG9015.L55 1989

1989b.   "Literature, Oral Transmission of."   In *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2 vols., prepared by editorial staff at the Catholic University of America, pp. 15,524-15,533. New York: McGraw-Hill. Location: BX841.N44 1967

1990.   "Patterns of Lives of Patriarchs from Abraham to Samson and Samuel."   In *Text and Tradition: The Hebrew Bible and Folklore*, ed. Susan Niditch, pp. 7-19.   Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press.

1991a.   *Epic Singers and Oral Tradition*.   Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press. (Reprints of 1953a, 1954, 1956a, 1962a, 1965a, 1967, 1980a, 1986e, 1986f, 1987c, 1987e; plus two previously unpublished essays, 1991b, 1991c.) Location: GR72.L66 1991

1991b.   "Homer as an Oral-Traditional Poet."   In Lord 1991a: 72-103.   Location: GR72.L66 1991

1991c. "The Formulaic Structure of Introductions to Direct Discourse in *Beowulf* and *Elene*." In Lord 1991a: 147-169. Location: GR72.L66 1991

1991d. [Interview with] "Albert Lord." In *Sa svetskim slavistima* [*With the World's Slavists*], ed. Miloš Jevtić, pp. 51-67. Gornji Milanovac: Dečje Novine.

1991e. "Ring Composition in *Maldon*; or, a Possible Case of Chiasmus in a Late Anglo-Saxon Poem." In *The Ballad and Oral Literature*, ed. Joseph Harris, pp. 233-242. Harvard English Studies, 17. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. Location: PR13.H3 17

1992a. "*Beowulf* and the Russian *Byliny*." In *De Gustibus: Essays for Alain Renoir*, ed. John Miles Foley, pp. 304-323. New York: Garland. Location: PN1303.G87 1992

1992b. "Cædmon Revisited." In *Festschrift for Jess B. Bessinger, Jr.*, ed. Helen Damico and John Leyerle, pp. 121-137. Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute.

1992c. "Bulgarian Traditional Literature in its Balkan Setting." *Indiana Slavic Studies* 6 = *Balkanistica* 8: 170-182. Location: DR1.B34

1993. "Text, Tone, Tune, Rhythm, and Performance in South Slavic Sung Narrative." In *Text, Tone, and Tune: Parameters of Music in Multicultural Perspective*, ed. Bonnie C. Wade, pp. 15-60. New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies Archives and Research Center for Ethnomusicology. Location: ML3849.T39 1993

1994. "The Impact of Vuk Karadžić on the Tradition: The Importance for Homer." In *The Uses of Tradition: A Comparative Enquiry into the Nature, Uses, and Functions of Oral Poetry in the Balkans, the Baltic, and Africa*, ed. by Michael Branch and Celia Hawkesworth, pp. 3-21. London: School of Slavonic and East European Studies and Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society. Location: PG1464.U84 1994

1995. *The Singer Resumes the Tale*, ed. Mary Louise Lord. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press. Location: PN1341.L67 1995

2000. *The Singer of Tales*, 2nd ed. with introduction by Stephen A. Mitchell and Gregory Nagy. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. Location: PN1303.L62 2000. Accompanying CD with audio and video. Location: RECORD CD HARVARD 4

Note: This bibliography was compiled by Morgan E. Grey, using the prior bibliography attached to J. M. Foley, "Albert Bates Lord (1912-1991): An Obituary," *Journal of American Folklore*, 105 (1992): 57-65, together with subsequent annotations made by Mary Louise Lord.

About the Authors

Adélékè Adéèkó

Adélékè Adéèkó is Humanities Distinguished Professor at Ohio State University. He served as guest editor of a recent issue of *Research in African Literatures* on writing about slavery in Africa. His study of panegyric and photography in southwestern Nigeria will appear later this year in *Critical Inquiry*.

Jaume Ayats

Jaume Ayats is a professor of ethnomusicology at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and a member of the Research Centre of European Multipart Music. His doctoral work involved research into the vocal expressions employed in street demonstrations and in football stadiums. He has completed a number of studies on sung oral traditions in several European countries and has published articles in Spanish, Catalan, and French journals.

Fay Beauchamp

Fay Beauchamp received her Ph.D. in English and American literature from the University of Pennsylvania. Since 1998, she has directed five U.S. Department of Education and NEH summer institutes on East, South, and Southeast Asia. She is currently Professor of English and Director, Center for International Understanding, Community College of Philadelphia. Topics of recent publications include the Tang Dynasty poet Bai Juyi (*Education About Asia*, 2009) and East Asian literature (*Understanding Contemporary Asian Pacific*, 2007).

Albert Casals

Albert Casals is a professor of music didactics at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and a member of the music education research group at the same university. His Ph.D thesis and his main line of research have focused on how ethnomusicology can contribute to innovation in primary school education. In addition, he is carrying out research on the link between traditional song and ethnic identity, and the relationship between music and other school subjects.

Katarzyna Mikulska Dąbrowska

Katarzyna Mikulska Dąbrowska is assistant professor at the Institute for Iberian and Iberoamerican Studies, University of Warsaw, where she specializes in the Mesoamerican pictographic manuscripts, systems of graphic communication, indigenous religion, and the Nahuatl language. Her recent writings include *El lenguaje enmascarado: Un acercamiento a las representaciones gráficas de deidades nahuas* (2008), "El concepto de ilhuicatl en la cosmovisión nahua y sus representaciones gráficas en los

códices" (2008), and "La comida de los dioses: Los signos de manos y pies en representaciones gráficas de los nahuas y su significado" (2007).

Laura Davies
Laura Davies is an early-career scholar whose research focuses on practices of orality within eighteenth-century English culture and their representation in the literature of the period. She teaches undergraduate courses at the University of Cambridge and has recently held a visiting fellowship at the Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History. Her publications include articles on Samuel Johnson and John Wesley, and she is currently working on a comparative study of secular and sacred life-writing by eighteenth-century women.

John Miles Foley
John Miles Foley is a specialist in the world's oral traditions, with particular emphasis on ancient Greek, medieval English, and South Slavic, and serves as the founding editor of *Oral Tradition* and architect-navigator of the Pathways Project. Further information is available at his portal (http://johnmilesfoley.org/portal/Welcome.html).

Morgan E. Grey
Morgan E. Grey is presently a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Classical Studies at the University of Missouri, Columbia, where she is working on a dissertation on Ovid. Her research interests include Latin poetry and the reception of classical literature, and she has published an article on "Mashups: Ancient and Modern" (Link: http://www.pathwaysproject.org/pathways/show/Mashups).

Kati Kallio
Kati Kallio is a project researcher at the Finnish Literature Society. She is finishing her doctoral thesis on Ingrian oral poetry in the Department of Folklore Studies at the University of Helsinki. Her research interests include Kalevala-metric oral poetry, sound recordings, performance, genre, and referentiality. She is about to begin a new project on the referential ties of various song genres, both oral and literary, in seventeenth-century western Finland.

Francesca R. Sborgi Lawson
Francesca R. Sborgi Lawson was a Fulbright-Hays and National Academy of Sciences Research Fellow in the People's Republic of China and a President's Minority Research Fellow at the University of California, Berkeley. She is currently an assistant professor in the Department of Humanities, Classics, and Comparative Literature at Brigham Young University and author of the book, *The Narrative Arts of Tianjin: Between Music and Language* (2010).

Mary Louise Lord
Mary Louise Lord received her Ph.D. in Classics from Cornell University, and enjoyed a long and distinguished career teaching at Bates College, Wellesley College, Boston University, and Connecticut College, where she served as Chair of Classics for many years. She was a highly respected specialist on fourteenth-century commentators on Virgil, and contributed monographs on Nicholas Trevet, Zono de Magnali, and Benvenuto da Imala. Primarily a Latinist, Professor Lord also wrote on oral tradition and the Greek *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, as well as completed and edited her husband Albert Lord's posthumous book, *The Singer Resumes the Tale*.

Kiri Miller
Kiri Miller is the Manning Assistant Professor of Music at Brown University. She received a doctorate in ethnomusicology from Harvard University and is the author of *Traveling Home: Sacred Harp Singing and American Pluralism* (2010). She has published articles in *19th-Century Music*, *American Music*, *Ethnomusicology*, the *Journal of American Folklore*, the *Journal of the Society for American Music*, and *Game Studies*. She is currently completing a book titled *Playing Along: Digital Games, YouTube, and Virtual Performance*.

Mercè Vilar
Mercè Vilar is a professor of music didactics at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and directs the music education research group at the same university. Her Ph.D thesis and her main line of research focus on the training of music teachers in different contexts in the Western world. Among her latest projects special mention should be made of an opinion study involving a sample group of music teachers with regard to the educational reform in Québec.

Wang Guoming
Wang Guoming is Associate Professor in the Gesar College of the Northwest University for Nationalities in Lanzhou, China. He was selected by the leading Gesar group in Gansu Province and his home institution to pursue further study at Minzu University of China in Beijing. He has published multiple books and numerous journal articles, and has also been in charge of three national projects. He was born into a family that has performed the Tuzu *Gesar* epic for multiple generations. At present his father, Wang Yongfu, is the only living singer of this tradition, and Wang Guoming has collected and published many lines of this epic.