



# ORAL TRADITION

Volume 28, Number 1

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*Oral Tradition* (<http://journal.oraltradition.org>) seeks to provide a comparative and interdisciplinary focus for studies in oral tradition and related fields by publishing research and scholarship on the creation, transmission, and interpretation of all forms of oral traditional expression. In addition to essays treating certifiably oral traditions, *OT* presents investigations of the relationships between oral and written traditions, as well as brief accounts of important fieldwork, and occasional transcriptions and translations of oral texts. In addition, issues will include the annual Albert Lord and Milman Parry Lecture on Oral Tradition. Submissions should follow the list-of-reference format ([http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/misc/oral\\_tradition\\_formatting\\_guide.pdf](http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/misc/oral_tradition_formatting_guide.pdf)) and may be sent via e-mail ([journal@oraltradition.org](mailto:journal@oraltradition.org)); all quotations of primary materials must be made in the original language(s) with following English translations. If appropriate, please describe any supporting materials that could be used to illustrate the article, such as photographs, audio recordings, or video recordings. *Oral Tradition* publishes such materials online in an eCompanion designed to supplement the texts of articles. Most contributions will be reviewed by at least one specialist reader and one generalist reader before a final decision is reached.

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## Editor's Column

We at the Center for Studies in Oral Tradition are pleased to offer our latest issue of *Oral Tradition* for consideration: seven essays reporting on a miscellany of verbal traditions from Europe, Australia, Uganda, the Peruvian Andes, Southeast Asia, and the archaic Greek world. It opens smartly with a study by Tom Pettitt that reveals processes of memorization, performance, and oral transmission in the life of “The Suffolk Tragedy,” a nineteenth-century English ballad. Confronting the broadside text against reflexes circulating in oral tradition—two collected in England (1906 and 1972), four in New South Wales, Australia, versions sung by Sally Sloane (1957 and 1976) and by Carrie Milliner (1995)—and with a version that Milliner reconstructed from a fragment found in an aunt’s songbook, Pettitt draws insights into the tradition’s propensity “to capture the absolute narrative (and dramatic) core of the ballad [...] implying nearly all the rest of the narrative.”

The next pair of essays address the socializing function of oral traditions in contemporary Uganda. Lara Rosenoff Gauvin draws on years of intensive fieldwork in Uganda and the writings of Okot p’Bitek (1931-1982) to portray the keen sense of desolation felt by Acoli youth victimized by two decades of war between the Ugandan government and the infamous Lord’s Resistance Army. Author and scholar, Okot p’Bitek regarded Acoli oral traditions as the vehicle for cultural knowledge that the individual requires in order to situate the self properly in society. Today, Acoli youth find themselves estranged from their tradition’s cultural norms and practices (tekwaro), deprived of the oral tradition of odoko dano, “the socialization process of creating a real human being.”

Valeda Dent Goodman and Geoff Goodman report their continuing research into the roles played by libraries in rural villages of Uganda and Africa. They study a set of adult reports about stories that primary caregivers tell to young children with an eye to discovering “what socializing concepts are present” and “the role that stories play within the parent/child communication framework.” The authors observe that storytelling as a socialization practice differs across cultures, highlighting a child’s misbehavior or catalyzing the teller’s re-imagination of her own childhood.

Reporting on the traditional Masha festival practice of songs improvised by pairs of singers in a Peruvian highland village, Charles Pigott adopts an ethnopoetic analytical model to interpret the songs’ construction of unity and difference. Pigott’s analysis reveals a complex of complementary opposites informing the festival’s activities. Quechua, a polysynthetic and agglutinating language, makes available to the singers a repertoire of affixes and suffixes for expressing semantic nuances that “interact in the creation of meaning.” A dynamic interplay between complementarity and opposition that is reflective of contradictions and oppositions that act reciprocally in Andean cosmology to serially produce new syntheses inform the song texts. The Masha songs are one expression of the ethical as “a function of the pragmatic” so that an individual’s participation in the festival is seen as a moral and social duty as well as a personal decision.

Qu Yongxian studies the song culture of the Dai, a people who are spread across southern China, northeast Thailand, northwest Vietnam, northeast Burma and Northern Laos. She contrasts the epic traditions and songs current among a Dai cultural group that practices Theravada Buddhism and employs a multi-secular writing system for the transmission of its epic poems with that of a second group that practices an indigenous animist religion and transmits its epic poems solely through oral tradition. The two groups share a poetic technique the “waist-feet rhyme.” Leading to the conclusion that the Dai groups share a similar poetic tradition, Qu Yongxian fashions a thorough portrait of the several Dai subgroups, recounts the etiological myth of their dispersal, characterizes the Dai script styles, manuscript production and storage techniques, and identifies Buddhist and Indian influence, such as Buddhist Jataka stories among the Theravada Buddhist Dai, that are completely unknown among the indigenous animists.

New technologies for interacting with traditional narratives and songs are highlighted by Copp lie Cocq’s study of the transposition of traditional Sami language into internet sites designed to encourage revitalization of this minority language. Proponents of revitalizing this endangered language, spoken by minorities in Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia, identify the Sami language as the cultural glue of their identity. As does all translation, the translation of traditional Sami storytelling to the Internet effects changes. Whereas storytelling once took place at the  rren, the fireplace at the center of the Sami tent, where the presence of the adults could serve as a bulwark shielding emotionally sensitive youngsters and deflecting a tale’s more terrifying details, the Internet offers no such guardian presence resulting in the elimination or bowdlerization of salacious details as occurred with Grimm’s m rchen. Though traditional narrative practices, Cocq observes, “remain the strongest bearer of language revitalization,” the development of Internet platforms for Sami storytelling offers an alternate venue and a model for other speakers of minority languages intent on preventing the demise of a mother tongue.

Finally, this issue concludes with an essay by David Elmer that explores political dimensions of archaic Greek epic and lyric poetry. An initial version of the essay was presented at the 26th Albert Lord and Milman Parry Lecture, March 13, 2012; it is here dedicated to the memory of John Miles Foley and offers a fitting tribute. Indeed, Elmer seamlessly argues that the *Iliad* casts consensus as “the ideal outcome of collective deliberation,” and that this political attitude is itself allied with “the poem as the product of an oral tradition”—thus advancing the case that the sympotic lyric tradition responds to the very same forces of archaic “song culture” as does the epic. Contrasting the public performance arena of Homeric epic with the private symposium performance space of the lyric, Elmer identifies and essays a rationale for situating “the preoccupation of sympotic poetry with political alienation.” His conclusion emphasizes that “the performance of poetry was a fundamentally political event in archaic Greece [...] whether at the symposium or the festival.”

Casting about for a novel way to duly recognize the efforts of Associate Editors Lori and Scott Garner: a simple thank you for maintaining the exacting standards of accuracy instituted by the founding editor, your teacher, seems about right. Our resident IT wizard Mark Jarvis controls

the Center's computing functions while Hannah Lenon keeps all manner of business affairs on the right side of the balance sheet. Also contributing to the day-to-day operations, Justin Arft, managing editor, Darcy Holtgrave, Associate Editor of ISSOT, and editorial assistants Elise Broaddus, Katy Chenoweth, Elizabeth Janda, Ruth Knezevich, and Rebecca Richardson Mouser lend indispensable assistance. Finally, it is my privilege to acknowledge a debt of gratitude owed to the many colleagues who graciously share their expertise reading and evaluating essays submitted to the journal. This process is fundamental to the now nearly thirty years of scholarly excellence that is customary of *Oral Tradition*.

In closing, we invite you to share your thinking about the world's traditional verbal arts with us. The standard review process involves evaluation by a specialist and a generalist reader, and a decision is generally forthcoming within a trimester of receipt. This journal is published online and free of charge: it counts upwards of 20,000 readers in some 200 countries and territories. We look forward to hearing from you.

John Zemke  
Editor, *Oral Tradition*

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## Text and Memory in the “Oral” Transmission of a Crime and Execution Ballad: “The Suffolk Tragedy” in England and Australia

Tom Pettitt

The murder of Maria Marten by her lover, William Corder, in May 1827 became the object of intense public interest and frenzied media attention immediately upon the discovery of the body eleven months later in the subsequently notorious “red barn” where he had buried her. While popular interest persisted much longer—and indeed continues—the case itself culminated with Corder’s trial and execution by public hanging in August 1828 and prompted the publication of no fewer than nine different broadside ballads—sensational journalistic accounts in the form of songs printed on a single sheet and sold cheaply at stalls or by itinerant ballad-mongers.<sup>1</sup> Two of these songs offer significant insights into the nature of oral tradition; having been printed, sold, sung, remembered, and passed on by word of mouth for many decades, they have subsequently been recorded from country singers, starting with the first great wave of folksong collection in the decades immediately prior to the First World War and continuing on into the 1990s. This situation does not represent the “pure” oral tradition sometimes encountered in the field, as the songs were composed in writing and initially diffused in print, and some of the singers were undoubtedly literate, but this interlacing of literate and oral transmission has been the norm in English folk tradition throughout its recorded history. Juxtaposing the words of the songs as recorded from singing with the texts of the originals as published permits us to determine exactly what the processes of memorization, performance from memory, and voice-to-ear transmission can do over time to verbal narrative material originally in the form of texts.

Of those two songs, “The Murder of Maria Marten” (Roud 215), with issues from at least six London printers, several more from the provinces, and yet others without imprint, was by far the more successful. Its preeminent market penetration is confirmed by the score or more recordings of the song, about half with texts, from folk tradition. In 1979 the versions of this

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<sup>1</sup> “The Murder of Maria Marten” (Roud 215); “A Copy of Verses on the Execution of Wm. Corder” (Roud V482); “Wm. Corder” (Roud V484); “The Red Barn Tragedy” (Roud V483, possibly of Scottish origin); another “Copy of Verses” amidst the prose documents on the *Execution and Confession of W. Corder, For the Murder of Mary Martin in the Red Barn [sic]* (Roud V481); “The Suffolk Tragedy” (Roud 18814, also printed as “The Red Barn Murder”). (See Pettitt forthcoming for a comparative analysis of all of these.) Three further ballads are listed below; see note 23. Where feasible, individual songs covered in this study are identified by the respective numbers assigned to them in the now standard indexes established by Steve Roud and accessible via the website of the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library maintained by the English Folk Dance and Song Society: the Roud Folksong Index (Roud 2012a) and the Roud Broadside Index (Roud 2012b). Songs featuring in both indexes have the same number in each. These indexes supply specifics on individual broadside printings and recordings from oral tradition (and their publication); additional details are provided as needed in what follows.

song that were known at that time were analyzed by Flemming Andersen and myself (1979); however, the song now merits revisiting in the light of new versions recovered and new insights established in the interim. In the meantime, the present study explores the evolution of the other “red barn” ballad to make it into oral tradition, “The Suffolk Tragedy” (Roud 18814). In quantitative terms its impact has been far less impressive—three broadside printings and four singers—but by another criterion, geographical diffusion, it did much better, with two of those four singers being natives of New South Wales.<sup>2</sup> In focusing mainly on these Australian variants, this study continues and completes (with occasional retrospective corrections) an earlier study of the transmission of “The Suffolk Tragedy” presented in this journal (Pettitt 2009) but for reasons of space restricted originally to the longer of the two English versions. It is also an opportunity more generally to draw attention to the significance of its Australian diaspora for the study of English folksong, a significance which is founded on the strength of Australian tradition, ensured by the energy and professionalism of the folklorists who recorded it, and enabled both by their generosity in sharing their material and by the efficiency and courtesy of the National Library of Australia in respectively curating and facilitating access to its holdings.

### “The Suffolk Tragedy”: Broadsides

It will not be a major factor in what follows, but is a necessary, final setting of the scene to insist that the composition of the original version of “The Suffolk Tragedy” (as with all the other ballads on the case) will have involved more than merely versifying the available information. The news broadsides, not least in the crime-and-execution category, were in the business—later taken over by what we now call the tabloid press—of sensationalizing and emotionalizing the simple facts of criminal cases to which the regular newspapers of the time generally restricted themselves. When possible, the main protagonist of the narrative was not the victim of the crime, but its perpetrator, who now, arrested, tried, and condemned, faced the awful consequences of his actions. Furthermore, the Maria Marten case, as revealed in court and reported in the press, was easily within striking-distance of a well-established paradigm, the Murdered Sweetheart Ballad: “well-established,” that is, in the sense of a proven money-making track-record that issued a standing invitation to adjust the facts of a given case to meet its conventions. In the case of “The Suffolk Tragedy,” for example, this modification includes attributing to Maria Marten a non-existent pregnancy at the time of her death, and it may well be that adjusting the narrative to the sub-generic paradigm helps explain the relative success of the two ballads recovered from oral tradition.

Our particular song was issued under the full title “The Suffolk Tragedy, Or, The Red Barn Murder” by Thomas Ford of Chesterfield (active as a broadside printer until 1830 or 1832) and with the same title (give or take a comma or capital or two) in a version without imprint,

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<sup>2</sup> The “Maria Martini” [*sic*] written down from the singing of Frances Repetto during the Tristan da Cunha islanders’ involuntary exile in Britain following the volcanic eruption on the island in 1961 (Munch 1961:221-22) is actually a quite different song about a separate sweetheart-murder case, “The Berkshire Tragedy” (Roud 263), in the Irish-influenced “Wexford Girl” sub-tradition.

further distinguished by a woodcut depicting the murderer; a third, entitled “The Red Barn Murder of Maria Marten,” was issued by Plant of Nottingham (active until 1838).<sup>3</sup>

These three printings offer what is effectively the same text, with the same number of stanzas arranged in the same order.<sup>4</sup> Despite their different titles, the verbal discrepancies between the versions of Ford and Plant are sporadic and limited, the most substantive being of the order of “She straight went to” versus “She straightway to,” “buried under ground” versus “underneath the ground,” and “the City of London” versus “the City of London Town” (Ford’s version is given first in each case). Where they differ, the Ford version, measured by conventional grammatical expectations, is the more “correct” and will be the version quoted in what follows.<sup>5</sup> The version without imprint<sup>6</sup> differs from both of them in a number of verbal and typographical idiosyncrasies within individual lines, which on closer inspection are clearly the result of squeezing the text to fit the sheet’s narrow columns by reducing the number of letters. A variety of devices are deployed: “18” used for “eighteen;” “William” consistently abbreviated to “Wm.,” and the omission of (mainly) dispensable short words, including the all but total substitution of “the barn” for “the red barn.” Even though its illustrative woodcut derives ultimately from the very earliest of the journalistic reports on the case, it seems unlikely therefore that this print is closer to any lost original issue than those of Ford and Plant, and the fact that this portrait of Corder is actually printed sideways across the sheet confirms that this unknown printer was having problems with format.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Dates for the printers are based on the Street Literature Printers’ Register that (like the Roud song indexes noted above) is now part of the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library “Full English” database: see <http://www.vwml.org/search/search-street-lit#>. The London printer James Catnach issued a sheet headed *The Suffolk Tragedy, or The Horrors of the Red Barn*, containing both a prose account and an untitled song (copy at St. Bride Printing Library Broadside Collection, catalogue no. S750), but it is a variant of his *Execution and Confession of W. Corder; For the Murder of Mary Martin in the Red Barn*, and the song is accordingly the same as its “Copy of Verses” (Roud Broadside Index no. V481) mentioned above.

<sup>4</sup> In what follows, whatever the stanzaic arrangements in which the broadsides were printed or the oral versions transcribed, they will be quoted, referenced, and measured in terms of what is manifestly their basic performance unit—the ballad quatrain—of which these broadsides have 24. The quatrain comprises four lines with four, three, four, and three vocal stresses (musical pulses) respectively and employing an ABCB rhyming scheme.

<sup>5</sup> Quotation and discussion will be on the basis of *The Suffolk Tragedy; or, the Red Barn Murder* (Chesterfield: Thomas Ford, n.d.), Derby City Libraries, Local Studies Library, accession no. 60374, Thomas Ford’s Ballads, no. 121 (by kind permission). Plant’s version has been examined on the basis of Cambridge University Library, Madden Collection 20 (Country Printers 5) [accessed on Vaughan Williams Memorial Library microfilm no. 87], no. 116.

<sup>6</sup> This version is available in Oxford’s Bodleian Library, Johnson Ballads 2889, online at <http://bodley24.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/acwweng/ballads/image.pl?ref=Johnson+Ballads+2889&id=22763.gif&seq=1&size=1/>.

<sup>7</sup> This paragraph corrects the discussion of the relationship between the three printings in Pettitt 2009:435 n. 9, which had not spotted the motivation for the distinction between “barn” and “red barn.”



## Oral Versions: England

While not the main topic of this study, the English oral versions may be briefly glanced at as a means of introducing the song, as a basis for comparison with the way Australian tradition has treated it, and as an occasion for re-stating what is at stake in the analysis.

In relation to the broadside original with its 24 stanzas, the fullest of the two English derivatives is the ten-stanza version of Freda Palmer of Whitney in Oxfordshire, as recorded by Mike Yates in 1972 (it can be heard in Hall 1998, item 12).<sup>8</sup> Substantially more reduced is the five-stanza version collected (without melody) by G. B. Gardiner from the singing of George Digweed of Micheldelver, Hampshire, in 1906.<sup>9</sup> There follows a schematic stanza-by-stanza survey of how these two versions treat the original in terms of its overall narrative structure, the use of italics signaling which stanzas include direct speech by a character in the narrative, a factor that seems to be relevant in transmission:

### BROADSIDE

### ENGLISH ORAL TRAD.

#### Palmer      Digweed

#### *INCIPIIT*

1. Listen: it's a dreadful tragedy
2. of cold-blooded cruelty; but true.

#### *THE AFFAIR*

3. Maria Marten of Polstead
4. loved a farmer's son;
5. *pregnant, she asks him to fix the wedding day*
6. *and he reassures her.*

10. [i. e., sings this stanza last]

#### *THE MURDER*

7. Maria is dressed in men's clothes;      1.
8. *her mother, concerned, asks why:*      2.
9. *Maria says she'll meet William at the barn,*      3.
10. *and they will be married in Ipswich.*      4.
11. She goes, but eleven months later      5.

1.

#### *THE DISCOVERY*

12. her mother dreams she is buried in the barn,
13. *and asks Maria's father to take his spade,*      6      2. and 3.
14. *and with a neighbor dig up the floor.*      7.      3. (cont.)

<sup>8</sup> Palmer's Stanza 1 was not included in the recording as published "for technical reasons" but is supplied by Yates 2002:3. A further unpublished recording by Steve Roud from 1978 has a virtually identical text (personal communication, January 25, 2005). The recording from Hall 1998, item 12, is appended (with permission) to Pettitt 2009:441.

<sup>9</sup> London, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, English Folk Dance and Song Society, Gardiner MSS., H214, quoted below with the permission of Librarian Malcolm Taylor. The original material is accessible via the "Take Six" digital archive at the website of the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library: <http://library.efds.org/archives/cgi-bin/search.cgi>.

- |                                             |    |    |
|---------------------------------------------|----|----|
| 15. They dig where she told them to         | 8. | 4. |
| 16. and find a mangled body tied in a sack; | 9. | 5. |
| 17. the clothes (listed)                    |    |    |
| 18. identify the corpse as Maria’s.         |    |    |

***THE JUDICIAL AFTERMATH***

19. A warrant is issued for Corder’s arrest;
20. he is apprehended and imprisoned;
21. tried;
22. *found guilty*;
23. *condemned to be hanged*;
24. *the Judge urges repentance*.

With regard to the narrative, it is in accordance with the general trend for other ballads in the Murdered Sweetheart genre (including “The Murder of Maria Marten”) in English folk tradition that neither singer shows any interest in the judicial aftermath of the murder—typically the arrest, trial, condemnation, the lover-murderer’s regrets, the grief of his family, and the anticipated or actual hanging (Pettitt 2010). As a result of this curtailment, our song—which as originally published modulated decisively into the tragedy of a young man grievously punished for a dire fault—in performance sustains its opening focus on the tragedy of the innocent young woman whose misguided trust in a seducer proves fatal.

As can be seen, there are no additions at the stanzaic level, and the two singers—despite their separation in time, location, and gender—agree on essentials: Digweed sings nothing that is not also sung by Palmer. Meanwhile other subtractions in transmission, not least of the introductory remarks (*incipit*) and the opening moves of the narrative, result in a focus on the central, intense interactions between the principals. This focus is enhanced by the relatively high survival rate of stanzas containing direct speech that substantially shifts the essentially journalistic report towards the impersonal, efficient, climactic, and dramatic narrative style more characteristic of folk ballads, a tendency discernible in the oral tradition of broadsides more generally (Pettitt 1997).

This macro-scale traditionalization is echoed at the more detailed level by reformulations that produce both the verbal repetition patterns and the more formulaic phraseology also familiar from the vernacular aesthetic of traditional ballads.<sup>10</sup> The Freda Palmer version having been comprehensively dealt with from this perspective in the earlier study (Pettitt 2009), a brief glance at Digweed’s performance may suffice by way of illustration. It is short enough to be quoted in full, juxtaposed with the relevant stanzas of the original text (italics indicating potentially significant deviation, most of which is discussed in what follows):

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<sup>10</sup>For a succinct summary of folk ballad characteristics, see Gerould 1974 [1932]:11, 105-07.

**BROADSIDE**

11. She straight went to the Red Barn,  
and never more was seen,  
Until eleven months were past,  
the mother dreamed a dream,
12. That her *daughter was murdered* by  
the man she loved so dear,  
In the Red Barn, beneath the floor,  
her body was buried there.
13. Three times she dreamed  
the same dream,  
then to the father said,  
  
I beg you will rise instantly,  
and with you take your spade,
14. Our neighbour with his pickaxe  
will bear you company,  
To the far corner of the Red Barn  
where our daughter does lie,
15. They went to the Red Barn,  
to the corner they were told,  
The same spot the mother dream'd  
they raised the floor and *mould*,
16. When they had dug  
eighteen inches deep,  
the body there they found  
Tied in a sack, and mangled  
with many a ghastly wound.
17. Her shawl, her bonnet and pelisse  
in the grave were found,  
That eleven months had been  
buried under ground.

**DIGWEED 1906**

1. *Maria Martin* went to the red barn  
and *never was seen ni more*  
Till eleven months *was gone and past*  
her mother dreamed a dream
2. She dreamed that same dream  
*three times over*  
and to her husband *told*  
*Your daughter she is murdered*  
*and covered up with mould*
3. I'd have you rise  
and take your spade  
*and then to haste away*
- The red barn at the further corn  
you'll *find her body lay*
4. *The very first stroke as they struck*  
  
*they howked up the mould*  
Her *apron, bonnet and spencer*  
*and furbelows did behold*
5. They dug *full*  
eighteen inches deep  
and then her body found  
Tied in a sack and mangled  
with many a ghastly wound.

Amidst the overall stability, qualified by disruption of the stanzaic structure, internal verbal contamination has in two instances enhanced through echoing formulations the conceptual balance of the original between the mother’s spoken prophecy of where the body is and the father’s action that confirms it:

she is	“covered <i>up</i> with <i>mould</i> ” (2.4)
and discovered when they	“howked <i>up</i> the <i>mould</i> ” (4.2);
the prediction	“you’ll find <i>her body</i> lay” (3.4)
is fulfilled when they	“and then <i>her body</i> found” (5.2).

Modulation to more traditional formulation includes “never was seen n[o] more” (1.2), “was gone and past” (1.3), “three times over” (2.1), and “full eighteen inches deep” (5.1). The traditional-sounding “and then to haste away” (Digweed 3.2) of the mother’s instructions is actually a contamination from an earlier stanza in the original (10.2), now lost, in which Maria tells her mother of her plans. In the opposite direction, the list of clothes found with the body (4.3-4) is revised quite substantially from what would have been the next stanza had it been retained (17.1); it contributes to an in fact quite effective demonstration of stanza-building competence.

Symptomatically it is this same stanza that includes Digweed’s one entirely new line, “The very first stroke as they struck” (4.1). This line belongs to a familiar formula-complex in traditional balladry in which an action is narrated with a cognate noun and verb, perhaps most familiar as “The first *step* she *stepped* . . .” (Andersen 1985:265-71). The variant with stroke and struck is what Andersen properly distinguishes as a “fight-phrase” (1985:271 n. 58), less at home here perhaps than in “Little Musgrove” (no. 81 in Child 1965) at the beginning of the duel between Musgrove and the husband of the lady who has seduced him: “The first stroke that Little Musgrave struck.” In this instance, however, it may well be that George Digweed himself, rather than some predecessor in the chain of transmission, was responsible for the change; he also introduced the phrase “the very first stroke” with even less appropriateness into another song in his repertoire, “The Molecatcher” (Roud 1052),<sup>11</sup> and at exactly the same point in the narrative as in “Little Musgrove,” the confrontation after a husband bursts in on his wife and her lover.

Taken together, and in juxtaposition with the broadside original, the two English versions confirm and further illustrate the trend of earlier results from experiments of this kind. English folk tradition involves the performance of verbal material retrieved from memory rather than improvisation anew at each performance on the basis of a remembered narrative skeleton (see Pettitt 1997). But repeated performance by a sequence of singers in a chain of transmission cumulatively produces substantial change in which subtraction of material not essential for the progress of the narrative tends to outweigh addition, and when addition or substitution—the subtraction of material and the addition of something else to replace it—does occur, the new

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<sup>11</sup> Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, George Gardiner Collection, GG/1/5/218, accessible through the VWML archive “Take Six” at <http://library.efdss.org/archives/cgi-bin/search.cgi>.

material is traditional in the sense of comprising formulas or commonplace formulations from the song tradition as a whole, or lines or phrases from other, particular songs known to a singer.

Furthermore, the two English versions of the song represent, respectively, the two major stages that, according to the thesis of Tristram P. Coffin (1961), can be identified in the long-term trajectory of a given song subjected to these processes. While Freda Palmer's version, as demonstrated in my preceding study (2009), has brought the song to the point where it by and large conforms to the characteristics of the traditional ballad, Digweed's takes us a good deal further. It should not be dismissed as a fragment—or as an incoherent and arbitrary jumble of stanzas and phrases—but appreciated as a reduction (in the sense of a boiling down) to what Coffin termed an “emotional core,” those stanzas or lines that contain the essence of the song concerned—except that what we have here is perhaps better characterized as the “narrative core” (or even “dramatic core”) of “The Suffolk Tragedy,” preserving the irreducible sequence of disappearance, revelation, and discovery. It has a coherent beginning, thanks to Digweed's providing the name of the protagonist in his first line, “*Maria Martin* went to the red barn;” a fragment would have retained the original's “*She* straight went to the Red Barn” (11.1). There is a middle (the dream), and there is an end (to the girl's tragedy); the Digweed tradition agreeing with the Palmer tradition that the discovered body was “Tied in a sack and mangled / with many a ghastly wound” (repeated verbatim from the broadside in both cases) makes for an effective climactic image.

The remainder of the essay will explore whether this scenario for the impact of folk tradition on narrative song will also hold good for its Australian extension, whether it will need to be adjusted, or whether there are special factors at work in relation to the Australian variants.

### **Oral Versions: Australia**

Reports of the Maria Marten case deriving from the English press were published in Australian newspapers for the most part just as soon as contemporary means of communication allowed (for instance, *Sydney Gazette* 1828:3; *Sydney Monitor*, 1828:3), but there are no signs that this attention in the press gave rise to any local ballads on the case; the reports will at most have whetted the appetite for “The Suffolk Tragedy” when it did arrive. And since there is no evidence that “The Suffolk Tragedy” was either printed or sold in Australia, we must assume that the song was transported there as either a broadsheet in the baggage or a song in the memory of an earlier immigrant.

Both of the singers from whom the song was recorded were from New South Wales, and both were recorded singing it twice: Sally Sloane of Lithgow (in 1957 and 1976) and Carrie Milliner (née Bobbin) of Eden (two performances in 1995). The dates rule out any possibility that they had access to a broadside, inviting speculation on the exact line of transmission by which the song reached them. This line of enquiry has little to offer in the case of Sally Sloane, who is reported to have learned many of her songs via her mother from her maternal grandmother, Sarah Alexander, who before emigrating in 1838 lived in Belfast, Northern Ireland (Low 2003). None of the songs on the Maria Marten case has been encountered—on broadside

or in oral tradition—in Ireland. Sally Sloane also mentioned half a dozen others from whom she had songs, but pursuit of their repertoires or backgrounds would be unlikely to bear fruit.

Meanwhile a detailed genealogy of the Bobbin family traces the direct descent of Carrie Milliner and her several singing siblings from a Jeffrey Bobbin, who was born in Burnham Market, Norfolk, in 1815 and emigrated to New South Wales in 1849 (Smith and Harvey 2012; Carrie is no. 128, seventh child of fourth-generation Henry Bobbin, no. 42). This Jeffrey Bobbin would have been a teenager in England back in 1828 when the Maria Marten case was breaking news and the subject of intense media interest, and it may be relevant that most of the oral versions of that other red barn ballad, the “Murder of Maria Marten,” were recorded in East Anglia, doubtless because of the local interest of the events in Suffolk. If our song benefited from the same interest, then it is at least possible that it belonged to Bobbin family tradition throughout their time in Australia.

Recordings of Australian singers performing a song that originated as an English broadside can of course be approached from various perspectives. To rephrase a question posed in another post-colonial context by Richard Dorson (1978), are they [British] “folklore in Australia,” or “Australian folklore”? The quest for a distinct Australian folk song tradition (discussed, for example, in Dodsworth 2010), in addition to the recording of new “bush” songs created locally, would legitimately also explore how Australian singers handled their British heritage. Which English, Scottish, or Irish songs proved viable in the new environment? Were imported songs changed to achieve such viability? How was unchanged material reinterpreted? While the texts and analyses offered in what follows may provide material that could contribute to such a discussion, because of its point of departure and its predominantly formal focus, the perspective here is rather to see Australian folk tradition as an extension of English. For present purposes the Australian singers are re-colonized as English people who just happen to live a long way away.

Nonetheless, if for technical reasons rather than national, analysis of the Australian variants of “The Suffolk Tragedy” will involve more and other challenges than was the case with the English versions. Both Australian singers were recorded commenting on the song, and both, if in significantly different ways, signaled an awareness—indeed frustration—that there was something inadequate in the song as they sang it. While students of song tradition should not dismiss a performance as fragmentary by failing to meet their alien, literate, and literary criteria (Constantine and Porter 2003), in the case of Sally Sloane and Carrie Milliner the dissatisfaction is presumably by their own vernacular standards.

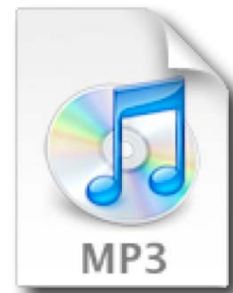
Juxtaposing the Australian oral versions with the broadside original therefore has potentially two distinct—indeed diametrically opposed and perhaps ultimately incompatible—purposes. As with the English versions, the exercise may provide insight into how this particular oral tradition handles song texts, but it is tempting to deploy that same broadside original to establish how the song would have been at some earlier, more vigorous stage in the singer’s knowledge of it, or in the family tradition of which she was the final recipient. Since this methodology incurs the danger of circular argument, the discussion to follow will at least attempt to distinguish between analyzing the song as they actually sang it and reconstructing the song as it would have been sung at some earlier stage. The latter would be a sterile, philological exercise if undertaken by the researcher alone, but in both cases the attempt is initiated by the singers

themselves. Ultimately, not least for those interested in the mixed oral-literate transmission more characteristic of English folksong than a pristine “oral tradition,” watching (hearing) the singers themselves struggling to reconstruct what they or their family once knew may be the most interesting and valuable feature of that particular exercise.

Otherwise the two Australian versions duplicate the pattern of their English counterparts, one exhibiting a length that might be expected of a song evolving into traditional, “ballad” mode and the other perhaps qualifying (at least as sung) as a reduction to the song’s narrative “core.” And for technical reasons the latter will be examined first.

### Sally Sloane

We have available two separate recordings of the song as performed by Sally Sloane: by John Meredith in March 1957 (Sloane 1957) and by Warren Fahey in May 1976 (Sloane 1976<sup>12</sup>). Each performance encompassed the same three stanzas, with only a couple of verbal discrepancies, more a question of transcription than of what was sung (is it “on the road” or “long the road;” “her dream” or “a dream?”).



We may note the relationship of these stanzas to the song as a whole and the English oral derivatives by repeating the relevant sections of the schematic survey:

Sally Sloane sings “The Red Barn.” (See Sloane 1957 for attribution.)

#### BROADSIDE

#### ORAL TRADITION

##### ENGLISH      NSW

Palmer Digweed      Sloane

#### INCIPIT (1-2)

#### THE AFFAIR

- |                                                         |     |  |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----|--|
| 3. Maria Marten of Polstead                             |     |  |
| 4. loved a farmer’s son;                                | 10. |  |
| 5. <i>pregnant, she asks him to fix the wedding day</i> |     |  |
| 6. <i>and he reassures her.</i>                         |     |  |

#### THE MURDER

- |                                                       |          |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------|----|
| 7. Maria is dressed in men’s clothes;                 | 1.       |    |
| 8. <i>her mother, concerned, asks why:</i>            | 2.       |    |
| 9. <i>Maria says she’ll meet William at the barn,</i> | 3.       |    |
| 10. <i>and they will be married in Ipswich.</i>       | 4.       | 1. |
| 11. She goes, but eleven months later                 | 5.    1. | 2. |

#### THE DISCOVERY

- |                                                  |  |    |
|--------------------------------------------------|--|----|
| 12. her mother dreams she is buried in the barn, |  | 3. |
|--------------------------------------------------|--|----|

<sup>12</sup> My thanks to Warren Fahey for his permission to quote this version in full.

- |                                                |    |            |
|------------------------------------------------|----|------------|
| 13. and asks Maria's father to take his spade, | 6  | 2. and 3.  |
| 14. and with a neighbor dig up the floor.      | 7. | 3. (cont.) |
| 15. They dig where she told them to            | 8. | 4.         |
| 16. and find a mangled body tied in a sack     | 9. | 5.         |
| 17. the clothes (listed)                       |    |            |
| 18. identify the corpse as Maria's.            |    |            |

**THE JUDICIAL AFTERMATH (19-24)**

More even than Digweed's selection, Sloane's three consecutive stanzas might be said to capture the absolute narrative (and dramatic) core of the ballad, straddling the moments of disappearance and discovery, while also implying nearly all the rest of the narrative we need to know (with the now expected indifference to the judicial aftermath): the courtship, the pretended departure, the murder, and the discovery. This particular selection of three stanzas also pins down the core of the ballad in terms of place: as we shall see, the Red Barn is mentioned (at the end of a line) in each of the three stanzas: she will go there (st. 1); she goes there (st. 2); her body resides there (st. 3). And the same focusing on essentials is true of characters and their relationships. The Judge is long gone; the husband/father is excised completely; the lover is an object of affection in the first stanza and the cause of death in the third, but emphatically off-stage, thought of and dreamed of. This is at heart a ballad about women and their relationships. The only characters directly seen or heard are nameless women who are essentially defined by their relationship to each other through a key word in each stanza: "Oh mother" (1.1), "her mother" (2.4), and "her daughter" (3.1).<sup>13</sup> And the selection is also very neat and self-contained in formal terms: three stanzas, three characters, three references to the red barn, three invocations of dreaming ("dreamt . . . dream . . . dreamt"), three weeks between the disappearance and the dream; one stanza before the crime, one stanza after the crime, one in between for the transition.

At the verbal level the three stanzas are reproduced from the broadside with perhaps less reformulation than the English singers:

**BROADSIDE**

**SALLY SLOANE 1976**

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>9. Mother! I am going to the Red Barn<br/>to meet my William dear<br/>His friends won't know me on the road,<br/>and when I do get there</p> <p>10. I'll put on my wedding robes,<br/>then we shall haste away,<br/>To Ipswich Town, to-morrow is fixed<br/>for our wedding day.</p> | <p>1. <i>Oh</i> mother <i>dear</i> I am going to the Red Barn<br/>To meet my William dear<br/><i>They</i> will not know me on the road<br/><i>Nor</i> when I <i>shall</i> get there.</p> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

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<sup>13</sup> The named exception is William, but he is defined in relation to one of the women as "my William" (Sloane 1.2).



- |                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>11. She straight went to the Red Barn,<br/>and never more was seen,<br/>Until eleven months were past,<br/>the mother dreamed a dream,</p>      | <p>2. <i>Straight away</i> she went to the <i>old</i> Red Barn<br/>And never more was seen<br/><i>When three long weary weeks had passed</i><br/><i>When her</i> mother dreamt <i>her</i> dream.</p> |
| <p>12. That her daughter was murdered by<br/>the man she loved so dear,<br/>In the Red Barn, beneath the floor,<br/>her body was buried there.</p> | <p>3. <i>She dreamt</i> her daughter was murdered<br/>By <i>the lad</i> she loved so <i>well</i><br/><i>At the very far corner of the red barn</i><br/>Her body there did <i>dwell</i>.</p>          |

Indeed, in one instance a verbal discrepancy is to be explained not by alteration in transmission, but by indebtedness to a variant form of the broadside: Sloane's "Straight away she went" presumably derives from the "straightway" of the Plant of Nottingham print, which differs in this from the Ford of Chesterfield text used for comparison here. And what seems to be a new formulation, "At the very far corner of the red barn" (3.4), has actually been shifted from a later but lost stanza (14.3), facilitated by the narrative connection between the mother's dream and her consequent instruction to her husband (a process we also saw in action in Digweed's version).

Compared to the English versions (Digweed and Palmer) there does seem to be less here by way of internal verbal contamination, and it is very small-scale: "*her* mother dreamt *her* dream" (2.4); "Mother *dear* . . . / . . . William *dear*" (1.1-2). Reformulation to a more traditional idiom is also on the level of single words—for instance, "lad" for "man" (3.2) and "the *old* Red Barn" (2.4). The latter may however be influenced by one or other of the popular songs invoking an "old red barn" (for example, Roud 15785, "The Cows are in the Clover;" Roud B109425, "The Old Red Barn").

External interference from another song certainly participates in Sally Sloane's most radical reformulation, in which the journalistic broadside's factually correct specification of the lapse of time between Maria's disappearance and her mother's dream, ". . . *eleven months* were past" (11.3), is replaced by "When *three long weary weeks* had passed" (2.3). Given the prevalence of threes in many forms of folk narrative, the change is itself a step in the direction of the traditional and may also have been influenced by the "three times" the dream was dreamed in an original line (13.1) that Sally Sloane partly remembered (see below). But this traditional law of three may merely have been the enabling context for the introduction of the specific formulation "three long weary weeks" from another song in Sally Sloane's recorded repertoire, "The Old Oak Tree Murder" (Roud 569; for text see Sloane 1976<sup>14</sup>). The connection in the singer's mind, conversely, will have been encouraged by the circumstance that the latter song is also about a murdered sweetheart, the phrase occurring at exactly the same point in the narrative and likewise referring to the anxiety of girl's mother. When her daughter fails to return from a tryst with her lover "beneath the old oak tree," she spends "three long weary weeks" looking for

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<sup>14</sup> Not be confused with the one about tying "yellow ribbons" on an old oak tree, this song can be heard being sung by Sally Sloane on "Songs that Made Australia: Maids of Australia," part of a ten-program radio series broadcast in the early 1980s by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. The program is available at [http://warrenfahey.com/audio\\_oz\\_songs-4.html](http://warrenfahey.com/audio_oz_songs-4.html), and this particular performance is found 3 minutes and 33 seconds into the broadcast.

her. “The Old Oak Tree Murder,” unlike “The Suffolk Tragedy,” probably was part of Sally Sloane’s heritage of Irish songs from her maternal grandmother: the Roud Indexes reveal both that two Dublin prints survive from the second half of the nineteenth century and that the song has been recorded from oral tradition in Northern Ireland.

Sally Sloane’s performance also manages to reveal the impact of the singing tradition in a more technical way: its reinforcement of the ballad stanza, corresponding to one singing through of the melody, as a narrative unit. The original song was printed in eight-line stanzas (or double ballad quatrains), and the text was evidently written with this arrangement in mind, as there are occasions where there is a run-on in sense between the last line of one ballad stanza and the first line of the next (that is, between the fourth and fifth lines of a textual eight-line stanza). But in the instance where this occurs in the material surviving as Sally Sloane’s version, the melodic (ballad-)stanza unit has asserted itself through reformulation affecting the syntax:

- |                                                                          |                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 11. ...<br>Until eleven months were past,<br>the mother dreamed a dream, | 2. ...<br>When three long weary weeks had passed<br>When her mother dreamt her dream. |
| 12. <i>That</i> her daughter was murdered<br>...                         | 3. <i>She dreamt</i> her daughter was murdered<br>...                                 |

Having sung them to two collectors at an interval of 19 years, these three stanzas can legitimately be appreciated as Sally Sloane’s rendition of the song, but she was explicitly aware that there was more. After her performance for Warren Fahey in 1976, she offered the following remarks (Sloane 1976; I have tabulated Warren Fahey’s transcript, supplied italics to identify song-fragments, and provided specification of their place in the original):

You know there are bits in it I can’t remember, where her body was <i>  tied up in a sack and mangled</i> <i>  with many a dreadful wound.</i>	[= broadside st. 16.3] [= broadside st. 16.4]
The cook, I think, mangled her up and put her in the bag. Her mother <i>  dreamt the same dream</i>	[= broadside st. 13.1]
for three weeks and <i>  the neighbour with his pickaxe</i> is part of it too.	[= broadside st. 14.1]
Anyhow they dug in the ground and <i>  there they found</i> where she was.	[= broadside st. 16.2]

The only erroneous assertion here (but an extravagant one) concerns the role of the cook as accessory. There is nothing in the broadside original to as much as hint at it, and it is hard to see by what logic some earlier version could have introduced this motif into the song. Perhaps a

murderous cook from some other popular narrative, sung or otherwise, has somehow intruded into her thinking about the song.<sup>15</sup> The detail of the mother dreaming the same dream “for three weeks” does not originate with the broadside either, but it is altogether plausible and may be a secondary effect of the contamination just discussed specifying three weeks as the period of Maria’s disappearance.

The remainder indicates that at some earlier stage Sloane’s version of the song (or the song as she heard it from another singer) included all or parts of three more stanzas from the original’s Discovery section. That they all come *after* the full stanzas Sally Sloane does perform suggests her memory became more vulnerable towards the end of the song. The indications are that, like the English versions, the narrative in this proto-Sloane version ended with the striking image of the uncovered body “tied in a sack and mangled”—these are the first and most complete of the lines that Sally Sloane recalls from the “bits” she does not remember fully. It is also striking that Sally Sloane does not even have faint memories of any of the stanzas prior to those she performs, suggesting that prior to this point the song had already modulated into something more resembling a traditional ballad, beginning in the fifth (or perhaps fourth) act. It may also be a symptom of traditionalization that (even including the remembered fragments) we have now lost both the location of the action (except for the “red barn”) and the name of the victim; the lover murderer is now merely a generic “William” (who in Scotland would already have been reduced to “Willie”).

### **Carrie Milliner and the Bobbin Family Tradition**

Our knowledge of “The Suffolk Tragedy” in the singing tradition of the Bobbin family of New South Wales, while substantial and multifaceted, has come to us exclusively via Caroline (“Carrie”) Maud Bobbin (1926-2005), who married Roy Milliner in 1945. She was one of ten siblings, at least four of whom (Carrie herself, Phoebe, Nance, and Tom) were familiar to the Australian folk song revival as singers with a rich heritage of popular song of many kinds. This song inheritance was preserved and cultivated in what informed observers have characterized as the “fertile isolation” of the bush near Eden, where the family made a living cutting railway sleepers (Roweth and Roweth 2006a).<sup>16</sup> Carrie herself reported learning songs from her father (Roweth and Roweth 2000), but it is equally evident that others of his generation were also active singers and relevant in relation to this song. Bobbin family songs have been extensively recorded by a number of collectors, but our fascinating cache of texts of and information on this particular song is due entirely to the joint collecting and recording efforts of Australian folklorists Rob Willis and John Harpley, the former furthermore having been extraordinarily generous in making unpublished material available and in supplying factual detail vital for

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<sup>15</sup> There are no murderous cooks in her other songs. There is a wicked Cook in “The Pink Flower,” one of the Grimm brothers’ fairy tales, but he merely arranges things to look as if a child has been slaughtered (Grimm and Grimm 1992 [1812]:283-86).

<sup>16</sup> A taste of the style of this generation of Bobbin singers is found in “The Bobbins of Nulliga,” a production by John Meredith Folklore Films available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NfcD25p2Y00>.

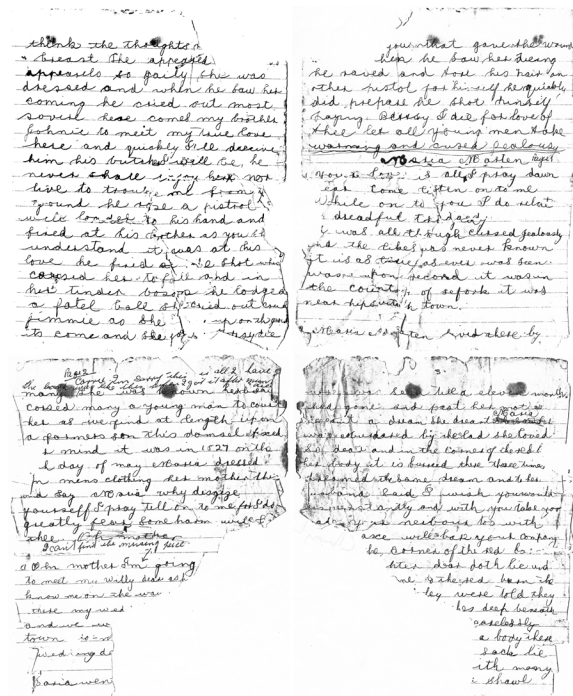
pinning down the status of this song in the Bobbin family tradition (see also Roweth and Roweth 2006b).<sup>17</sup>

The central circumstance, unique among the texts examined in this study, is that the song was evidently not part of the active repertoire of the immediate informant. By her own account, Carrie Milliner had heard performances as a young child (of 5 to 7 years) by two of her aunts, “Aunt Anne” (1885-1960, her father’s sister), and “Aunt Lil” (1902-1957, wife of Carrie’s uncle Lancelot Leighton Bobbin). She could recall the melody and some words or phrases, but during a recording session in 1994 was unable to offer a viable performance. Whatever its other contributions, therefore, Rob Willis’s fieldwork documents and contextualizes a verbal reconstruction exercise from within the tradition, vastly more comprehensive than what we have just seen with Sally Sloane.

In that exercise, one circumstance was pivotal: Carrie’s Aunt Lil had kept a “songbook” in which she had written out the words of her songs. Lil Bobbin herself having passed away in 1957, Carrie Milliner applied to her daughter, who in an act qualifying simultaneously as cultural conservation and vandalism, tore the relevant pages out of the songbook and sent them to Carrie. This damaged the book, but preserved the text of this song; while the book itself is now probably lost, Carrie Milliner, at their next encounter, made the excised pages available to Rob Willis, who photocopied them and has in turn made copies available for this study (see Figs. 1-4). As a bonus, since what the songbook calls “Maria Marten” begins half way down the verso of a sheet, we also have a substantial extract of the preceding song, “The Rambling Bachelors” (which will play a minor supporting role in what follows).

The text is written out as prose across the page, and, to judge from the varying stroke-width, with a pen that was dipped in an inkwell. The sheets concerned—evidently from a rather squat exercise book with lined pages (21 lines per page)—are old, worn, and have been considerably damaged, with substantial and irregular bits of paper missing so that the text lacks lengthy word-sequences. This damage is particularly relevant for the second sheet, which has “Maria Marten” on both sides and towards the bottom tapers to a narrow sliver preserving only ten or so letters per line.

The damage was evidently not incurred during the removal of the pages from the songbook; it is all along the outer edges of the sheets, and a note added at the top of the first full page to include “Maria Marten” explains: “Carrie I’m sorry this is all I have, the book was like this



Figs. 1-4. Four pages from the “songbook” of Lily Bobbin (“Aunt Lil”). Courtesy of Rob Willis.

<sup>17</sup> Thanks to Rob Willis and the National Library of Australia for permission to use and quote this material, both the performances and his discussions with Carrie Milliner (listed in the References as Milliner 1995).

when I got it after mum died.” The daughter of Aunt Lil who wrote this apology also alerts us to another odd feature. 12 lines down on this same page the text breaks off in the middle of a line at the words “Oh Mother” (Maria’s reply at the beginning of st. 9 of the broadside), which seem to be lightly crossed out. In the next (originally blank) line is the note “I can’t find the missing piece,” but really nothing is missing: for some reason the transcript has broken off, only to begin again after one skipped line—and in a noticeably smaller hand—with “Oh mother I’m going. . . .” We shall probably never know what intervened, but at least the note confirms the next generation of this branch of the family (as represented by Carrie’s cousin) did not sing the song either.

The exact status of Aunt Lil’s songbook in relation to the Bobbin singing tradition is not altogether clear. It was evidently not made at the behest of some earlier folk song collector, and neither the format nor its condition suggests it was intended as some kind of memorial for later generations. A practical function is more likely, but it is a complicating factor that Aunt Lil was a Bobbin only by marriage. That her maiden name was Palmer need not prompt speculation of a connection with one of the two English singers from whom the song has been collected, Freda Palmer of Whitney, Oxfordshire; while women singers invariably have their names from fathers and husbands, as often as not they have their songs from their mothers and (in the case of both Carrie Bobbin and Freda Palmer) their aunts. The thought is nonetheless a reminder of the more general, valid point that Lily Palmer may have brought some songs of her own into the Bobbin family tradition, and if the Maria Marten ballad was one of them, then it would perhaps have been closer to English tradition than many of the Bobbins’ songs. Piecing together evidence from the Bobbin genealogy cited above (Smith and Harvey 2012) and an internet query from a genealogist of the Palmer family (Coleman 2003), it is a near certainty that Lily Palmer (Aunt Lil) who was born in 1902 in Charters Towers, Queensland, was the daughter of an emigrant, Emily Palmer, born in Tiverton, Devon, c. 1877 (although the match in surnames actually suggests she was born out of wedlock). On the other hand, the fact that the song was also sung by “Aunt” Anne Bobbin may suggest Lil was the recipient. Writing down the songs may have been her way of learning them and integrating herself into a singing tradition that was evidently a significant feature of family identity.

But for whatever reason it was written down, the songbook text of “Maria Marten” is relevant for the present investigation in two ways: firstly as a direct, if imperfect, witness to the state of the song as known to the generation preceding Carrie Milliner’s some time before the mid 1950s; secondly as a point of departure for Carrie’s own attempt at reconstruction. For in anticipation of their next recording session, Carrie Milliner transcribed the text from the song book, filling its lacunae as best she could, and in due course showed the result—two pages in her own hand headed “Maria Marten (song)” —to Rob Willis. Rob Willis copied, preserved, and made available this transcription (see Figs. 5 and 6) for this study. Finally at that later encounter on May 26, 1995, Rob Willis recorded two separate performances of the song by Carrie Milliner, interspersed with their substantial and informative discussion on the process. The recording of this entire interview was subsequently deposited with the National Library of Australia (Milliner 1995). It provides the basis for the following analysis, the expediting of which was in turn greatly enhanced by central excerpts supplied directly by Rob Willis.

Thus we have available no fewer than four texts of the Bobbin “Suffolk Tragedy”: 1) the damaged text from Aunt Lil’s Songbook, 2) Carrie Milliner’s written reconstruction, and 3-4) her two recorded performances. Given their respective provenances and the methodological problems noted at the outset, it will clearly be best to resolve discussion into two phases: first, a direct and effectively philological confrontation with the text in Aunt Lil’s Songbook, as an albeit imperfect witness in our (outsider’s) attempt to reconstruct the song as it was when still alive in the Bobbin family tradition; second, a discussion of Carrie Milliner’s parallel reconstruction efforts, supplementary to our first effort, but mostly as a topic of interest in its own right, as reflecting the perceptions and competences of an insider.

*Aunt Lil’s Song*

Of the general points that can be made about the Bobbin tradition of our song as represented by the text in the songbook, the most striking is that it conserves far more of the broadside than any of the other derivative versions, English or Australian. We may recur to the now familiar summary:

**BROADSIDE**

**Aunt Lil’s Songbook**

***INCIPIIT***

- |                                       |    |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| 1. Listen: it’s a dreadful tragedy    | 1. |
| 2. of cold-blooded cruelty; but true. | 2. |

***THE AFFAIR***

- |                                                         |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 3. Maria Marten of Polstead                             | 3. |
| 4. loved a farmer’s son;                                | 4. |
| 5. <i>pregnant, she asks him to fix the wedding day</i> |    |
| 6. <i>and he reassures her.</i>                         |    |

***THE MURDER***

- |                                                       |                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 7. Maria is dressed in men’s clothes;                 | 5.                    |
| 8. <i>her mother, concerned, asks why:</i>            | 6.                    |
| 9. <i>Maria says she’ll meet William at the barn,</i> | 7. <i>(imperfect)</i> |
| 10. <i>and they will be married in Ipswich.</i>       | 8. <i>(imperfect)</i> |
| 11. She goes, but eleven months later                 | 9. <i>(imperfect)</i> |

***THE DISCOVERY***

- |                                                       |                            |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 12. Her mother dreams she is buried in the barn,      | 10. <i>(imperfect)</i>     |
| 13. <i>and asks Maria’s father to take his spade,</i> | 11.                        |
| 14. <i>and with a neighbor dig up the floor.</i>      | 12.                        |
| 15. They dig where she told them to                   | 13. <i>(imperfect)</i>     |
| 16. and find a mangled body tied in a sack            | 14. <i>(fragmentary)</i>   |
| 17. the clothes (listed)                              | 15. <i>(one word only)</i> |
| 18. identify the corpse as Maria’s.                   |                            |

***THE JUDICIAL AFTERMATH***

While its length might lead us to expect a “balladized” modulation of the broadside original along the lines of Freda Palmer’s, the content suggests that this process has at most taken only a few steps. Retention of verbal material has been considerable. Of the broadside’s first 17 stanzas, 15 (clearly recognizable even when imperfect or fragmentary) are retained, and in their original order. There are no additional stanzas. The only omission not due to damage comprises the two-stanza exchange in which the pregnant Maria begs her seducer to marry her and he offers reassurances: this omission is in line with a general tendency for oral versions of murdered-sweetheart ballads to downplay the pregnancy, and none of the other versions of the song retain these stanzas.<sup>18</sup> And for the first time we have a “folk” version of “The Suffolk Tragedy” that retains all the opening business: the performer’s call for attention and characterization of what the song has to offer, the setting of the scene, and the introduction of the characters.

Indeed, it is not even possible to be quite certain that, like the other versions (and most folk versions of most other murdered-sweetheart broadsides), the Bobbin tradition lacked the judicial aftermath. As we have seen, Aunt Lil’s daughter seems to have perused the manuscript quite carefully before excising and sending the sheets, but the fact remains that the last word written (and not just the last word surviving) on the reverse of the last sheet sent to Carrie is “shawl.” This word takes us just beyond the “tied in a sack and mangled” image preferred by other singers as a conclusion, but furthermore it is also the second word in the first line of the broadside’s stanza 17. We can suspect, therefore, that the text continued at the top of the next page of the exercise book—that is, the recto of the next sheet—with at least the rest of this stanza (listing the clothes) and perhaps the next (identification of the victim), and we cannot entirely rule out that it may have continued into the trial.

But despite this apparent strategic conservatism, it had likely been some time, or some generations, since anyone in this line of tradition had access to the printed original, for the latter’s opening line—a typical broadside “come all ye” formula—was evidently at some stage garbled beyond recognition and subsequently reconstituted into something that felt more appropriate to the context:

## BROADSIDE

1. Young lovers all, I pray draw near,

## SONGBOOK

1. Your love is all I pray dawn [d?]ear.

And at this detailed level the verbal material has been subjected to some other interesting changes, reflecting oral tradition and retrieval from memory. These modifications include the precise setting of the action:

3. In the County of Suffolk  
'twas in Polstead Town,

3. It was in the County of Sefork  
it was near hipswitch town.

---

<sup>18</sup> Given the ubiquity of bawdy songs in both English and Australian folk tradition, this practice seems to be a matter of vernacular generic decorum rather than prudery: sex is simply out of place in a tragic love-story.

“Sefork” may represent local pronunciation of “Suffolk” rather than an actual change: perhaps Aunt Lil was writing down the song as someone else sang (a scenario that might explain the erasure and fresh start noted above). Meanwhile the lesser known Polstead has been replaced by the better known Ipswich (again perhaps in local pronunciation), borrowed from a later line.

Most interesting of the changes—and the result of a process encountered with two of the other oral versions discussed here—is the revised formulation of the song’s major theme:

2. As for cold-blooded cruelty

2. [It] was all through *cursed jealousy*.

In the absence of the specific reference to pregnancy and the girl’s marriage plea, jealousy is not altogether illogical as the murderer’s motivation, and there is a related and overlapping sub-genre of murder ballads in which a sweetheart is killed by her lover not because she has become an encumbrance, but because he is insanely jealous. The expression “cursed jealousy” does not seem to be commonplace in the ballads within this tradition, but it does occur in one that is particularly relevant for present purposes. Several of the singers of the extended Bobbin family sang what Chloë and Jason Roweth (2000) call—on the basis of its opening line “Come all ye rambling bachelors” rather than its topic—“The Rambling Bachelors,”<sup>19</sup> which ends with the valediction “Let all young men take warning of *cursed jealousy*.” There is a further link between the two songs that may have triggered the contamination, in that both the sweethearts were slain by their lovers at a secret rendezvous where they arrived wearing male attire to avoid recognition. That Aunt Lil herself knew this song (with a variant of this line, “Let all young men take warning and cu[r]sed jealousy”) is demonstrated by its presence in her songbook, a substantial extract surviving as noted above on the pages her daughter sent to Carrie Milliner with the text of “Maria Marten,” which it immediately precedes. It may also—just—be possible that the contamination occurred as the songs were being written into the songbook, “cursed jealousy” from the “Rambling Bachelors” appearing just five lines before the phrase’s occurrence in “Maria Marten” and also directly above it at the end of a line.

But it would be wrong not to note an alternative explanation along the same lines but in connection with another song, the very popular ballad entitled “The New York Trader” (Roud 478). It belongs to a cluster of songs (“Captain Glen” and “Sir William Gower,” both also Roud 478; “Brown Robyn’s Confession,” Roud 62) in which a ship is saved from disaster when its captain confesses to some heinous crimes and is thrown overboard. The crimes vary, but specific to “The New York Trader” are the following lines (recorded, as it happens, from a Norfolk singer in 1921), which provide an almost exact parallel to the whole of the reformulation in Aunt Lil’s songbook (Williams and Lloyd 1971:72-73):

I killed my wife and children three,  
*All through that cursed jealousy,*  
 . . .

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<sup>19</sup> This song does not appear in the Roud index.



Evidently a very popular song, it has been recorded from tradition in both Britain and North America, ultimately deriving from a nineteenth-century broadside ballad that achieved several printings; of these, all that were able to be consulted included this line.<sup>20</sup> But while the internal similarities are stronger, the external connections are weaker: perpetrator and victim in “The New York Trader” are not lover and sweetheart, and there does not appear to be any evidence of this ballad circulating, as broadside or folk song, in Australia.

Given the imperfect or fragmentary nature of several of the remaining stanzas from the song’s core narrative (murder and discovery), it is not easy to demonstrate the emergence at the verbal level of traditional features, but we have, for example, the enhancement of “eleven months were past” (11.3) to “eleven months had *gone and past*” (9.3), and the conceptual link between the mother’s dream and the instructions it prompts has enabled a classic instance of the generation of verbal repetition through contamination:

12.2 In the Red Barn beneath the floor,	10.2 and in the	<i>corner of the red barn</i>
14.4 To the far <i>corner of the Red Barn</i>	12.4 To the	<i>corner of the red barn</i>

This version, especially in the introductory phases, is also particularly fond of regularizing the beginnings of sentences into a uniform formulation:

2.1 As for cold-blooded cruelty	2.1 [ <i>It</i> ] was all through cursed jealousy
3.1 In the County of Suffolk	3.1 <i>It was</i> in the County of Sefork
3.2 ’twas in Polstead Town,	3.2 <i>It was</i> near hipswitch town
7.1 In eighteen hundred and . . . ,	5.1 <i>It was</i> in 1827,

But the overall impression, at both the narrative and verbal levels, is of considerable conservatism in relation to the broadside, so much so that with the exception of the last few lines (where the problems are not merely due to textual losses) there are few challenges in reconstructing at least an approximation of what the undamaged notebook would have contained. Perhaps symptomatically, this is one of the few instances in which a version of either of the Maria Marten ballads recovered from tradition retains the original and correct spelling of the family name (here both in the text and the title) rather than the otherwise almost invariable “Martin.”

### *Carrie Milliner’s Reconstructions*

For Carrie Milliner, these damaged pages, supplemented by a few words and phrases recalled from the singing of Aunt Lil and Aunt Anne, were her central resource in reconstructing the song for the folklorists studying the Bobbin family tradition. And the value of our study of

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<sup>20</sup> Consulted versions include those of the Bodleian Library, available at [http://bodley24.bodley.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/acwwweng/regsrch.pl?wert=new+york+trader+\[title\]&recnums=:1486:1693:5060:11685:17055:27932:48960:50775&index=1&db=ballads](http://bodley24.bodley.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/acwwweng/regsrch.pl?wert=new+york+trader+[title]&recnums=:1486:1693:5060:11685:17055:27932:48960:50775&index=1&db=ballads), and the English Broadside at the National Library of Scotland, accessible at <http://digital.nls.uk/english-ballads/pageturner.cfm?id=74891632>.

her reconstruction will reside not so much in that reconstruction’s product, which under the circumstances hardly qualifies as a “folk” version, but in its process, which may provide a rare insight into the ways of thinking of a singer about song dynamics.

*The Written Text*

*Mania Marten (song)*

Mania Marten young in years  
 most lovely to be seen  
 was courted by a farmer's son  
 your love is all I pray for dear  
 Come listen unto me  
 while unto you I do relate, a dreadful tragedy  
 It was all through cursed jealousy  
 and the love was never known  
 It is as true as ever was seen  
 was put upon record it was in  
 it was in the court of justice  
 it was near Ipswich town  
 Mania Marten lived there by  
 the name she was known  
 her beauty caused many a young man to court her  
 as we find at length upon a farmer's son his counsel  
 forced his mind  
 it was in 1827 on the 18th day of May  
 Mania dressed in man's clothing  
 her mother this did say  
 Mania why disguise yourself I pray tell unto me  
 for I do greatly fear some harm will come to thee  
 Oh Mother I'm going to meet my willy dear  
 no one will know me along the road  
 or will they when I get there  
 and we will go into Ipswich town  
 and live the wedding day  
 Mania no more was seen till eleven months had gone

and paid.  
 her mother reports a dream. Three nights in a row  
 she dreamt Mania was murdered  
 by the lad she loved so dear  
 and in the corner of the red barn  
 her body it is buried there  
 Three times she dreamt the same dream  
 And to her husband said  
 I wish you would remember instantly and with you take  
 your neighbour too with pickaxe and a spade  
 he will have your company  
 and in the corner of the red barn  
 her daughter dear doth lie  
 and in the corner of the red barn  
 and as the stonemason said  
 they found her cloths deep beneath  
 a grave dug carelessly  
 and Mania's body in a sack lay there  
 and round her neck a shawl.

Figs. 5-6. Carrie Milliner’s Written Reconstruction. Courtesy of Rob Willis.

In the first instance, we may consult the written version that was the first product of her reconstruction efforts. While this version is manifestly a transcript of the songbook text supplemented through attempts at filling the gaps, there are a few instances where Carrie seems to be recalling words or formulations, ultimately deriving from the broadside, from some source other than the songbook—presumably her own recollection of performances. For example, from a pair of songbook lines (7.3-4) of which the damaged pages preserve only

as h[ ] know me on the wa[y]  
 [ ] there,

Carrie constructs (8.3-4):

no one will know me along the road  
 or will they when I get there

close to the broadside's (9.3-4):

His friends won't know me on the road,  
and *when I do get there . . .*

This reconstruction involves not merely filling the gaps in the songbook but “correcting” it, rejecting the obviously intended “the way” in favor of the actual original “the road.”<sup>21</sup> Such instances may be just enough to suggest that Carrie's distant and sporadic reminiscences of performances by her aunts reflect an earlier phase in the family tradition retaining more verbal features from the broadside than the version recorded in the songbook: if she did hear the song as a young child, it would have been in whatever form it had during the early 1930s.

But the reconstruction process, as Carrie Milliner reports, was arduous.<sup>22</sup> There are instances where Carrie is totally subordinate to the text in the songbook and others which take her text further from the broadside, for example, in narrating the search for the body in the barn. The broadside's

15. They went to the Red Barn,  
to the corner they were told,

is reproduced imperfectly in the songbook's

13. and [        ]me to the Red Barn,  
the [        ]hey were told.

Carrie reintroduces “corner” but deploys it in the first of the lines and is reduced to constructing something new out of “told” in the second—actually the kind of “filler” associated with the decline of late-medieval minstrelsy:

14. and in the corner of the red barn  
*and so the story's told*

Another more traditional shift away from the broadside concerns the location of the events. As we saw, the original “county of Suffolk” became “county of Sefork” in Aunt Lil's songbook, but while this change, as suggested, may be a reflection of local pronunciation rather

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<sup>21</sup> Compare also Carrie's rendition (9.2-4) of the songbook's 8.2-4 with the broadside's 10.24, her correction (3.4) at the songbook's 2.4 closer to the broadside's 2.4, and her version (7.4) of the songbook's 6.4 in relation to the broadside's 8.4.

<sup>22</sup> It is proper to add that she did have access to information about the Maria Marten case independently of the songbook, as she and two sisters and a brother were celebrated for their rendition of one of the many melodramas based on the case, which they knew in the form of a set of 78-rpm records (see Roweth and Roweth 2006b). It may be this access that explains Carrie Milliner's most striking “correction” of the text. The broadside, reflecting an error in its journalistic source, dates Maria Marten's disappearance to May 19. Aunt Lil's songbook text lacks the number, but Carrie (6.1-2) gets it right: “it was in 1827 / on the 18th day of May.”

than an actual change, Carrie writes (and in performance sings) “Sefort.” This modification may rather reflect local geography, there being a Seaforth in New South Wales. It is a suburb of Sidney, but the last letters of “county” have been smudged in the songbook, and Carrie writes and sings “court of Sefort,” perhaps as a last glimpse of the case’s judicial aftermath. Relocating the action of ballads not merely to a place closer to home but to one that sounds somewhat similar to the original is a feature of tradition and indeed occurs in the English branch of transmission in our song, with Freda Palmer, in Oxfordshire, replacing the distant Ipswich with the nearby Islip.

Carrie Milliner’s most substantial intervention, however, comprises her three new opening lines, of which only the third has any direct relationship to the songbook text (borrowing “courted” and “farmer’s son” from st. 4):

*1. Maria Marten young in years  
most lovely to be known  
was courted by a farmer’s son  
your love is all I pray for dear*

Our first instance of a substantial addition to the broadside, these lines seem to have been prompted by the feeling that the songbook’s opening line, “Your love is all I pray dawn [d]ear” (a garbling, as we have seen, of the broadside’s “You lovers all I pray draw near”), was an odd beginning and needed not merely correction to “your love is all I pray for dear” but motivation—presumably as words spoken by the farmer’s son in his courting of Maria. These lines derive, astonishingly, from a quite different broadside ballad on the case of which nothing has been seen or heard since its publication in the illustrated pamphlet *Murder of a Young Woman in Suffolk . . .* printed by Catnach close to the events in 1828. It begins:

1. A horrid deed has come to light,  
Most awful for to hear!  
You have not known, or heard the like,  
Since happened that of Weare.
  
2. *Maria Marten, young in years,  
And lovely to behold,  
Was courted by a farmer’s son,  
Who had great store of gold.*

This song should, accordingly, be added to the two red barn ballads known to have survived in oral tradition.<sup>23</sup> But the addition has broader consequences, for it reallocates the first line of the old first stanza as the fourth line of a new first stanza, leaving a new second stanza of only three lines and a potential knock-on effect for the stanzaic structure of the rest of the song.

### *Carrie's Sung Reconstructions*

The implications of Carrie's opening intervention for the song's stanzaic structure are not immediately apparent (to us or her) in her written reconstruction, set out as it is in lines that sometimes represent one ballad line, sometimes two, and with no indication of stanza divisions. This is far from the case, however, with her two performances, for now the stanza as a song unit can be clearly discerned, signaled by the rounding of the melodic pattern and an emphatic pause for breath. Fitting the new written material into this performance vehicle will produce a misfit for which a solution will have to be found.



Carrie Milliner sings "Maria Marten": first performance. (See Milliner 1995 for attribution.)

In the first performance the discrepancy between text and melody clearly takes Carrie Milliner by surprise, and after a long hesitation she is reduced to matching the lexical element of the second stanza to the musical unit by repeating its third line:

#### **Aunt Lil's songbook**

1. Your love is all I pray dawn [?]ear  
     come listen on to me,  
     While unto you I do relate  
     a dreadful Tragedy,

#### **Carrie's first singing**

1. Maria Marten young in years  
     most lovely to be known  
     was courted by a farmer's son  
     your love is all I pray for dear.
2. Come listen unto me  
     while unto you I do relate,  
     a dreadful tragedy [pause . . . ]  
     *a dreadful tragedy.*

In her second performance—following some quiet rumination on how to fit precisely the original opening words to the melody in their new position—Carrie opts for the alternative of compressing the second stanza's three lines into two and then completing this stanza by moving up the first two lines of the next:

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<sup>23</sup> It is one of three additional songs discovered at a late stage in this article's progress to publication (October 2013) in a contemporary scrapbook collection of printed material on the case, now in the Arents Collection of the New York Public Library (Arents BIP AL 01-355, p. 133). The other two songs are the "Copy of Verses" (first line: "A deed of murder, dark and dread") in the *Particulars of the Trial and Execution of William Corder* and the *Copy of Verses Written by William Corder . . .* (first line: "Come all you thoughtless wild young men"). The assistance of the staff of the NYPL Rare Books Division is acknowledged with thanks.

**Aunt Lil’s songbook**

**Carrie’s second singing**

...  
 come listen on to me  
 While onto you I do relate  
 a dreadful Tragedy,  
 2. [It] was all through cursed jealousy  
 and the likes was never known.

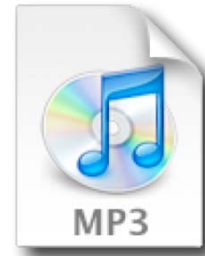
...  
 2. Come listen unto me  
 while to you I tell, a dreadful tragedy  
 It was all through cursed jealousy  
 and the likes was never known.

This alteration solves the problem of the second stanza, but it of course merely pushes the problem ahead, for the next stanza will have to comprise the two remaining lines of this one and the first two lines of the next stanza, and so forth.

Indeed, it is a characteristic of both performances, because of either this problematic start or later problems of the same kind, that they suffer from a chronic lack of synchronization between the stanzas as verbal units (as signaled by syntax and rhyme) and the stanzas as musical units (as signaled by melody, cadence, and pauses for breath). The words comprising a “verbal” stanza are often split between two “musical” stanzas, disconnecting the two rhyming lines so that the second line of one (musical) stanza now rhymes with the last line of the preceding stanza. Conversely, sentences now tend to end in mid-stanza, to a hovering musical cadence, rather than at the end of a stanza, where syntactical conclusion would be reinforced by melodic closure, the latter now falling in mid-sentence. The result is an endemic unease in the performances, and it is odd that an experienced singer could not spot this very practical discrepancy. The ultimate source of the problem is of course the imperfection of the text being used for the reconstruction, but the cause of the unsuccessful engagement with it is signaled both by what is said in the interview and by the sound of rustling paper throughout the performances: on both occasions Carrie Milliner is singing the words she sees on the text of the written reconstruction in front of her rather than subjecting them to some kind of shaping process between eye and voice.

This practice is evidently the norm for this singer at this stage of the recording process, where Carrie Milliner is supplementing her already-recorded but active repertoire with songs from family tradition, the reconstruction of which needs further enquiry and consideration. Her performance in this same interview of “The Rambling Bachelors” (which goes somewhat better) is prefaced by her looking through what is evidently a pile of sheets (mentioning other songs she spots) to find the text, and there is a moment halfway through the performance where the exclamation “where’s the rest of it?” is a prelude to more paper-shuffling.<sup>24</sup>

Written and printed texts, verbal memory, and oral performance have gone hand in hand in the song traditions of the English-speaking world for several centuries in a generally



Carrie Milliner sings “Maria Marten”: second performance. (See Milliner 1995 for attribution.)

<sup>24</sup> This is also Carrie Milliner’s reconstruction of a song she could insufficiently recall at earlier recording sessions, but she has evidently had access to other (and better) sources than the extract (corresponding to sts. 6-13) in Aunt Lil’s songbook; the sigh with which the performance ends nonetheless hints at dissatisfaction.

productive symbiosis, and the relationship between songbook and performance is emerging as central to understanding the art of the medieval minstrel (Taylor 2012): the two fields might indeed be usefully juxtaposed. Too strong a textual orientation can, however, clearly produce problems, and these emphasize the importance of memory and retrieval from memory within performance in a process for which “oral tradition” is an inadequate designation. On that day, otherwise filled with memories, the role of memory has—for the minutes devoted to this song—been usurped by writing in the form of a received text whose imperfections have been remedied pen-in-hand to generate a new text as the basis of performance. Had Carrie Milliner achieved her reconstruction in her mind and/or committed it to memory earlier and then sung it from memory, things might have gone otherwise.

For an English academic to pronounce Carrie Milliner’s performances of “The Suffolk Tragedy” aesthetic failures would be impertinent, were it not that we have her own concurring judgment by her own vernacular standards (and in her own vernacular idiom). Each singing through of the song concludes, in the first case under her breath and in the second out loud, with a frustrated “Bloody hell!” These are assessments (hers and mine) in the specific context of the verbal reconstruction of a recently “lost” song—not of her powers as a singer, or as a preserver and mediator of a cultural heritage. British and North American students of English-language folk song have as yet attributed insufficient significance to Australian song tradition in general and the Bobbin family in particular. But even though Carrie Milliner left school at age 9, and by her own account was anything but a diligent pupil, it would seem that the presence of a written text, if only in a beaten up exercise book, was enough to awe her into a literate approach, downplaying the aural, mental, and oral competences that were surely still integral to the singing tradition in Australia at this time.

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## **In and Out of Culture: Okot p'Bitek's Work and Social Repair in Post-Conflict Acoliland**

**Lara Rosenoff Gauvin**

In 2008, on my fifth visit to Northern Uganda, I was staying with Nyero's family in Padibe Internally Displaced Person's (IDP) camp, in what is now Lamwo district. At that time, the cease-fire of the previous year and a half had changed things considerably. People all over Acoliland<sup>1</sup> (Northern Uganda) had begun to return to their villages after a decade of forced displacement into squalid camps, where inhumane conditions killed—according to one study—in excess of about 1,000 individuals per week (UMH 2005). Like much of the 90% of the population who had been forcibly displaced, Nyero's family was planning to return to their “traditional” village at the end of the year. Finally, land was being cleared, seed sown, water wells checked, gardens planted, grass cut, and huts built.



Fig. 1. Padibe Internally Displaced Person's Camp, Northern Uganda. January 2007. Unless otherwise indicated, all photos are by the author.



Fig. 2. Beatrice and Kilama start to clear land for farming after living in Padibe IDP camp for 5 years. July 2008.

At the same time, however, Acoli men, women, children, youths, families, and villages struggled to deal with the past two decades of war between President Museveni's Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebel group. Forced displacement, confinement, poverty, and social torture (Dolan 2009) by the Government of Uganda, together with brutal abductions and terrorization by the LRA, squeezed the population between the two sides.

<sup>1</sup> I use the spellings Acoli and Acoliland rather than the more common anglicized versions (Acholi and Acholiland) after Okot p'Bitek himself.

Children and youths who grew up only in the congested, squalid conditions of the camp were reintroduced to “normal” village life primarily based on subsistence agriculture. Youths who escaped from the LRA struggled to reintegrate into their families and villages. Extended families tried to cope with the brutal effects of the decades of violence and internment, as well as the humiliation of their forced dependence on humanitarian aid. Conflict over land was common, and food was not yet plentiful. Tens of thousands of youths were, and still are, missing with their whereabouts unknown. Tens of thousands of deaths have not been properly mourned. Bones have not been buried. Ghosts roam free.

While relieved from the threat of armed violence (from both rebels and the Ugandan military) and the confinement, hunger, and disease of the IDP camps, some of the rural youths I spoke with in Padibe expressed anxiety about their disconnection from *tekwaro* (culture/tradition/history).<sup>2</sup> Their angst was shared by many of the rural adults and elders who feared that youths who had grown up only in the IDP camps or with the LRA did not know, or were “out of,” *tekwaro*.<sup>3</sup> It was intriguing and somewhat perplexing to me that rural elders, adults, and youths repeatedly used the concept of youths’ disconnection from, or ignorance of, *tekwaro* to communicate their post-conflict reconstruction and/or reconciliation concerns. Although scholars have written about how contemporary intrastate conflict in Africa tends to overturn generational structures (Richards 1996; Hoffman 2003; Cheney 2007; Finnström 2008; Honwana 2005), there has been little research on how the overturned structure affects the intergenerational transmission of oral tradition, and what impact that effect itself has on post-conflict processes of social reconstruction, reconciliation, and social repair.<sup>4</sup> Interested in the community’s concerns about *tekwaro* in this post-conflict context, and heeding calls from Baines (2010) and Finnström (2010) to study the social processes that order morality and relations in post-conflict Northern Uganda, I therefore returned to live with Nyero’s family in their rural village of Pabwoc for the better part of 2012 as part of my dissertation fieldwork.

Fundamental to my understanding of what is happening in Pabwoc today—and other places in Acoliland as well—are Okot p’Bitek’s academic works that explore how Acoli oral tradition shapes moral agents’ formations and understandings of their place in the universe (p’Bitek 1962, 1963, 1973, 1986). He views oral tradition as a form of social action that accounts for how people act and make meaning in the world, and he emphasizes the performative, intersubjective processes involved in the transmission and performance of cultural knowledge. According to p’Bitek (1973:90), oral tradition shapes social relations, and those vital relationship-building oral tradition practices are found in daily meaningful activities or life as it is actually lived.

p’Bitek’s largely overlooked academic scholarship on oral tradition offers great insight into Acoli communities’ post-conflict social repair processes that center around the rebuilding of culturally sanctioned social relations. Although p’Bitek was virtually ignored in academic

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<sup>2</sup> The Acoli word *tekwaro* is generally referred to as “culture” or “tradition,” but as in English, the word itself has a large semantic range that also includes history.

<sup>3</sup> Such fears corroborate Finnström’s note (2010:144) that elders referred to youths as “out of culture.”

<sup>4</sup> Exceptions are the preliminary warnings by Tefferi (2008) and Honwana (2005).

scholarship when he began writing at the time of *uhuru*<sup>5</sup> in the early 1960s, he critically explored processual and performative theoretical approaches long before they became common academic currency decades later. And while his literary work has been globally celebrated, his important and prolific academic work on oral tradition, for example, has been largely ignored within the discipline.

Much of p'Bitek's impetus for his 1963 B.Litt. thesis in anthropology, titled "Oral Literature and Its Social Background among the Acoli and Lango"—as it was also for his literary "songs" and later work on African "religion" (1971)—was to correct mistaken Western conceptual categories of literacy, social organization, and belief that he maintained were denying African nations the complex, elaborate, and rich histories and cultural practices that were their legacy (p'Bitek 1963, 1973:18). What makes Okot p'Bitek's work even more important today—in addition to its contemporary relevance to the history of the field of oral tradition—is the observation of the challenges of returning to "everyday" life, variously termed as "social repair" or "social reconstruction," after two decades of war and displacement in Pabwoc. While international and national organizations are fiercely debating transitional justice practices in Northern Uganda (Hovil 2011), there is a dearth of attention to the everyday micro-processes and -practices of social reconstruction, reconciliation, and community building—especially in rural areas—that hundreds of thousands of Acoli are engaging in daily. p'Bitek's work on oral tradition as social action provides insight into these everyday micro-processes, and, like contemporary articulations of Indigenous epistemologies and approaches to the theorization of oral performance, it valorizes community and place-based methods of moving on after violence and/or conflict.

I will begin with a brief history of the general effect of war and displacement on intergenerational relations in Northern Uganda. I will then describe the village of Pabwoc in 2012 (about 2 years after the majority of its residents returned home from Padibe Internally Displaced Person's Camp), their history during the war, and some of the resurgent oral tradition practices I encountered there. I will then review p'Bitek's main theoretical points on oral tradition and, building on a p'Bitekian framework, examine how the acknowledgement of oral tradition practices as social action leads to a better understanding of contemporary transitions in rural "post-conflict" Northern Uganda.

## Methodology

My work in northern Uganda spans eight years and began in 2004. I spent four months traveling throughout the north in 2004 and 2005; a total of four months living specifically in Padibe IDP camp in 2007, 2008, and 2010; and a continuous six months living in one rural village, Pabwoc-East, in Padibe West Sub-County in 2012. During those last six months, I participated as much as I was able (or capable) in daily life and learning the language. I also moved around among every household compound in the village, conducting a complete survey

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<sup>5</sup> *Uhuru* refers to the African movement for, and actualization of, independence—mostly in reference to East Africa.

of families' histories during the war and their perceptions of *tekwaro*. Group interviews were held with lineage and chieftain councils within Padibe West and East Sub-Counties, as well as with groups of youths in five villages. Village-wide *kabake* (debates) were held in those same five villages in March and April 2012. In addition, I participated in and followed a youth group's "cultural revival" programming within Padibe East and West Sub-Counties from March to September 2012.



Fig. 3. Author washing dishes in front of her hut in Pabwoc-East village. August 2012. Photo by Ryan Gauvin. Full reproduction permissions given.

### The 1986-2006 War in Northern Uganda

The two-decade war in Northern Uganda technically saw President Museveni's military at war with the Lord's Resistance Army rebels. But the massive displacement and confinement of the rural population by the government, the abduction and forced soldiering of Acoli youths by the rebels, and the recruitment of other Acoli youths by the government—combined with the targeting of Acoli civilians by both sides—made the majority of the Acoli people (and Acoli youths specifically) both primary perpetrators and victims of the violence (Baines 2010; Mawson 2004). In addition to the massive loss of life, high levels of violence, displacement from the land, and the resulting poverty, the separation of children and youths from their close kinship networks at various times in the conflict was unprecedented in Acoli history, even in its most tumultuous past.<sup>6</sup> Up to 25% of youths have been abducted at some point by the LRA and forced to serve as soldiers (Annan et al. 2008:vii).

Tens of thousands of "night commuter" children walked nightly, also without any form of adult guidance, to the three city



Fig. 4. This boy escaped from the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) Rebel group five days before this photo was taken. The LRA is made up mostly of abducted children. October 2004.

<sup>6</sup> All seven power shifts since British colonial rule (ending in 1962) have involved various forms and degrees of civilian-focused violence, and the Colonial administration policies before "independence" in 1962 were often themselves violent. Additionally, coercion by Arab slave traders, inter-chieftdom wars, and cattle raids were also common in the pre-colonial Acoliland area (Atkinson 1994).

centers in Acoliland for fear of abduction (Cheney 2007:206). And even before the decade of forced displacement to IDP camps, most children and youths would hide and sleep in the bush apart from adults for self-protection (Baines and Paddon 2012).

Within the IDP camps, one could see the devastating effects of the war on everyday patterns of residence, social relations, and activities. For example, *wang'oo*, nightly fireside storytelling that acted as a vital mode of social control and education, fell out of practice. Because of a lack of firewood, imposed curfews, and the dense population of a camp with huts built quite close together, *wang'oo* was no longer feasible or safe.



Fig. 5. Up to 50,000 children walked each night to the three city centers in Northern Uganda at the height of the war in order to protect themselves against abduction by the Lord's Resistance Army. October 2004.



Fig. 6. Fires that spread quickly throughout the IDP camps were quite common due to massive overcrowding. Anaka IDP camp, March 2005.

In addition, with no or limited access to their gardens, youths grew up alienated for the most part from everyday practices of subsistence farming, traditional foods were replaced with World Food Program emergency aid, and food preparation routines (which most other daily activities in this rural context aimed at supporting) were significantly altered.

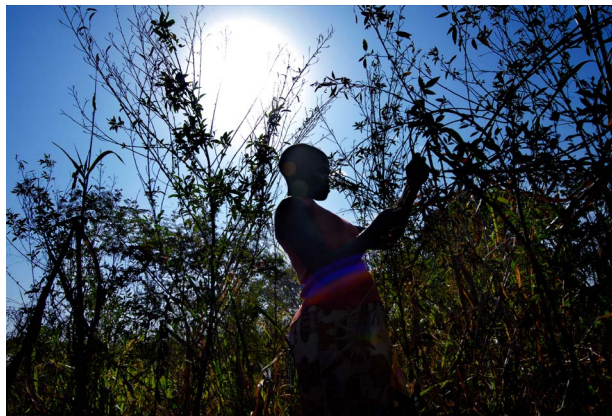


Fig. 7. Beatrice harvests peas (*lapena*) on her neighbor's plot just outside Padibe IDP camp. January 2007.



Fig. 8. Throughout the long war, residents were wholly dependent on food aid from the World Food Program for survival. Purongo IDP camp, March 2005.

Lineage authority waned as access to land through customary tenure lost its centrality in people's everyday lives. Families torn apart by the war lived together in one hut, contrary to previous practices that had girls at puberty move to a hut with their grandmother for teaching and saw boys at puberty move into a bachelor hut. In addition, ceremonies such as funerary rites—



elaborate occasions that addressed mourning, inheritance, and reconciliation of extended kin relations—were significantly curtailed because of the impossibility of travel (due to confinement or issues of security), lack of funds, or, in many cases, missing bones. Furthermore, youths were taught “Child Rights” by international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) so that the youths felt empowered enough over their elders to refuse working in the home (now seen as “child labor”) and to refute traditional corporal punishment (now seen as “beating”). Considering p’Bitek’s assertions about social relations and everyday practices as they relate to performance in oral tradition, one can imagine the profound transformations that two decades of war wrought on community, morality, and personhood.

### Pabwoc Village

Pabwoc Village is about a 75-minute walk southeast of the former Padibe IDP Camp, which had before the war been a trading center and is now a town center. The village is divided

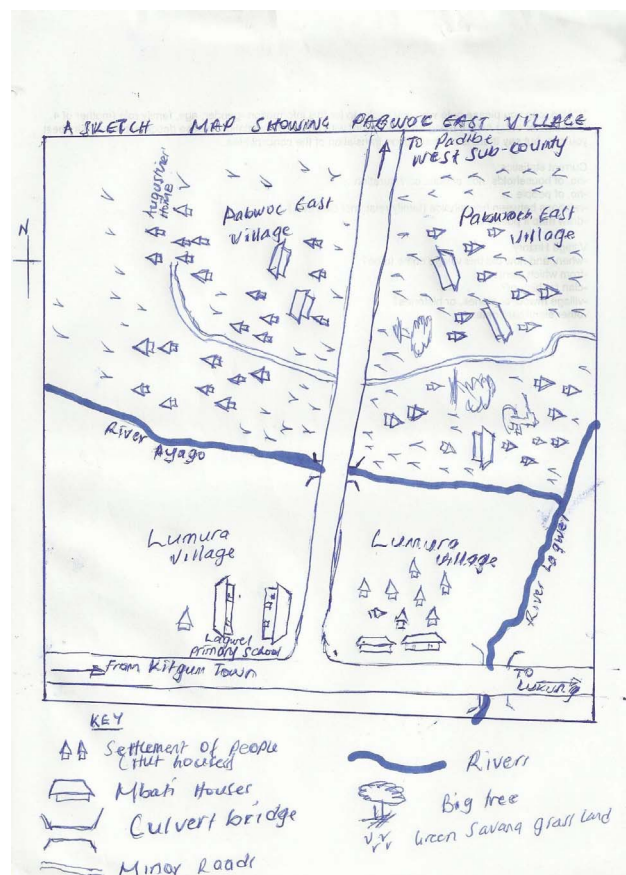


Fig. 9. Augustine (the author’s research assistant and friend) drew this map to represent his home village of Pabwoc-East. March 2012.

for administrative purposes into Pabwoc-East and Pabwoc-West, but the name Pabwoc (*pa* = “of;” thus, Pabwoc = “of Abwoc”) indicates a common ancestor of the people who live there.<sup>7</sup> There are approximately 600 people in each Pabwoc (East and West), residing in about 120 homesteads respectively. Within Pabwoc, there are three lineages along which residents trace their origins: the Otuna, Ocuga, and Abonga. Pabwoc-East, where I myself lived, is composed mostly of the Ocuga lineage. In most of rural, subsistence-farming Acoliland, land title is through customary land tenure,<sup>8</sup> and the lineage, sub-clan, and clan are therefore important and primary means of social organization and survival. Today, the village also counts itself as part of the Padibe Chieftainship and within the parish of Lagwel, the sub-county of Padibe East, and the district of Lamwo.

Pabwoc-East does not have electricity or solar panels. The water borehole that serves the village is often broken, and water is fetched from the neighboring

<sup>7</sup> Some scholars would use the term “sub-clan” to indicate the relationship between Abwoc and the Bobi clan.

<sup>8</sup> Approximately 70-80% of all rural land rights throughout Uganda are based on customary land tenure.

village's (Pabwoc-West's) borehole, about a 20-minute walk each way, depending on the location of one's homestead. The village itself consists of various homesteads—each containing collections of two to eight huts that house close family members, a granary, a pit latrine, fruit trees, and a central fire pit. Each homestead is surrounded by small gardens and can be reached by footpaths. There are communal grazing lands (*alot*) on the east boundary of the village and large communal gardens to the west that are used for the intense agricultural production that sustains the people.

Almost everyone in Pabwoc Village was displaced from their land in 1997 because of the war. Then most residents traveled to Kitgum—the capital of their district at the time—on account of increased rebel and military activity around their homes. A few stayed behind, at great risk of violence and abduction, to care collectively for livestock. Those who fled were first put up in a public primary school in Kitgum, and after two months they were then moved to relief tents at Gang-Dyang, still within Kitgum. Because of overcrowding and poor conditions, cholera broke out at Gang-Dyang, and the government expanded its policy of turning former trading centers within the rural areas into “protected villages,” or Internally Displaced Person's camps. The government transferred those who had fled to the town back to the trading centers within their home sub-counties. For Pabwoc, that was Padibe. Some residents tried to return home at that time to farm for a few years, but by 2003 everyone had shifted back to Padibe Camp as the rebels took increasing control of their homeland and the government army declared anyone who remained in their homes, outside the camps, a rebel.

The years in Padibe camp were bitter and difficult. Unable to access their land consistently, residents were dependent on the World Food Program for survival. Livestock, which was their wealth and longstanding financial security, was looted (by Karamajong or government soldiers) and disappeared. Firewood was scarce and dangerous to collect, and it was thus used sparingly for cooking rather than for the traditional nightly gatherings of *wang'oo*. Disease was rampant because of a lack of hygienic facilities and water, as well as because of overcrowding. Raids by rebels were common, and people built huts almost on top of one another out of fear and a lack of space. Major fires broke out in the camp, further destroying the few possessions people had left. Although families originally settled by village (sub-clan), as space became scarce, everyone mixed. Social control by family, lineage, and sub-clan eroded in this environment. Children grew up without knowing who their extended relatives were (issues obvious at home when village boundaries are physical manifestations of one's relations). Incest,



Fig. 10. The homestead of the author's family in Pabwoc-East village, Lamwo district, Northern Uganda. September 2012. Photo by Ryan Gauvin. Full reproduction permissions given.

according to Acoli's far-reaching conceptions of relatedness,<sup>9</sup> became rampant. Alcohol abuse—perhaps an effect of either the idleness of the camps, the humiliation of dependence on aid, or the trauma of the war—became common.

In addition, the population was exposed to immense amounts of foreign ideology through the new presence of international NGOs in the camp and their “trainings.” As discussed by Lederach (1995), “trainings” are not merely the apolitical delivery of aid, but the “packaging, presentation, and selling of social knowledge” (6)—social knowledge that is, inherently, full of the cultural, religious, moral, and philosophical biases of those behind the aid and trainings. For example, most Pabwoc residents speak of their disdain for the trainings related to “child rights” that undermined parental, lineage, and sub-clan responsibility and the ability to control their children socially.

In an academic context, Chris Dolan has asserted that the IDP camps in Northern Uganda facilitated “cultural debilitation” and that the overcrowded living conditions were “vectors for social breakdown” (2009:168-69).<sup>10</sup> Baines (2007:96) has also explored the idea that the war, and all its effects, represents a fundamental imbalance in the Acoli moral, social, and spirit worlds, and Finnström (2008) has spoken of the cosmological crisis that the conflict provoked for Acoli. According to the people of Pabwoc, exile from the land, the breakdown of kin authority in the crowded camps, and foreign interventions all contributed to these failures and crises.

After a ceasefire in late 2006, though amidst a failed peace negotiation in 2008,<sup>11</sup> residents finally began returning home in late 2008, and by 2010 almost all residents of Pabwoc who intended to do so had left the IDP camp. The years since their return have also been difficult, and adults' efforts have been focused almost exclusively on survival and the social organization it entails. As I was reminded often by Yolanda, a mother in her forties, “returning home, rebuilding huts, latrines, and digging land from bush . . . it is really, really hard. It takes a lot of work . . . all of our time and energy.” Women work almost exclusively in the gardens. Men for the most part do garden work as well, but some have jobs in “the center” (the former camp), Padibe, teaching or making furniture. Children spend most of their days going to and from school, working at the appropriately gendered household chores, and helping in the gardens on the weekends and school holidays. According to people in Pabwoc, some youths who grew up in the camp have slowly adjusted to rural and subsistence-farming life. Others have a hard time returning to a home and lifestyle that is both foreign and undesirable to them, and as some adults and elders say, “they now think they are too good and refuse to dig! They only want to make money so they don't have to be good people.” To be independently wealthy, the elders explained

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<sup>9</sup> One is related to whole other villages—and therefore sub-clans and clans—through maternal families and in-laws.

<sup>10</sup> Dolan (2009:1, 171, 221, 236, *et passim*) further asserts that this debilitation has occurred in line with the government's plan to “inclusively subordinate” the Acoli, replacing traditional authority structures with governmental ones.

<sup>11</sup> Despite the failed peace negotiations, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) withdrew from Northern Uganda. It continues to be active in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), South Sudan, and the Central African Republic (CAR).

to me, was very dangerous since it permitted an individual to be unaccountable to their kin, and therefore socially irresponsible.

Today, despite the tumult of the displacement and war years, lineage, sub-clan, and clan structures and practices have all strongly, and perhaps surprisingly, revived since the return to the land. *Wang'oo* have also mostly returned. According to my village survey, approximately 85% of households engage in this practice within their own compounds or visit an elderly family member to practice with them. In addition, 100% of Pabwoc-East residents now survive upon subsistence farming.



Fig. 11. *Wang'oo* (nightly fireside gathering) in Pabwoc-East village. August 2012. Photo by Ryan Gauvin. Full reproduction permissions given.

The Acoli have a classic patrilineal (inheritance through one's father) segmentary lineage system and traditionally marriages are patrilocal, with the wife moving to her husband's village.<sup>12</sup> 100% of the residents of Pabwoc-East are either descendants of Abwoc or have married a descendant of Abwoc, and they can all trace themselves to one of the three lineages mentioned earlier. During my time in Pabwoc I observed how kin structures deal with a multitude of problematic issues connected with stubborn youth, domestic violence, land disputes, theft, and collective farming, and I even saw how a homicide passes through the various levels of kin and chieftain organization towards resolution. If and when issues cannot be settled through these means, the police and courts then offer potential alternative solutions.

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<sup>12</sup> However, there are numerous exceptions when a woman returns to her father's village as a result of divorce, barrenness, or ill treatment by the husband. There are also some examples in Pabwoc of families tracing themselves through their mothers to Abwoc.

### Okot p'Bitek (1931-1982)

Although in literary circles Okot p'Bitek is considered one of the most important African post- and anti-colonial writers and cultural revolutionaries, his critical academic work—with a significant amount of it treating oral tradition—is not widely known or applied. p'Bitek was born in 1931 in Gulu, Northern Uganda; his mother, Serena Laca, was widely known as a storyteller and dancer, and his father, Jebedayo Opi, was a schoolteacher. He wrote his first novel, *White Teeth*, in 1952 and traveled to England in 1958 with Uganda's national football team. While there, he decided to pursue academic studies—first in law and then, as his interest in the legal practices of his own Acoli people grew, in anthropology at Oxford, partially under the prominent Sir E. E. Evans-Pritchard. p'Bitek's first writings on oral tradition appear at that time. He returned to Northern Uganda soon after, continuing his writings, and is credited with founding “the East African Song School” of literature with his most famous work, *Song of Lawino*, originally published in 1966. Importantly, the song style of his literary work advocated for reconsidering what was

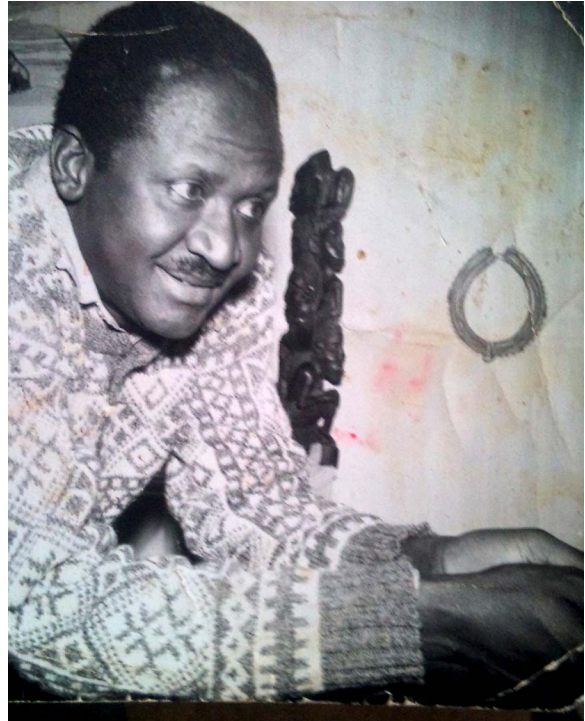


Fig. 12. Okot p'Bitek. Photo and reproduction permissions provided by Okot's daughter, Julie Bitek.

conceptualized as literature, and p'Bitek succeeded in questioning binary thinking regarding illiteracy and orality by basing his literary work in an oratorical style.

p'Bitek moved to the capital, Kampala, in 1966, where he became the first African director of the National Theatre. He was forced into exile (in Kenya) in 1968 and began teaching in the University of Nairobi in 1971. He also taught briefly at the University of Iowa, the University of Texas at Austin, and the University of Ife in Nigeria. During those years, he wrote the collections of Acoli oral literature *Horn of My Love* (1974) and *Hare and Hornbill* (1978), as well as *African Religions in Western Scholarship* (1971) and a collection of critical essays entitled *Africa's Cultural Revolution* (1973). He also continued to compose his “song” literature. After Idi Amin's reign, p'Bitek finally returned to Uganda in 1980 to a teaching position at Makerere University in Kampala. He died tragically of a stroke in July 1982 and was buried in the town of his birth. Another collection of essays, *Artist, the Ruler* (1986), was published posthumously.

In 1963, Okot p'Bitek wrote his B.Litt. anthropology thesis, “Oral Literature and Its Social Background among the Acholi and Lango.” In order to correct the false, and consequently harmful and destructive, impressions that Western scholars and missionaries had made of his people, he documented what he called their “knowledge,” variously understood as the social philosophy, worldview, or religion manifest in the “oral literature” of the Acoli. p'Bitek's holistic

view conceptualizes oral literature and tradition as representing and enacting a people's general approach to life, and he argues that the practices embodied in Acoli oral tradition (and other primarily non-written cultures) are the main method by which society interprets itself and its members relate to each other and the outside world (p'Bitek 1973:27). In this and all his subsequent academic writings (1962, 1963, 1971), p'Bitek provides powerful arguments to counter the decontextualizing, non-holistic, and patronizing way that Western scholarship had previously studied the oral traditions, philosophy, and culture of African peoples.

Beginning with the basic acknowledgement that the fullness of Acoli life exists only within the bonds of kinship relations, p'Bitek contrasts the relationality and social collectivism of the Acoli with the Western concepts of autonomy and individuality (1986:19):<sup>13</sup>

Man is not born free. He cannot be free. He is incapable of being free. For only by being in *chains* can he be and remain "human." What constitutes these chains? Man has a bundle of *duties* which are expected from him by society, as well as a bundle of *rights* and *privileges* that the society owes him.

Emphasizing the idea that Acoli identity is relational, he sees the processes of socialization and the basis for creating those relationships as embedded in the oral tradition. Such views can help us to better understand the angst of Pabwoc's youths and elders regarding youths being outside of *tekwaro*. If the basis of creating, and ostensibly maintaining, social relations is embedded in oral traditional practices—and if those practices are foreign to youths who grew up in the IDP camps—then considerable practical and existential uncertainty can be attributed to the havoc or break caused by the war and the subsequent displacement from their land. Extrapolating from p'Bitek's assertion, then, a break from *tekwaro* and the oral tradition associated with it also means a break in social relationships. Interestingly, privileging the importance of relationships also resonates with the contemporary emergence of an Indigenous research paradigm (see, for instance, Tuhiwai Smith 1992; Alfred and Corntassel 2005; Wilson 2008). Wilson explicitly explains that the core of an Indigenous ontology and epistemology is relationality, whereby "relationships do not merely shape reality, they *are* reality" (2008:7).

Following upon his arguments about the relationality of social existence and that oral tradition is inextricably linked to social relations, p'Bitek emphasizes that the social philosophy (or "knowledge," per contemporary Indigenous scholarship) of a people is not communicated through abstract speculation or by seeking experts within the culture, but that it should be sought in the meaningful practices of people's daily activities, or in life as it is actually lived (p'Bitek 1973:90). p'Bitek's adamant insistence, in the 1960s at least, on focusing upon the practices of everyday life is seen reflected in later works on orality such as David W. Cohen's (1989) observations among the Busoga, which emphasize that historical knowledge is not located in specific formulaic narratives, but that it is constantly "voiced, addressed, and invoked all through everyday life" (13), and that the working intelligence of daily life is necessarily based on knowledge of the past. Deemphasizing expert knowledge and processes also resonates with many Indigenous researchers in the Americas and Australia today who insist that Indigenous

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Imbo 2002:131.

knowledges are acquired through daily experience (for instance, Wilson 2008; Dei et al. 2000).

As corroboration, during my time in Pabwoc there were very few instances of formal story or history telling. Rather, when walking to the garden for digging, for instance, one's elders might point out the boundaries of the sub-clan, identify neighboring villages or sub-clans, recount past conflicts over land, or speak of which crops were grown before.



Fig. 13. Dorkus leads the author to her garden, explaining who gardens in the other plots along the way, where the next villages begin, and what the histories are between Pabwoc-East and their neighbors. July 2012.

While gathering firewood, I even heard a story about the last elephant shot in the area (in the 1950s). Due to the proliferation of arms when Acoli soldiers from England's King African Rifles Regiment returned home from the Second World War, big game was quickly hunted out. These examples make it clear that

oral tradition practices, which according to p'Bitek create and maintain social relations, are indeed found in everyday life practices such as gardening and wood gathering—the exact everyday practices that were dormant during the long years of war and displacement from the land when the population was confined to the camps. This performance-oriented conceptualization of oral tradition also finds resonance with more recent academic concerns, first with “context” in oral tradition, as per Ruth Finnegan's *African Oral Traditions* (1970), and later in a more fully elaborated form with “performance studies” in cultural production and reproduction, as described, for example, by Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs almost two decades later (1990:61):

Performance-based study challenges dominant Western conceptions by prompting researchers to stress the cultural organization of communicative processes. . . . We attempt to provide a framework that will displace reified, object-centered notions of performativity, text, and context— notions that presuppose the encompassment of each performance by a single, bounded social interaction.

A performative approach to oral tradition not only facilitates engagement with context, but also further considers its practices as social action—action that is representative and at the same time constitutive of social, moral, and political worlds.

Anthropologist Julie Cruikshank (1997) takes a similar approach when she speaks of storytelling as social action at a Yukon storytelling festival and explores how speaker, audience, context, histories, and occasion intersect in performance as they actually serve to *do* something in the world. In Pabwoc, I have found such performative social action in far less-formal oral tradition practices. There were countless days around the homestead where Mama and the Aunties instructed the young girls (and myself) on how to prepare food properly, how to serve food and drink properly, how to sit properly, when to bathe, and many other activities essential to being a good Acoli woman. While these instructions may at first glance be seen as utilitarian,

there are bountiful moral and social lessons—especially regarding social relations—bound up in the Acoli concept of *woro* (“respect”) that were transmitted on those occasions.

While p'Bitek's observations on relationality, everyday practice, and performance certainly find resonance in various spheres today, his disinterest in reconstructing history—in addition to his anti-colonial sentiments—minimized academic response at a time when academia was mainly focused on the legitimacy of oral traditions as historical sources. Jan Vansina's groundbreaking work in establishing the legitimacy of oral history had only just been published in French (1961) at the time when p'Bitek was researching and writing his thesis (1963). And while Vansina's



Fig. 14. Mama (the author's adoptive mother) instructs the author and other young girls on how to serve the evening family (often extended) meal. April 2012.

work fundamentally challenged Western conceptions of documentation and history on one level, his preoccupation with legitimizing oral history in his search for “validity” and “reliability” by giving “confidence that the components of an oral narrative could be disembedded from the present and from the performance” (Curtin 1968a, quoted in White et al. 2001:11) was directly opposed to p'Bitek's more holistic, fluid, and constitutive social philosophical and action-oriented approach to orality.

### **Becoming Human after War: Oral Tradition As Social Action**

Studies of oral tradition generally examine verbal and non-verbal communication in order to better understand a wide array of social processes. p'Bitek's work on oral tradition's building of social relations, its everyday forms, and its performative nature provides significant insights on social repair and forms of “localized transitional justice” (Shaw et al. 2010) practices in communities recovering from violence and conflict. For instance, with p'Bitek's assertions in mind, one recognizes that Acoli oral traditions are the principal means of socialization and education (despite formal schooling), whose transmission promotes moral development (Apoko 1967; p'Bitek 1962), enforces social norms (Okumu 2000), serves as conflict resolution, and provides the conceptual tools to examine and act in all aspects of social life (p'Bitek 1963, 1974). Furthermore, there is an Acoli concept termed *odoko dano* that refers to the socialization process of creating a real human being (*dano adana*), who, according to Finnström (2008:25), is someone who “is able to take advice from elders and contribute to household maintenance” and who, according to Apoko (1967:49), “knows their duties.” In conjunction with Acoli conceptions of personhood, then, becoming a human being largely depends on the intergenerational transmission of cultural values through oral tradition (narratives, practices, everyday work



activities, and the like),<sup>14</sup> and according to Acoli processual notions of the transmission of culture (*tekwaro*) and the making of humanity (*odoko dano*), oral tradition involves—both practically and conceptually—social action that constitutes social, political, and moral worlds.

In Pabwoc, I heard many times about the humiliation people felt at having to survive by “begging” from the NGOs, and many agreed with one man when he said that “getting something for nothing was never in the Acoli culture. Living in the camps has changed many of our youths—and even our elders.” Emphasizing their distance from the land, their loss of livestock, their subsequent loss of self-reliance, and youths’ abhorrence of gardening are all common vernaculars for speaking about the war and its devastating effects on personhood and community. (This is not to say that the violence of the war is trivialized or ignored, but the violence experienced has actually very little bearing on these individuals’ efforts to retake control and rebuild their lives.<sup>15</sup>) Such a situation reminds us of the observations found in this essay’s introduction where adults in Pabwoc expressed their angst about youths being “out” of *tekwaro*; being “out of” *tekwaro* is the colloquial way of referring to the war’s devastating effects on social relations and Acoli ideas of personhood.

Taking the subjective and intersubjective processes of communication involved in oral tradition as a site for the creation of meaning, world-views, relationships, and ultimately, reality, provides important focus for examining how people engage in processes of social repair. This emphasis on actual communication processes and colloquial forms partially explains, for example, why survivors of war and violence tend to under-emphasize the facts of violent events, including dates, physical descriptions, and so forth. And although the lack of chronology may be frustrating to evaluators in formalized truth-telling processes (Krog et al. 2009; Ross 2001), attention to what is emphasized by survivors reveals far more about how people make sense of lethal violence and remake their lives.

Emphasizing the creation of personhood and relatedness through oral traditional practices—the resurgent practices (for instance, *wang’oo*, work parties, lineage councils, sub-clan meetings, and subsistence farming) I saw in Pabwoc relating to the strengthening of lineage and kin relations—specifically constitutes an embodied, practice-oriented form of social repair. Considering *odoko dano* and Acoli notions of becoming human through oral tradition and participation in one’s kin community, the important resurgence of lineage, sub-clan, and clan authority and institutions following a return to traditional land makes good sense. In fact, in addition to the central role of kin structures in everyday survival and organization, approximately

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<sup>14</sup> According to Opiyo Oloya (2013:17): “The stories we were told as children had moral endings that instructed us how to relate to the people around us as *dano adana*, human persons, a core identity endowed on each individual, and which determined how the individual viewed self, and how the individual was treated by others within the community. In essence, these stories told us how we should live . . . as my parents put it, *kit ma omyero ibed calo dano adana*, ‘how you should live like a human person.’”

<sup>15</sup> The devastating violence experienced during the war, at least in Pabwoc and Padibe generally, is indeed bracketed away from standard Acoli ways of dealing with conflict. Usually, for example, in instances of an individual being killed—and differing from the individualist, Western approach to justice—the sub-clan of the perpetrator, and not the perpetrator him/herself, is responsible to the sub-clan of the victim. In post-conflict Acoliland, however, the scale of the violence experienced during the war, as well as the circumstances of much of it (most LRA rebels were abducted as children and forced to kill), precludes an adherence to these collective responsibility standards.

90% of villages within the Padibe Chiefdom (the chiefdom that incorporates the villages in the sub-county) have “raised” an *abila*, the lineage or sub-clan’s ancestral shrine. And although Pabwoc has yet to raise theirs, the *Won Abila* (“father of the shrine”) is planning for it to be raised “soon” in order to “help bring the *kaka* [a term variously used for lineage, sub-clan, or clan] together and heal all the sickness that happened from the war” (Rosenoff Gauvin 2012). Reestablishing these shrines strongly supports the centrality of kin institutions, oral tradition, and relationality to post-conflict social repair in Pabwoc, Padibe, and rural Acoliland more generally.

These quite quick resurgences in organizational structures and related practices suggest the variability of forms in which the people of Pabwoc and Padibe reconcile history (even when violence has been involved), restore self and community, and rebuild after conflict. Connerton’s (1989) assertions that our experience of the present is largely dependent on our knowledge of the past and that it is chiefly through bodily performances that societies remember the past also support the notion that the resurgence of kin structures and their related practices indicates intense and dynamic local processes of repair.

To clarify an approach to everyday processes of social repair that is theoretically grounded and practically informed, it is useful to recognize p’Bitek’s groundbreaking work and appreciate the performative nature of oral tradition as well as its vital role in creating personhood and social relations as social action. Relating these concepts to the field of post-conflict social reconstruction and social repair elucidates critiques regarding the Western philosophical bias to truth-telling and judicial processes, for example, and prioritizes locally relevant processes of relationship-building practiced by communities themselves that may reject binaries between remembering and forgetting, speaking and silence, truth and fiction.

### **Place-Based Approaches to Post-Conflict Inquiry**

The use of p’Bitek’s incredibly rich scholarship on oral tradition to understand and explain people’s post-conflict concerns and actions beginning from their own cultural concepts around *tekwaro* helps clarify the vital significance of everyday resurgent practices in contemporary Acoliland. Okot p’Bitek’s work, decades ahead of its time, inherently acknowledged the “local” as a primary place of knowledge and capacity (as subsequently urged by Baines [2010] and Finnström [2008]). His main points, that oral tradition shapes personhood and social relations, and that oral traditional practices are performed within everyday social interactions and activities, provide a logical framework to understanding how communities are actively engaging in processes of social repair.

Keeping in mind p’Bitek’s work on the fluidity of oral tradition, social philosophy, education, religion, and moral positioning, one of his main concerns was that the nations of Africa should be built on actual African foundations. Rather than calling for a retreat to traditionalism from “modernity,” as some critics have charged, p’Bitek instead propounded the development of African institutions based on African, and not specifically European, biases, values, and ideas. And in relation to questions concerning post-conflict processes of social repair—a topic of urgent concern in Northern Uganda and elsewhere—p’Bitek’s work emphasizes that for transitions to succeed, the definitions, values, and terms of “repair” or “justice” must be those

that are meaningful and relevant to a majority of a specific people's everyday lives. That is not to say that people in Northern Uganda may not want a variety of approaches to transition, but that attention to everyday oral traditions and vital socialization practices will provide invaluable insight into indigenous, sustained, effective, and longer-term processes of social relationship building. Indeed, those of us that have not lived through two decades of war are, at best, students open to learning about transition and social reconstruction from the experts themselves—survivors whose daily lives embody the theoretical, moral, and practical challenges of that reality. And for that access and privilege, I am grateful.

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**Appendix: Portraits of Survivors/Residents of Pabwoc East**

Portrait 1. Almarina and Justo (husband and wife). April 2012.



Portrait 2. Yolanda. September 2012.



Portrait 3. Alice and Grace (co-wives). August 2012.



Portrait 4. Okot. September 2012.

## **The Beast Had to Marry Balinda: Using Story Examples to Explore Socializing Concepts in Ugandan Caregivers' Oral Stories**

**Valeda Dent Goodman and Geoff Goodman**

### **Introduction**

The current essay is based on interview data gathered during the summer of 2009 in the rural Ugandan village of Kitengesa as part of a larger constellation of studies (Dent 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2008; Dent and Yannotta 2005; Parry 2004) that have investigated the impact of rural village libraries in Uganda and elsewhere in Africa on the users they serve.<sup>1</sup> One of these studies focused on the learning readiness of young children (ages 5-7) as influenced by the reading habits and library use of their primary caregivers—most often their mothers and grandmothers (although there were two fathers in the study who were the primary caregivers). The project included more than 50 hours spent interviewing 51 caregivers about their reading, storytelling, and literary practices, as well as their home lives, health, and socioeconomic status. As part of the interview process, we asked caregivers to talk about the stories told to their children who were participating in the study. These stories were actually *examples* of told stories; the caregivers were not observed telling the stories to their children in a natural setting. The caregivers were thus engaged in telling us *about* their telling of these stories by answering other related questions while also providing examples of the stories themselves.

Our study employs a grounded theory approach in order to analyze the data extracted from these interviews. Such an approach provides a way to explore qualitative data systematically for patterns, themes, and theoretical constructs (Glaser and Strauss 1967); the raw data involved may consist of interviews, focus groups, oral narratives, and so on. The method can of course be used to generate research questions for further study, but it also allows researchers to begin their inquiry with guiding ideas that frame the domain being explored (Backman and Kyngas 1999:149). One such research question guided this study: what

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socializing concepts are present in the stories that Ugandan primary caregivers tell their young children?<sup>2</sup>

The goals of this essay are therefore twofold. First, guided by our research question, we aim to explore particular story examples and describe these stories in relation to the sociocultural ecology of life in Kitengesa. Through this process we hope to provide what Charmaz (2008:10) refers to as “an interpretive portrayal of this world, not an exact picture of it.” Second, we will then use the theoretical constructs resulting from our content analysis in order to characterize the socializing concepts inherent in these story examples.



Fig. 1. The original Kitengesa Community Library, built in 2002. Photo by Valeda Dent Goodman.



Fig. 2. The new Kitengesa Community Library, built in 2009. Photo by Valeda Dent Goodman.

It is important to point out that the perspectives presented herein are those of Western researchers who readily acknowledge the impact of their own cultural and social biases during the course of this study. Any discovered themes and constructs are certainly colored by this bias. On the other hand, as researchers we have also spent long periods of time over the course of eight years in this village and do indeed have an experiential framework from which to conduct our study. Accordingly, this study is able to make use of a broad constellation of ethnographic experiences to aid in the discovery of patterns, categories, and connections within the story examples. These examples were not told in a vacuum; they were in fact “triangulated with

<sup>2</sup> In order to answer this question, data were coded by following the steps explicated by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003:7) and according to the constant comparative approach as defined by Glaser and Strauss (1967:3), Glaser (1978, 1992), Strauss (1987), and Strauss and Corbin (1998:71). Grounded theory allows researchers to generate research questions and hypotheses after data collection and after careful examination of the data (Auerbach and Silverstein 2003; Strauss and Corbin 1998), and the discovery of categories from the data is one of the strengths of the approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Researchers can also begin the grounded theory process with research questions in the manner described by Backman and Kyngas (1999:149): “The research questions in grounded theory are statements that identify the phenomenon to be studied. The questions are formulated so that they give the researcher the flexibility and freedom to explore the phenomenon in depth.”

Auerbach and Silverstein (2003:35) discuss the seven elements of the grounded theory coding process: raw text, relevant text, repeating ideas, themes, theoretical constructs, theoretical narrative, and research concerns. These steps progress from the most elementary to the most sophisticated, with the first step being the initial examination of the raw text. The development of the theoretical constructs is key to surfacing the research concerns. It should be noted that the process of coding the data is iterative rather than linear in nature (Auerbach and Silverstein 2003:35; Strauss and Corbin 1998:71). For this study the original interview transcripts provided the raw text, and the story fragments provided the relevant text.

ethnographic background knowledge” of the researchers (Olshansky 1987:56). Our own interactions with the caregivers, with their children, and with other people in the village, as well as our involvement in local practices and cultural activities, provided a rich palette from which to explore and better understand the socializing aspects of these story examples. This level of interaction was key to understanding the oral traditions and storytelling practices of the culture being studied, much in the way that Schott (1994) has described.

It is also necessary to understand that the story fragments used in this study make up only a small part of a larger set of oral traditions at work in the village where the study took place. Oral traditions are a familiar part of the communication constellation in cultures around the world and may take many forms.<sup>3</sup> Storytelling is just one type of oral tradition, and stories play a role in religion and history, as well as in the actual development of cultures and the self. In many cultures, stories are frequently shared between adult and child. Degh (1969:vii) reminds us that storytelling is actually a complex matrix of factors—the oral narrative, the storyteller, the setting, and the audience—working together to form a “whole in the expression of culture,” and Stoeltje (2003:94) suggests that “in studies of African oral traditions two topics have emerged as significant in recent years. The first concerns the interweaving of concepts and practices defined as traditional or indigenous with those originating in the paradigm of modernity, while the second identifies the relevance and the power of gender and sexuality.” Each of these sentiments is relevant to this study since the story fragments are being considered within the framework of storytelling as oral tradition.

## **Background and Theory**

The theoretical framework for this study is informed by two primary, related areas: 1) the socializing role of oral stories told within African cultures, and 2) the role that stories play within the parent/child communication framework. Each of these areas certainly merits thorough review; however, for the purposes of this essay a more general overview of their relation to this study must suffice.

Research has demonstrated that oral stories are a powerful medium for communication and socialization within cultures. The context for such socialization practices can be found in the work of Bamberg (1997), who suggests that stories help to create a moral order, and also of Bruner (1990), who explicates the value of the story in sharing morals and values: “The practice of giving our children moral lessons in the form of stories is common not only in western traditions, but in many, perhaps most, other cultures” (cited in Walton and Brewer 2001:308). Walton and Brewer examine the role of the story in helping children become a part of the moral discourse of their culture and the ways in which the narrative “functions to position children as moral agents” (2001:308); they go on to conclude that stories (those told by children and those told to children) can be a critical element in the socialization process “crucial to the transmission

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<sup>3</sup> According to Finnegan (1992:5) oral traditions can be any “unwritten tradition,” including those that are “enunciated or transmitted through words.” Henige (1982:2) suggests that oral traditions are verbal, non-written, belonging to the people, and typically “recollections of the past that are commonly or universally known in a culture and have been handed down for at least a few generations.”

and re-creation of culture” (330), and they should thus be encouraged. Stories can communicate shared values within a group, contribute to social stability, and promote and maintain the social status quo (MacFadyen 2004). Oral stories in particular play a key role in the transmission of cultural capital and support the ongoing maintenance of beliefs, morals, and rules (Macfadyen 2004).

Jacobson-Widding (1992:19) suggests that African stories may function in the same way as their western counterparts, providing a means to share moral and cultural messages and to “express ambiguous emotions involved in close interpersonal interaction that we all share” within a culturally established framework. These stories can also “epitomize the structural and structuring principles of the public, social order” (10). Such stories may sometimes play upon certain emotions to help create this moral order, and fear works as a particularly good example of this phenomenon. Rachman describes the way in which fear may be transmitted from parent to child within the communication framework (1977:384):

Information-giving is an inherent part of child-rearing and is carried on by parents and peers in an almost unceasing fashion, particularly in the child’s earliest years. It is probable that informational and instructional processes provide the basis for most of our commonly encountered fears of everyday life. Fears acquired informationally are more likely to be mild than severe.

Consideration of cross-cultural differences in how parents talk to and interact with their children is an interesting framework from which to view the story examples collected for this study, particularly because many of these story examples were represented by the caregivers as more of a conversation with their children meant to impart some relevant cultural, moral, or social information. Burns and Radford (2008:194) suggest that children develop within “complex and interactive social relationships, located within social institutions and organizations such as families and communities.” In a conversation analysis study designed to explore the interactions between Nigerian parents and their children, Burns and Radford (2008) discovered that the Nigerian mothers’ conversations with their children fell into four categories: tutorial modeling (eliciting a desired response through explicit instruction), initiation-response-evaluation (an adult-initiated question to the child, followed by the child’s response and evaluation of the answer by the adult), initiation-evaluation (interaction initiated by the child, with response by the adult), and initiation-confirmation-topic pursuit (interaction initiated by the child, with further topic pursuit by the adult). The researchers concluded that the Nigerian mothers’ talk was highly instructional, similar to the discourse one might find in a classroom. In another study of Nigerian mothers’ conversations with their young children, Trevarthen (1988) found that mothers tend to talk to their (very young) children while they are being fed or changed, and Law (2000) observed that conversation and stories in West African culture heavily emphasize obedience and responsibility. These findings by Trevarthen and Law are similar to observations made during our own study.

The interplay between sociocultural and socioeconomic factors has also been examined in relationship to stories and communication between mothers and children. In general, past researchers have found that poverty plays a major role in the communication patterns between mothers and children, and these themes sometimes surface in local stories. For instance, poverty

often interacts with other social factors to influence how children learn to navigate communication itself (Farran 1982), and as is the case in Uganda, impoverished familial living conditions also have a great impact on children's early development and socialization. As Farran (1982:33) notes, such homes are characterized by great amounts of stimulation but little attention being paid to children who are not still infants.

Further, stories are acts of language, laden with symbolism and meaning, that serve a particular function, especially where children are concerned. Stavans and Goldzweig (2008) suggest that one of the most common types of parent-child interaction is the oral story. Stavans and Goldzweig also contrast stories told at home (an informal setting) with those told at school (a formal setting) and suggest that these different contexts impact how the story is told, why the story is told, who speaks when, and so on. Duranti et al. (2011:2) suggest that language—including stories—is “a fundamental medium in children's development of social and cultural knowledge and sensibilities;” they also assert that “social competence” is cultivated “in and through requesting, questioning, asserting, planning, storytelling, correcting, evaluating, confirming, and disputing” (7), to name just a few such activities. “Language socialization” can therefore be described as that which “examines how children and other novices apprehend and enact the ‘context of situation’ in relation to the ‘context of culture’” (Duranti et al. 2011:1). In the case of the story examples that we ourselves collected for this study, the caregivers may be seen as those with more experience, and their children as the novices; the stories serve the purpose of socializing, guiding, and informing the novices across a variety of different situations. But Duranti et al. caution against seeing language socialization simply as a narrowly defined set of practices (2011:12): “language socialization does not boil down to a set of behaviors that are explicitly and intentionally oriented to enhance a novice's knowledge or skill.” Rather, the emphasis should be on the complex matrix of experiences, learning, and interactions among the members of a culture that support the process. In the case of stories, it is this broader mosaic populated by the semiotic forms and cultural interpretations that is important (Duranti et al. 2011:2). Within this framework it is easy to find examples that are relevant to the current study. For instance, Miller et al. (2011) discuss how narrative can be used to challenge children's behaviors. Ochs and Capps (2001) refer to the fact that in many communities the narrative interactions that children have help to frame problems and provide guidance. As we shall see, both of these approaches were present in some of the story examples explored for this study.

Myers provides a higher-level view of the role of both oral stories and children's literature in childhood socialization, stating that “theories of child socialization typically function as synecdoche for broader ideologies of reform or repression” (1989:52). Myers' assertion that children's literature and stories provide a “reconstitution of the child, a locus for personal longing and reformist fantasy alike” (52) that is particularly attractive to women is highly relevant for our own study since the caregivers were women often telling stories with a girl as the main character. Myers states that women may use these forms of communication to “reimagine their own childhoods and invent the future childhoods of their gender in more satisfying forms than unmediated realities proffer” (52).

### The Ecology of Life in a Ugandan Village

The sociocultural framework we experienced as researchers is an important component of our study, as it provides an ethnographic backdrop for the relevant themes and constructs. Our study began in 2009 and was renewed in 2011 and again in 2012. During these periods we accumulated many hours of interactions and observations that comprise two large quantitative data sets for our study, but just as important was the time we spent immersing ourselves in the life of the village: getting to know the locals; participating in their cultural and social events; spending time with their families; and visiting their homes, schools, and churches. This ethnographic approach has provided rich data that continue to inform our understanding of life in this small village. Kitengesa cannot be found on most maps; the nearest city is Masaka, which is about ten miles away. The people who live in the village survive mostly through subsistence farming, and most families have incomes of less than \$275 US per year.



Fig. 3. A woman taking her cattle to pasture. Photo by Valeda Dent Goodman.

Interview data from our larger study suggest that a number of the participating mothers had husbands who had more than one wife (the area is a mix of both Muslim and Christian religions, and Muslim men may practice polygamy), leaving the mothers or grandmothers alone to care for the home for months at a time (Dent and Goodman 2009). In addition, fathers often left the village to work in the more urban area of Kampala, only to return a few weekends each month (Dent and Goodman 2009). Our interviews also revealed that mothers and grandmothers were often the

primary breadwinners for the family, making a living by selling crops or animal products from their small farms (Dent and Goodman 2009). There is no running water in the village, and solar-powered electricity is only available at the Kitengesa Community Library.

Our larger, longitudinal study also explored the health status and health concerns of the primary caregivers in Kitengesa (and Uganda more broadly). Impediments to well-being and health are always present and include disease, famine, threats to hygiene, lack of access to clean water, low educational attainment, and low literacy rates (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2005; UNESCO 2007; UNICEF 2011; World Health Organization 2006), as well as even more sinister dangers such as kidnapping, ritualistic murder and child sacrifice, and familial violence (Li 2005; Whewell 2010). A number of mothers and grandmothers revealed serious, chronic illnesses such as diabetes, cancer, and HIV. Many had nowhere to turn for medical help. There were a number of children in the study who frequently battled malaria and other illnesses (Dent and Goodman

2009). Primary caregivers reported that they sometimes struggled with depression and that they were sometimes unable to care for their children because they felt sad or down (Dent and Goodman 2009).

In terms of childcare and childrearing, our knowledge was again primarily shaped by collected data and observation over extended periods of time. Many of the caregivers participating in our study had more than one child. A companion study conducted by Yellin (forthcoming) also revealed that some of the caregivers had lost a child at some point, and some struggled with symptoms of profound grief. Children in Uganda do not begin formal schooling until age 7, so young children are left to play and interact with other children, siblings, and other family members while their caregivers work. Young children also do chores—it is not uncommon to see children as young as age 4 carrying sticks or water or fruit on their heads or filling water cans at the spring. There are few amenities, and children do not have the luxury of toys, books, or games. Children often make their own toys out of plastic jelly cans (which are used to carry water), sticks, mud, stones, and even refuse they find on open fire pits used to burn garbage. Residue from any of these experiences and activities may find their way into the stories told by the caregivers to their young children.



Fig. 4. Children carrying kindling for their households. Photo by Karen Gubert.



Fig. 5. Children carrying a chicken home. Photo by Valeda Dent Goodman.

We also learned a great deal about the challenges related to literacy and language. Many villagers are eager to learn English because it is the language of trade in many urban areas and nearby countries that do trade with Uganda; for villagers who have larger farms and sell their crops across borders, knowledge of English is an important skill. Younger children learn English in school, but for the most part adults speak the local language of Luganda. The story examples we collected were told in Luganda and carefully translated into English by native Lugandan speakers/research assistants who had worked with the Kitengesa Community Library since 2004.

Overall, the essence of life in this Ugandan village is similar to many others in the developing world where poverty is chronic, resources scarce, and isolation fairly common. On the other hand, the people of the village have an indomitable spirit and a desire to learn about the world around them while contextualizing that knowledge against the backdrop of their history and their own experiences. They are eager to share what it means to be Ugandan, and they are

kind, warm, welcoming, and proud of their culture. These aspects are all relevant in terms of gaining a better understanding of the nature of the story examples told by the caregivers.

## Methodology

### *Participants*

Caregivers recruited for this study were previously known by our research assistants in Uganda, and they were required to have at least one child or grandchild between the ages of 5 and 7.<sup>4</sup> From a total of 51 interviews conducted with mothers and grandmothers, twelve were chosen for analysis based on the greater length of their included story examples.<sup>5</sup> Five of these twelve women were members of the Kitengesa Community Library (the site of the study); seven were nonmembers. The age range of the women was from 24 to 67 years. Two of the women were heads of their households. Seven of the women were mothers and five were grandmothers, and all were primary caregivers for the target children in this study. The participants were from roughly similar socioeconomic backgrounds, ones considered extremely poor by Western standards.



Fig. 6. A few of the participants wait in the Library for the interviews to begin. Photo by Karen Gubert.

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<sup>4</sup> IRB approval for this study was granted by Long Island University.

<sup>5</sup> Some caregivers gave very short examples that would have been challenging to work with from a research perspective. For instance, a number of caregivers simply stated that they told their daughters to “do well in school” or “to behave.” While these statements are certainly representative of themes that tell us something about the ecology of life within this village, they do not function well as actual story examples.

### *Procedure*

Structured interviews were conducted in connection with our larger set of studies over the course of two and a half weeks and were held in the local secondary school with the aid of a translator.<sup>6</sup> Participants answered 40 questions focusing on the caregivers' reading habits, library use, literacy practices, and storytelling practices, as well as their socioeconomic and health status. The answers to two specific questions from these interviews generated the data relevant to the current essay: "Do you ever tell your children stories?" and "If yes, can you provide an example of a story that you tell to your children?" Caregivers were given as long as they wanted to respond to this second question, and the answer to that question was used to generate the story data; we did not witness the caregivers telling the stories directly to their children.

The transcripts from these interviews were initially read in their entirety. Notes and descriptions about the interviewee, the setting, and the interview itself supplemented our review. Next, the data were initially coded for repeating ideas independently by the two researchers.<sup>7</sup> During this review process we were mindful of factors such as to whom the story was told (whether it was a girl or a boy, for instance) and the context for the story example. Disagreements were addressed by way of periodic discussions during which we referred to our own notes in order to talk through inconsistencies in coding and come to agreement. This iterative process resulted in each of the repeating ideas eventually being included in the next methodological phase. Once the repeating ideas were solidified, we again reviewed the data to surface emergent themes. This process included each researcher working independently in order to group the repeating ideas into meaningful categories by looking for patterns and relationships among coded terms.<sup>8</sup> Disagreements were again addressed by way of periodic discussions utilizing notes, during which time we would eventually come to agreement about which categories to include as we moved forward. Those categories were then consolidated into smaller groups. Once the themes were consolidated, we shared our analyses with each other, referring back to the transcripts and repeating ideas to demonstrate how we had arrived at our results. We next reviewed the themes in order to surface emergent theoretical constructs. A constant comparative method also guided this phase of the analysis. Those themes that showed up most often in the results contributed to the three major constructs as detailed in the next section.

"Analytical exhaustivity" as defined by Ellis (1993:478) was the goal at each stage of the work. Ellis states that "the categories and properties derived should be able to subsume completely any relevant information contained in the transcripts, and no major category or property should remain unidentified" (478). He further clarifies that the final categories should apply "with some generality across the sample" (478). By using these guidelines, we were

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<sup>6</sup> The interviews each took approximately one hour to administer and were all translated simultaneously from the native Luganda to English through a translator as they were being conducted. The videotaped sessions were later transcribed into text by students from Long Island University's clinical psychology doctoral program.

<sup>7</sup> See note 2 for further information concerning the theoretical framework according to which data coding was performed. In actual practice, a spreadsheet was used to capture and tally the words, concepts, and ideas that recurred in the transcripts. The repeating ideas provided the unit of analysis for calculating initial inter-rater reliability, which was  $r = .81$ .

<sup>8</sup> The process is known as axial coding.



reasonably certain that we had reached these goals in our coding, and that we had thereby addressed the initial research question about the socializing concepts in these story examples.

## Results

The outcome of the content analysis revealed three major socializing concepts (presented as theoretical constructs) that answered our initial research question:

- 1) Punishment and blessings
- 2) Moral/acceptable behavior versus immoral/unacceptable behavior
- 3) Attachment (separation/abandonment versus searching/reunion)

The discovery of these concepts does not imply that these are the *only* concepts in Ugandan caregivers' stories; rather, for the data that were reviewed, these were the constructs that emerged. The story examples were themselves varied and engaging, and in some cases the caregivers were extremely animated and told their stories with relish and great theatrics. We were therefore mindful of the fact that the caregivers' recounting of the story examples probably differed from the way the stories were actually told in their naturalistic settings; in fact, the caregivers were "performing" these stories for the interviewer.<sup>9</sup> Each construct is discussed in detail below in relation to the context of rural life in this part of Uganda and in relation to the theoretical framework for the study.

### *Construct 1: Punishment and Blessings*

Characters in the story examples frequently experienced either punishments or blessings, depending on their actions. This was a recurrent and strong socializing concept that framed many of the stories. Many of the story examples featured girls as the main characters, and often these characters met with some fateful end or punishment if they behaved in a socially unacceptable way. A number of the story examples within this construct focused on marriage, the importance of fulfilling marital duties, and doing the household work required of a wife. These tales may therefore serve to socialize girls to act appropriately within marriage—a notion supported by responses from women when interviewed about their life in the village. When asked "What is the meaning of children?" a number of the women responded that female children "fetch a high bride price" (Dent and Goodman 2009). The idea that daughters may be sold as property may influence the need for this type of socialization, for no man in this community would want a badly behaving bride.

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<sup>9</sup> It is also important to note that the provenance of these stories was not always clear; some of the stories were reported to have been passed from generation to generation, while other caregivers shared that their examples were original creations. There were even stories that were repeated by a number of caregivers. *Njabala the Lazy One* is a good example of this type of common story and can actually be found in book form (Ssewankambo 1998); however, it is unclear whether the story was first an orally circulated traditional story that someone eventually put into print or the oral versions derive completely from the published tale. None of the caregivers indicated that their stories were from a library or from a book that they had read, but these possibilities cannot be ruled out.

The story of “Balinda” is a good example of a tale that combines marriage and gender-role elements with those of punishments and blessings (subject #0201022, transcript p. 2):<sup>10</sup>

At one time when they go to the forest to fetch firewood. So people are fetching firewood, collecting firewood for hut. She was seated, Balinda was seated. So the beastie came, so in the process of bringing that firewood, that beast had to marry Balinda. When Balinda put the firewood on her head, that beastie followed Balinda. So the beast was like, “Balinda, wait for me!” Balinda was crying, then her friends were like, “You never wanted to collect the firewood, let it follow you. . . . Let the beast follow you.” So they come with it home, Balinda come with this beast at home. So the beast told the parents that “we made an agreement with Balinda, that I have to collect her firewood, and every time I have to take her home, and she has to cook for me.” So, Balinda cried. So what we learn in this story, that you have to work in this world, not sit. If you want free things, you end up getting what? Problems. So Balinda was married to the . . . to the monster, to the beast. The beast, yes, because she was lazy.

In the story, Balinda must marry a beast as her punishment because she failed to do her chores. The story suggests that punishment is the consequence for lazy behavior. Laziness was a recurring idea in a number of the stories, including the story (told by a number of the mothers and grandmothers) of “Njabala,” a young girl who was married but lost her husband because she “failed to fulfill all the marital duties” (subject #1124021, transcript p. 4). The story of “Whengivla” also featured a young, married girl who was punished when her husband left her because “she was very lazy at home” (subject #0925021, transcript p. 2).

Female identity and the related theme of marriage are common socializing concepts in African stories. According to Jacobson-Widding (1993) these themes are often tied to punishment, blessings, and social norms. Within a study of individual identity in African storytelling, Jacobson-Widding describes stories that feature a girl who was destined to “assume an identity conferred to her by the official social system” and another story where a girl “finds her identity by relying on her own inner resources” (1993:28). The girl in the latter story faced punishment and disapproval from her community.

Lieberman (1972:386) points out that “marriage is the fulcrum and major event of nearly every fairy tale; it is the reward for girls, or sometimes their punishment.” She states that through stories, children “learn behavioral and associational patterns, value systems, and how to predict the consequences of specific acts or circumstances. Among other things, these tales present a picture of sexual roles, behavior, and psychology, and a way of predicting outcome or fate according to sex” (384). Specifically, she suggests that the impact of some of the more traditional fairy tale stories on women is particularly worrisome (385):

Millions of women must surely have formed their psycho-sexual self-concepts, and their ideas of what they could or could not accomplish, what sort of behavior would be rewarded, and of the nature of reward itself, in part from their favorite fairy tales. These stories have been made the

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<sup>10</sup> The translations provided within this essay are presented as originally captured during the interview and have not been altered with respect to any perceived grammatical irregularities.

repositories of the dreams, hopes, and fantasies of generations of girls.

While these Ugandan mothers and grandmothers were not telling the same traditional fairy tales to which Lieberman refers (for instance, *Cinderella*, *Beauty and the Beast*, or *Hansel and Gretel*), there are marked similarities with regard to the girls' portrayals and their punishments or blessings in these stories. Not one of the mothers' or grandmothers' stories featured a marriage with a happy outcome or without punishment, nor did any of the marriage stories feature a girl who was a heroine.

While one or two of the stories included boys, most of the stories featured girls and women. The structure of these stories may also then serve another socializing purpose—that of maintaining the dominant social order in this culture, which is both fiercely patriarchal and polygamist (Gordon 1998; Mayambala 1997; Mirembe and Davies 2001). It is notable that none of the story examples featured a boy as the actual protagonist, perhaps implying that boys do not have to learn how to behave or be moral—that is the domain of girls. Both genders therefore learn that females are in a subservient role within the culture and that society's rules apply to only one gender.

One of the most interesting punishment/blessings story examples we discovered was about a woman who is digging in her garden when she encounters something mysterious in the ground. Against the advice of her friends, who are fearful and tell her not to continue digging, she tries to see what it is. At once, her face begins to deform. She goes to a church for healing, despite her friends telling her that the trip will not help. She is then healed and able to testify to her friends about the power of God: "Have you seen the powers of God?" (subject #0201022, p. 2) she asks them. The story is clearly meant to highlight the power of God's ability to heal, but a punishment for curiosity and knowledge-seeking must first take place.

One obvious message is that children who disobey a parent are likely to wind up hurt or in some kind of trouble. As one mother stated when asked about her story (subject #0907032, transcript p.9), "it teaches children to behave." Jacobson-Widding (1993) supports this notion and suggests that teaching children obedience, correct behavior, and good manners is "a woman's prime duty" (10) in several African cultures; "unconditional obedience to those who are bigger than yourself" (10) is a key socializing message. Consider the story example of a child walking alone at night, against her parents' advice, when a creature attaches itself to the child's back (subject #1202031, transcript p.1):

There was a child that used to walk at night, many times. And there was a mask-like creature that attached to her, to her back when she was . . . walking at night. And that one teaches children not to move at night.

In another example, one twin is eaten by a monster because she disobeys a parent (subject #0907032, transcript p.7):

These two twins went to the garden. And mom told them that you know what, it is time to go back home. So one decided to remain in the garden, then the one come with the mom. The one who remained behind was eaten by a beast.

Finally, there is within this construct the physical embodiment of the punishment, the essence of which is represented by monsters and beasts. Note that beasts appear in three of the stories mentioned above.

*Construct 2: Moral/Acceptable Behavior versus Immoral/Unacceptable Behavior*

A wife who does not fulfill her marital duties or is lazy is guilty of morally unacceptable behavior, as was the case in the story of “Balinda,” who will never be able to reverse the ill-fated outcome of her laziness. “Njabala” is an additional story that features a lazy girl who does not fulfill her duties as a wife. The suicide story example below also contains socializing elements related to morally unacceptable behavior and punishment. The body of a father who commits suicide is publicly beaten in order to discourage others from committing the same act, which is culturally perceived as sinful (subject #0712042, transcript p. 4):

She comes back and then finds the dad has committed suicide. The dead body. Was beaten and buried. So when they see the dead body being beaten, they can't also commit suicide because they will also fear to be beaten. After they're dead.

There were, on the other hand, a few story examples that featured morally acceptable behavior. For instance, in “Nakato” a girl has worked hard to plant millet in her garden. As she prepares to cut her millet, she is serenaded by birds who beg her to leave the millet for them, and she obliges (subject #1224032, transcript p. 5):

A tale, where a girl left home to cut millet in the garden, while she was cutting these, I mean, the, the millet, then there were these birds, small birds, and then they were singing. . . . Yeah, birds were singing to this girl to leave us, we eat our millet, millet of our lives, those were birds singing to eat.

Nakato's behavior is morally acceptable on two levels. First, she is engaged in physical labor (which Balinda and Njabala refused to do), and second, she provides sustenance for the birds in her garden. In this way, the concepts of hard work and generosity are supported.

*Construct 3: Attachment (Separation/Abandonment versus Searching/Reunion)*

Lieberman (1972) discusses the themes of parental abandonment and helplessness in traditional fairy tales, and these elements appeared in some of our story examples. Talmon (2010) suggests that for children who have experienced the loss or abandonment of a primary caregiver, stories and fairy tales in which the mother is absent may serve as a “protective factor or a surrogate for the absent mother” and, in some cases, provide a “holding environment from which to develop a secure attachment and gain mastery over their traumatic experiences” (2). In terms of this study, three caregivers—in this case, grandmothers—disclosed that the mothers of their grandchildren had died from AIDS, so the loss of a mother was certainly real for some of these children. As a socializing concept, attachment is a complex topic beyond the scope of this

essay, but generally attachment seemed to be related to warnings about straying too far from parents.

A number of the story examples featured children who are either left alone or are walking alone. Abandonment is common in Kitengesa, and it is not unusual to find children who are wandering the roads, uncared for and basically fending for themselves. We were told that children tend to be unattended for long stretches of time while parents are away working or tending to farming, and parents may also leave children with extended family members when they themselves are unable to care for them. During our stay in the village, a number of adults and children also talked about the dangers of child-kidnappings and child-sacrifice by “witch-doctors” (cf. Whewell 2010). It was a subject frequently on the minds of the villagers, despite the fact that the majority of these acts were rumored to have taken place in the northern part of the country. We ourselves often observed very young children walking the roads alone at night, so the stories and their included warnings did indeed seem especially relevant.

In the suicide story, the children are abandoned by both their parents—first, by the mother who is out looking for food, then by the father who commits suicide (subject #0712042, transcript p. 4):

That once upon a time, there was a man who married his wife. They produced kid, two kids. That there came a dry spell, famine. The mommy goes to look for the kid, goes to look for the food. She comes back and then finds the dad has committed suicide. The mommy comes back, finds the children were just alone. The dad has committed suicide. People gathered when mommy came back; she was so alone and people gathered. That the dead body was beaten . . . the dead body. Was beaten and buried. But after bury, burial and funeral, that after the family just dismantled, like the mom went in a different direction, and the kids went away because the mom could not look after these. The story ends there. This one to bring the mind from the same thing the dad did. So when they see the dead body being beaten, they can't also commit suicide because they will also fear to be beaten. After they're dead.

At the end of the story, the mother abandons the children again because she cannot look after them. The image of the father's body being beaten also heightens the fact that the father is never coming back, that he has permanently abandoned his family. Paradoxically, however, the fact that the beating after death is to be feared by the living suggests a denial of death and nurtures the unconscious wish that death is not the ultimate separation. Fairy tales that contain ghosts also nurture this wish that death does not represent a permanent separation.

### **Further Discussion**

The theoretical framework for this study was informed by two primary areas: 1) the socializing role of oral stories told within African cultures, and 2) the role that stories play within the parent/child communication framework. While Stavans and Goldzweig (2008) are correct in their assertion that storytelling as a form of parent-child oral interaction acts as a socializing activity in general, the findings of the current study suggest that socialization practices may

differ from culture to culture within the African diaspora. For instance, Burns and Radford discovered that the Nigerian mothers' conversations with their children (including conversations made up of stories) were highly instructional and bore a similarity to the discourse one might find in a classroom; these researchers detailed four categories for this type of talk (2008:199):

- 1) tutorial modeling (eliciting a desired response through explicit instruction)
- 2) initiation-response-evaluation (an adult-initiated question to the child followed by the child's response and evaluation of the answer by the adult)
- 3) initiation-evaluation (interaction initiated by the child, with response by the adult)
- 4) initiation-confirmation-topic pursuit (interaction initiated by the child, with further topic pursuit by the adult)

The story examples explored in this study, however, were different in that they did not fall into any of these four categories. This variation does not mean that Ugandan stories are never instructional, but since we were unable to observe the children's responses to these story examples, it remains unclear whether they were designed to elicit specific responses—perhaps of an instructional nature.

Jacobson-Widding states that African stories can “express ambiguous emotions involved in close interpersonal interaction that we all share” (1992:19), and this study supports that notion. Our collected story examples featured a variety of close interpersonal relationships and characters experiencing many different emotions, and quite often these emotional messages were transmitted as Rachman (1977) described. Our findings can also be placed within the context of language socialization. Miller et al. (2011:198) state that stories can be used to highlight a child's unacceptable behavior; such a function is clearly seen in the story about Balinda and also in the story example about Njabala. Lastly, Myers (1989:52) describes the role of stories in the reconstitution of the child as a reflection of the storyteller (in this case, the female storyteller) who may be using stories to reimagine her own childhood. While this role might not be immediately apparent in the story examples of this study, the fact that the content typically focused on the female's acceptable behavior within the marriage framework could be seen as a mother or grandmother cautioning a young girl not to make the kinds of mistakes that they themselves or others had made in the past.

### *Limitations*

There are a variety of limitations on this study. The stories used were *examples* of told stories—the caregivers were not actually observed telling the stories to their children in a natural setting. Stories told in such a setting may have varied in content or delivery. The story examples presented here have also been reduced to fragments of text for research purposes, which may impact the overall meaning. Additionally, the caregiver sample collected in this study might not accurately represent the population of rural Ugandan caregivers. And translation, of course, always presents further challenges. The stories in this study were translated from Luganda to English, and certain limitations related to meaning may therefore be present. Our inherent bias as

researchers may also be seen as a limitation. While we readily acknowledge the impact of our own cultural and social perspectives on the exploration and explanation of the themes, we are at the same time aware of this bias and used a variety of strategies (for instance, grounding our findings in the relevant literature) to reduce its impact. Finally, 51 caregivers answered the questions about stories and storytelling, yet we selected only 12 story examples for use in this essay. As mentioned earlier, our choice was primarily a result of some caregivers giving only very short examples that would have been challenging to work with from a research perspective, but this selection could also be viewed as a limitation in that the integrity of that portion of the data set was compromised and not used in its entirety; however, we reason that the story examples alone can still provide useful information.

### *Directions for Future Research*

Further exploration might include the collection of stories by the same set of caregivers told in a natural setting to their children. This method of collection would address the concern that the way the story examples were obtained for the current study did not allow for the observation of the interaction between caregiver and child—an important component for any study exploring storytelling. In addition to the collection of stories told in the home environment, ethnographic interviews (which would be informed in part by the content of the stories) might be conducted with the female caregivers to examine their concept of women's roles within this rural Ugandan setting. Such interviews would thus ultimately allow further investigation of the idea promoted by Myers (1989:52), who suggested that women may sometimes project their own fears, problems, and warnings onto their children through the telling of certain stories.



Fig. 7. The research team: Julius Ssentume, Geoff Goodman, Valeda Dent, Ssewa Baker, and Karen Gubert. Photo by Kate Parry.

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## Unity and Difference in Andean Songs

Charles Maurice Pigott

In this essay I textually analyze a selection of Andean songs that I collected during doctoral fieldwork in the Peruvian Andes, between 2010 and 2011.<sup>1</sup> Song is an important oral tradition in the Andes, where verse is normally accompanied by music and dance. Many song-genres (such as those presented here) are only performed during particular festivals, while others (for instance, the *waynu*) are part of daily life. The diversity of songs makes it difficult to classify “genres” according to Western lines of interpretation, which is why in this essay I have adopted an emic perspective and listed each song according to its place within the wider context of the festival. As John Miles Foley states (2002:36), “when dealing with the genres of oral poetry, expect a cornucopia. . . . Examine all defining features of each oral poem according to its idiosyncrasies rather than according to a prepackaged set of expectations,” for “care must be exercised to ‘read’ each oral genre on its own terms first.” Accordingly, this essay adopts an ethnopoetic model of analysis, reading “upwards” from the text rather than “downwards” from preconceived notions or categories. Indeed, “we need to make the effort to speak and hear the right language as fluently as we can manage, even if that effort entails a degree of culture shock” (20). Only by entering the “world” of the poetry—and, in the case of this essay, this means deep textual analysis in tandem with knowledge of the wider cultural context—can we reveal the underlying motivations of the texts in question.<sup>2</sup>

My research involved traveling among various villages in Bolognesi and Pomabamba provinces, Ancash department, Peru, in search of local song traditions. My focus was on the linguistic and literary aspects of the songs, and particularly how they can elucidate the concept of “identity.” The songs presented here are extracts from the verses sung during the Masha festival in the village of Mangas, Bolognesi. I examine their portrayal of two major aspects of identity-creation, namely “unity” and “difference.” Mangas is well-known across Bolognesi for its traditional festivals, which have earned this village the popular designation as *el pueblo de*

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<sup>1</sup> The research involved in this essay was generously supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (United Kingdom).

<sup>2</sup> There have been a small number of studies on Andean sung poetry. Musicological studies frequently include some ancillary reference to the lyrics (for instance, Baumann 1996; den Otter 1985; Stobart 2006). The principal studies on the literary and linguistic aspects of Andean songs are Arnold and Yapita 1998; Harrison 1989; Harrison Macdonald 1979; Husson 1985; Itier 1992; Julca-Guerrero 2009; and Mannheim 1986, 1987, 1998, 1999. There is also some discussion of Andean sung poetry in Delgado and Schechter 2004 and throughout the 1993 volume (19.37) of the journal *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana*.

*brujos* (“town of witches,” a designation not necessarily used in a derogatory manner). The principal language of the songs is Ancash Quechua, a member of the Quechua 1 branch of the Quechua language-family, according to Torero’s (1974, 2002) classification. Quechua 1 is spoken in the central Peruvian Andes, whereas the Quechua 2 branch extends from southern Colombia to northern Chile and Argentina, its original range roughly coterminous with the borders of the Incan Empire. Given the far greater diversity of Quechua 1, we know that it is much older than Quechua 2 (Parker 1976:27-28), despite the very common misbelief—even by Quechua 1 speakers—that the Quechua (a Quechua 2 variety) of the former Incan capital, Cuzco, represents an original standard.

In common with many Amerindian language-families, Quechua is polysynthetic and agglutinating. A polysynthetic language is one that “allows the formation of extremely long words with many affixes” (Parker 1976:29, my translation). An agglutinating language is one where the affixes “undergo very little fusion or morphophonemic change” (29); in other words, adding new affixes does not change the form of those already there. All Quechua affixes are suffixes, and most of the suffixes can combine spontaneously with any word-root so that words are often formed *ad hoc* as meaning is fine-tuned by the addition of different suffixes. According to Mazzotti, Quechua can therefore “better express tonalities and affects without depending entirely on an extensive vocabulary” (2003:101). How such suffixes interact in the creation of meaning is thus a central issue for the current essay. An additional linguistic concern arises from the influence of Spanish now being omnipresent across the Andes, to the extent that it can be viewed as a second native language. As a result, the texts analyzed here incorporate aspects of Spanish to greater or lesser degrees.<sup>3</sup>

### The Masha Festival

The festival of Masha traditionally takes place every November in Mangas and lasts for two weeks. It centers on the construction of the church roof, which is typically changed every year by replacing the straw.<sup>4</sup> The term *masha* literally means “son-in-law” but is more loosely used in Bolognesi to denote any relation who helps in the construction of a house; the literal meaning of the word, however, indicates how this reciprocal practice of house-construction serves to unite distinct families who would otherwise have no real connection. Much of the festival in Mangas concerns the traditional opposition and complementarity between the two halves of the town, the “lower” Kotos and the “higher” Allawkay. This pattern of dual division is common throughout the Andes (Bourque 1994:230; Bouysse-Cassagne 1986:202-03; Fock 1981:316-17; Platt 1986:230-31; Sallnow 1987:37; Urton 1981:40-42; Zuidema 1964:2-10), though by no means unique to this region.<sup>5</sup> Manuel Burga, who conducted historical and

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<sup>3</sup> The structure of Spanish, in common with other Indo-European languages, is “periphrastic,” with meaning becoming fine-tuned principally at the sentence-level. This situation contrasts deeply with the polysynthetic-agglutinative nature of Quechua where meaning-production is mostly word-internal.

<sup>4</sup> The church allegedly dates from the seventeenth century. See Fig. 1.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Needham 1973 on similar structures in other cultures.

ethnographic fieldwork in Mangas, notes (1998:32) how the division is not necessarily based on physical location, but is largely construed through kin relations; likewise, the designation of “high” and “low” districts does not refer to physical altitude so much as the ascribed origin of each group—an issue discussed in more detail later in the essay. The two districts compete to construct the church roof more quickly than their counterpart and engage in a mock bullfight at the end, but they also exchange goods in an expression of solidarity. This interplay of complementarity and opposition is the chief focus of this essay.



Fig. 1. The seventeenth-century church in Mangas, focus of the Masha festival.  
Photo by Charles Maurice Pigott.

The songs of the Masha festival are traditionally performed by a female singer termed *awayaq*, which perhaps derives from the Ancash Quechua verb *away* (“to weave”).<sup>6</sup> The *awayaq* is accompanied by an *orquesta* (“orchestra”), comprising harp, violin, and drum players. The male Masha dancers attach bells to their trousers in order to accentuate the rhythm as they dance in time to the music.<sup>7</sup> Every festival has two *awayaqs*, each of whom represents one half of the village. Rather than having a specific personal identity, the *awayaq* has the function of voicing salient themes at any given moment in the festival. Her songs communicate the most important aspects of each event rather than a particular, personal stance with which others might potentially disagree. The texts detailed below were sung by the *awayaq* Doña Clotilde Rojas Varillas, who was in her early seventies at the time and is of primarily indigenous heritage.<sup>8</sup> I was introduced

<sup>6</sup> Weaving is a principal occupation of Andean women. Moreover, Allen (2011), Arnold and Yapita (1998), Lienhard (1993), and Mannheim (1998) all suggest a close relation between textiles and poetic patterns in the Andes.

<sup>7</sup> It was not possible to explore the musicological dimensions of the festival in any detail during my visit, but Masha is sure to offer a rich field of enquiry for ethnomusicologists.

<sup>8</sup> Any “ethnic” classification is, however, problematic, given the mixed indigenous and Andean descent of most people and the fact that few people in Mangas would identify themselves along ethnic lines.



to Doña Clotilde by Beatriz Arcayo, a local schoolteacher who greatly facilitated my research in the village. Doña Clotilde sang the songs in Beatriz's house, during which time I transcribed the texts. I then asked Doña Clotilde to repeat the songs, whereby I verified my notes against Doña Clotilde's sung version.<sup>9</sup> After confirming that my transcriptions were accurate, I elicited "native" interpretations from both Doña Clotilde and Beatriz, in terms of both the texts themselves and the wider context of the festival. Thus, my data came from the memory of a recent (but not, at that moment, active) tradition. Doña Clotilde explained to me that there was no single, "correct" version of the songs since the texts were malleable enough to communicate *ad hoc* events occurring in the immediate context. Nonetheless, the verses all pertained to salient themes during the festival, thereby conforming to a single "blueprint."<sup>10</sup> Doña Clotilde did not define each song in terms of a particular genre, or even give a title. Instead, she explained the location of each song in relation to the overall festival. I have followed an emic lead and deployed Doña Clotilde's temporal categorization as a title.

As with many other Andean traditions, Masha seems to be declining; the festival had not been realized for two years prior to my visit.<sup>11</sup> The reasons are complex, but it is likely that the traditional festivals are seen as less and less relevant to modern generations, who are increasingly mobile and are experiencing a greater cultural "shift" towards Creole norms, not least through the influence of modern media and contact with urban environments. There were, however, rumors that the festival may recommence in the near future, and I am hesitant to classify Masha as already extinct. Therefore, my deployment of the present tense in this essay is not to be read as an example of the fallacious "ethnographic present," but as a desire not to bury the festival prematurely, which would risk being both inaccurate and unethical. Nonetheless, from the standpoint of my visit there, Masha conformed to what Foley has termed "Voices from the Past" in that the festivals are no longer performed but are nonetheless remembered. Since in such situations, "too much remains either unknown or dependent on composite media to settle unambiguously on single options for composition, performance, and reception" (Foley 2002:50), I have focused principally on the words themselves, albeit with the contextual elucidations of Doña Clotilde and Beatriz.

I have organized this essay under the following sections: anticipation of unity (where the two halves prepare to meet), enactment of unity (the meeting of the two halves), and reinforcement of difference (the mutual separation of the two halves). While, in reality, all of the songs represent all of these issues, particular issues are more clearly represented in some songs than others. The presentation of the songs follows their chronology in the festival of Masha.

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<sup>9</sup> Prior to my research, there was no written record of the Masha texts, nor is there any similar text in the province. (The neighboring settlement of Gorgorillo has a Masha festival, but I was told that there are no songs.)

<sup>10</sup> Thus, the texts are not so *ad hoc* that they cannot be recited away from the festival context (which explains why the "artificial" context of my transcription has not intruded on the texts themselves).

<sup>11</sup> At the time of my visit, the church had an aluminum roof that covered the straw on the outward side. While it is still possible to replace the straw from inside the building, the aluminum covering is perhaps a sign of the decline of the importance of Masha.

**Section One: The Anticipation of Unity***Song Sung at the Start of the Festival (Day One)*

Llapan yarpanqaykitachi Tsaylla parlakuykallarqayki, parlakuykarqayki Tsayllata tantiar tantiallarqayki Mahallaywan wallqillaywan	All of your worrying You only spoke of that, spoke of it You only thought of that, thought of it With your spouse, with your companion
“Ama tsaapis, mana tsaapis” Nikyayllapachi pasarillaychi Común nunallantsik rimashllapis Pachak nunallantsik parlashllapis	You spend your time thinking “Will it come to pass, will it not come to pass?” While everyone is gossiping While a hundred people are whispering
Shuyakurllaashun Huk hankaq barriumi shuyakallaamantsik Apurayllapa papaakuna, Yusulpay varallantsikmi	We shall wait The other, mountainous district is waiting for us Make haste, fathers, Mayor
Maynachi tsaynachi ashiykaamantsik, watukaykaamantsik Yarpanqaykita tantyanqaykita Kay carguykita	Everywhere they are looking for us, they are visiting us For what you are preoccupied about, thinking about This charge of yours
Kay fiestata rurakurqayki Ishkay mahallayki parlakurqaychi rimakurqaychi, Nikyayllapachi parlakuykallarqayki	You made this festival Speaking, talking as a couple, Talking, speaking

The first verse describes the preoccupation of the *mayordomo*, the festival’s organizer: “all of your worrying” (*llapan yarpanqaykitachi*). The organizer, so the verse reveals, has been talking of nothing else but the festival. His main interlocutor on this subject has been his wife—*mahallaywan wallqillaywan* (“with your spouse, with your companion”). The mentioning of *maha* (“partner”) and *wallqi* (“companion”) introduces another dimension of binary complementarity beyond the moiety (bipartite) division of settlements—that of complementarity between the sexes. The structural parallelism of the two near-synonyms reinforces the binary division. Here, the unity between husband and wife results in the creation of the festival, which would have been impossible without this synthesis. Several scholars have noted the importance of gender-complementarity in the Andes, both past and present. Silverblatt (1980:154) notes how

in Incan society, for instance, “male and female occupations—defined as interdependent and complementary activities—were conceptualized as forming the basic unit of labor required for the reproduction of Andean society.” The regenerative function of sexual complementarity was incorporated into the state religion, where the principal deity, Wiraqocha, was androgynous (159). Silverblatt argues that “these forces stemming from the interplay between the model’s male and female constituent parts were conceptualized as creating the driving energies of the universe” (159). Indeed, this fusion of the sexes in Incan religion is unsurprising if we see ideology as intimately linked with survival. Commenting on the modern Andes, Harris states that “it is the fruitful cooperation between woman and man as a unity, which produces culture, and which is opposed to the single person as a-cultural; culture is based on duality” (1986:25, my translation). This cooperation is arguably what is conveyed by the lines in this song, whereby the festival can only be engendered through fruitful collaboration between the *mayordomo* and his wife. In the phrase *mahallaywan wallqillaywan*, the suffixes *-lla* and *-y* both emphasize the affective nature of this relationship. A principal function of the suffix *-lla* is to convey emotional approximation and a sense of empathy; the suffix *-y* has a similar function, but it can also act as a possessive, thereby conveying all the more strongly the sense of a single sphere of relations. The fact that this relationship of gender complementarity is grounded on pragmatic considerations, yet reinforced through affective use of language, suggests that there is no separation between “affective” and “pragmatic” domains of existence for the authors of this verse. Rather than being incompatible, the “affective” and “pragmatic” are mutually oriented towards productive ends.

The second verse begins with the clause “*Ama tsaapis, mana tsaapis*” / *Nikyayllapachi pasarillaychi* (“You spend your time thinking / ‘Will it come to pass, will it not come to pass?’”), which follows the typical head-final word-order of Quechua whereby what is quoted precedes the verb that marks the quoted speech (hence my English translation is the inverse of the Quechua). Beatriz Arcayo explained the meaning of the clause thus: if everyone makes an effort, the festival should be a success, whereas if they do not, it will not be. Therefore, the success of the festival depends on the extent to which people are willing to join together and cooperate. Beatriz’s explanation suggests that unity is not pre-given, never guaranteed, but requires personal and communal effort for it to be realized. The final two lines of the verse nonetheless convey a latent sense of community that can be actualized if people are willing to do so: *Común nunallantsik rimashllapis / Pachak nunallantsik parlashllapis* (“While everyone is gossiping / While a hundred people are whispering”). The term *nuna*, or *runa*, “refers to person in a general sense, conveying in a broad sweep the condition of humanity while at the same time having the potential descriptively to qualify the many sub-categories of the particular reference group,” meaning also “member of one’s particular community” (Skar 1994:200). Thus, the word here indicates an undifferentiated mass of people with the latent potential to form a single community, an idea further emphasized by the use of *común* (“common”) and *pachak* (“hundred”), words that both convey unity through diversity. Additionally, the suffix *-ntsik* (used twice in these lines) is first person plural possessive (“our”). Quechua, unlike English or Spanish, has two first person plural (“we”) categories. The inclusive category (*noqantsik*) includes the speaker as well as the addressee as part of the referenced group; the exclusive category (*noqakuna*) includes the speaker and other people, but not the addressee. The suffix *-ntsik* pertains to the inclusive category. There is, however, no external “possessed” object in this verse; instead, the people

“possess” each other. Thus, rather than viewing this suffix in terms of true “possession” (which suggests hierarchy), we can read it as depicting a sphere of common relations, where everyone has latent bonds with everyone else. This function of *-ntsik* is reinforced by the affective *-lla* that precedes it. Given that the unity is only latent and not yet actual (the success of the festival is not yet guaranteed, with people still arriving), we can read these two lines as more enactive than descriptive. The language, rather than being separate from the action, functions as a catalyst for the unfolding of the event. Accordingly, the emphasis on speech, realized through the two near-synonyms (*rima-* and *parla-*) for the verb “talk, speak,” highlights the communicative basis of unity, while the multiplicity of people is conveyed by *-pis* (“too, also”), reinforcing the sense of unity in diversity.

The third verse introduces the notion of an external community: *Shuyakurllaashun / Huk hankaq barriumi shuyakallaamantsik* (“We shall wait / The other, mountainous district is waiting for us”). This verse refers to the bipartite division of Mangas, specifically the “higher” Allawkay.<sup>12</sup> According to Beatriz, the populations of the two districts would meet in the center of the village during the festival and, in earlier renditions, young men and women would choose their husbands and wives. A key term in this verse is *huk* (“other”). This term conveys the fact that the two halves of the village are separate. However, this does not imply an unbreachable divide in the way that the word *wakin* (also meaning “other”) would. The term *huk* is also the number “one” and serves to stress the wholeness of an entity rather than its marginality; a more appropriate translation might therefore be “the other,” “an-other,” or “one more.” Thus, the term *huk*, while stressing difference, conveys the possibility of the two entities becoming linked in meaningful ways. We can see *huk* as the principle of unity, whereby in Hegelian fashion two *huks* form a larger *huk* that can in turn be decomposed into *ishkay* (“two”) separate *huks* in their own right. This principle is suggested by the following observation in relation to a southern Peruvian village (Allen 1988:85): “While each man and woman is a complete individual with both male and female qualities, the two unite to form another individual of a higher order: a *warmi-qari*, the nucleus of the household.” Arguably, the communication of this synthetic process is enhanced by the parallel structure of the verses here. For instance, we have already seen this parallelism in *Mahallaywan wallqillaywan* (“With your spouse, with your companion”) as well as *Común nunallantsik rimashllapis / Pachak nunallantsik parlashllapis* (“While everyone is gossiping / While a hundred people are whispering”). As Mannheim states (1998:267), Quechua poetic parallelism facilitates a “cognitive focus on commonalities and specific differences” that do not exist as inherent relations but rather as strategic connections whose pragmatic value can be reaffirmed or negated by changing contexts. Lienhard (1993:93) and Husson (1985:352) argue that Quechua parallelism is linked to a general cultural orientation toward dualism. However, while parallelism is a useful means of conveying dualism, it does not entail a dualistic worldview. Indeed, it is a common poetic device in widely varying cultures around the globe. Nonetheless, the moiety division of towns, the emphasis on male/female unity, and perhaps, in this context, the semantic parallelism are all examples of what in Quechua 2 is referred to as *yanantin* or *iskaynintin* (Urton 1997:78): “The terms *yanantin* and *iskaynintin*

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<sup>12</sup> We know, therefore, that the singer, Doña Clotilde, positions herself in the “lower” district of Kotos.

represent what we could call imperative forces that ‘urge’ the linkage of things considered to have a natural, complementary relationship to each other.”

The complementarity between Kotos and Allawkay is reflected in the two uses of the first person (inclusive) plural category (“we”) in combination with the verbal root *shuya-* (“wait”). Thus, the word *shuyakurllaashun* contains the first person (inclusive) future form *-shun* (“we shall wait”); likewise, *shuyakallaamantsik* contains the first person (inclusive) object-marker *-ma . . . ntsik* (“to us”) so that the whole word reads “waits for us.” The first word denotes Kotos people waiting for Allawkay people, while the second word denotes the converse. Thus, each half waits for the other half. The final lines of the verse, *Apurayllapa papaakuna / Yusulpay varallantsikmi* (“Make haste, fathers, / Mayor”), refer to the fact that each of the two districts has its own *Yusulpay vara* or *alcalde* (“mayor”) for the festival, whose role is to oversee the festival and provide food and drink to the community. The *alcalde* of Kotos is urged, along with the other authorities, to make haste so that they may join their counterparts from Allawkay. The fact that there is no single organizer of the festival—indeed the responsibilities are divided equally between the two districts—again illustrates the complementarity that is generated through opposition.

The fourth verse is once more addressed to the organizers: *Maynachi tsaynachi ashiykaamantsik, watukaykaamantsik / Yarpanqaykita tanyanqaykita / Kay carguykita* (“Everywhere they are looking for us, they are visiting us / For what you are preoccupied about, thinking about / This charge of yours”). The phrase *Maynachi tsaynachi* (“everywhere”) consists of *may* (“where”), *tsay* (“there”), temporal *-na* (“already”), and the evidential marker *-chi* (evidentiality is a grammatical category in Quechua that indicates relative degrees of certainty). The beginning of this verse serves to show, then, that people are coming from all directions, “looking for” (*ashiy*) and “visiting” (*watukay*) the group. The group is again defined by the object construction of *-ma . . . ntsik* (the inclusive plural “us”). The boundaries of the group—precisely who is included and who is not—are nonetheless more difficult to ascertain here (does the group comprise just the speaker and the authorities, or Kotos, or the whole village?), but it is likely that the group is no longer defined by its opposition to Allawkay, for otherwise people would probably be coming from a specific direction rather than described as acting *Maynachi tsaynachi* (“everywhere”). The fact that the original location of the visitors is ill-defined is highlighted by the evidential marker *-chi*, which denotes doubt and uncertainty. Furthermore, the temporal suffix *-yka* indicates continuous action, serving to highlight both the act of traveling a long way and the number of people who are continuously arriving. The end of the verse makes it clear that people are arriving for the purpose of the festival: *Yarpanqaykita tanyanqaykita* (“For what you are preoccupied about, thinking about”), and the responsibility of the organizers for making the festival a success is emphasized in the final line: *Kay carguykita* (“[For] this charge of yours”), referring to the authorities’ role in bringing the festival to fruition. The adjective *kay* (“this”) emphasizes the present location as the center to which people are gravitating, and also the immediacy of the authorities’ responsibility. This responsibility is stressed in the final verse: *Kay fiestata rurakurqayki* (“You made this festival”). It is clear, then, who is to be acclaimed if the festival is a success, and who is to be blamed if it is not! That the accomplishment of the festival was not a solitary affair, however, is reinforced in the rest of the final verse: *Ishkay mahallayki parlakurqaychi rimakurqaychi / Nikyayllapachi parlakuykallarqayki* (“Speaking,

talking as a couple / Talking, speaking”). Gender complementarity is once again stressed, illustrated by the number *ishkay* (“two”) followed by *mahallayki* (“your partner”). Romero defines *maha* as “companion, partner, counterpart” (2003:121, my translation); as in several other examples in this song, the focus is on productive unity between two equal halves. And it is this process of combination of complementary elements that leads to productivity and creativity engendering the festival, which in turn unites Kotos and Allawkay. The dialogical base of this cooperation is indicated by three verbal roots concerning speech: *parla-* (“speak, talk”), *rima-* (“speak, talk”), and *nikya-* (“say, tell”).

This song has depicted the interplay of unity and difference chiefly through the following examples:

- gender complementarity indicated by *maha* (“partner”) and *wallqi* (“companion”)
- the suggestion that unity is a prerequisite to production, in *Ama tsaapis, mana tsaapis / Nikyayllapachi pasarillaychi* (“You spend your time thinking / ‘Will it come to pass, will it not come to pass?’”)
- the latent potential for unity in multiplicity, conveyed by *Común nunallantsik rimashllapis / Pachak nunallantsik parlashllapis* (“While everyone is gossiping / While a hundred people are whispering”)
- the word *huk* (“other”) in *huk barriu* (“other district”), which implies complementarity in difference, the synthesis of a Hegelian whole
- the interplay between *shuyakurllaashun* (“we [inclusive] shall wait”) and *shuyakallaamantsik* (“waits for us”), whereby the two districts parallel each other’s actions, also reflected in the fact that there are two organizers—one from each half—and two singers
- the focus on communication in the verbal roots *parla-* (“speak, talk”), *rima-* (“speak, talk”), and *nikya-* (“say, tell”)
- semantic parallelism, whereby potential relations between concepts are foregrounded through their structural juxtaposition

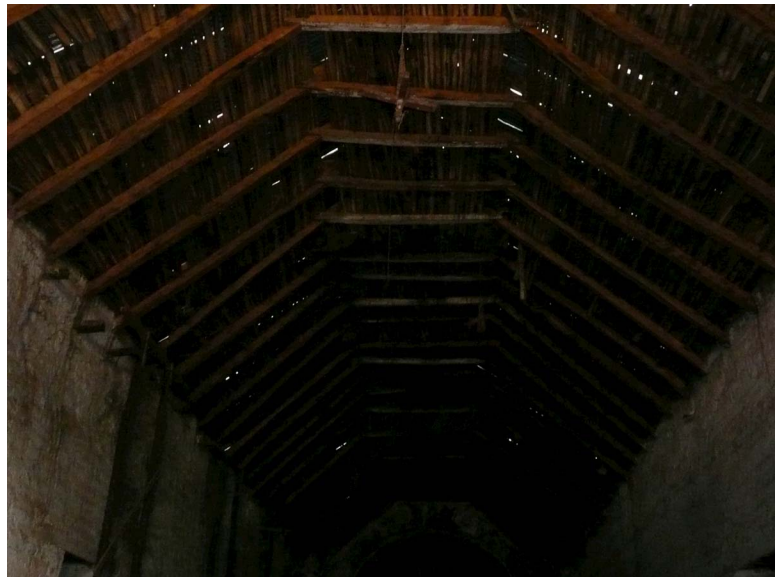


Fig. 2. The church’s straw roof, which is traditionally replaced every year. Photo by Charles Maurice Pigott.

## Section Two: The Enactment of Unity

### *Arrival of the Grandfather and Black Man (Day Three)*

This song describes the arrival of the *awelitu* (“grandfather”) and *rukya* (“black man”), who symbolize Allawkay and Kotos respectively and are enacted by a member of the corresponding district. The *awelitu* descends from a location above Allawkay, while the *rukya* ascends from a place below Kotos.

Hirkapita aywallaamun	From the hills is coming
Awelituntsik kay costumbrellantsikta	Our grandfather, to this custom of ours
Cada watallan kay cargullantsikman	Every year, to this charge of ours
Kay fiestallantsikman	To this festival of ours
Kanan hunaqlla aywaykamun	Today is coming
Rukyanashllantsikqa	Our black man
Qeshpikaamun, Huacho markapita	He is appearing, from the town of Huacho
Yunka markapita	From the coast
Pescado cargallachi	Carrying fish
Vino cargallachi	Carrying wine
Aywallaamun	He is coming
Kay costumbrillantsikchi	To this custom of ours
Kay nillapachi	Saying so
Yarpay shonqullachi aywakyaamun	He of mindful heart is coming
Rukyanashllantsikqa	Our black man

The first verse begins with a statement of the *awelitu*'s arrival: *Hirkapita aywallaamun / Awelituntsik kay costumbrellantsikta* (“From the hills is coming / Our grandfather, to this custom of ours”), before describing the cyclical nature of the event: *Cada watallan kay cargullantsikman / Kay fiestallantsikman* (“Every year, to this charge of ours / To this festival of ours”). Again there is abundant use of the first person (inclusive) possessive *-ntsik*. But this time it is also applied to the *cargu* (“charge”), which in the previous song was *cargullayki* (“your charge,” with second-person possessive *-yki*). Thus, from the initial implication that the festival is entirely the organizers’ responsibility, there is now a progression to stating that it is *everyone’s* responsibility. This movement reflects the fact that in the previous song people were in the process of arriving, whereas now almost everyone has arrived. Therefore, a single community is physically present, where before it was still in the process of becoming consolidated. Now that the people are here, it is up to everyone to determine whether the two halves can unite in turn. The phrase *cada watallan* (“every year”) stresses the cyclical nature of the festival, suggesting that *cargullantsik* (“our charge”) is built on a series of acts of relational approximation. Thus, the solidarity that emerges as people arrive at the festival does not emerge from a vacuum, though neither is it automatically produced if people are unwilling to engage. As Stobart states for the

Bolivian Andes (2006:89), “the annual repetition of the various musical genres, each connected to and creating a particular context, also instills a sense of history and serves as an important mode through which cultural knowledge and sensibilities are both grasped and transmitted.” The use of the first person (inclusive) possessive *-ntsik* in *costumbrellantsik* (“our custom”) and *fiestallantsik* (“our festival”) conveys not just that the festival is “of the group,” but also that the group derives “from the festival,” given that the nature of the festival is that of people joining together in some form of unity. It is, moreover, already obvious that this is a festival of people in Mangas (rather than elsewhere); thus, the addition of the possessive suffix is not strictly necessary, suggesting that it serves a phatic purpose of enacting unity through expressing it.

The second verse describes the arrival of the *rukya*<sup>13</sup> (“black man”) *yunka markapita* (“from the coast”), or more specifically *Huacho markapita* (“from the town of Huacho”). This arrival is narrated in fascinating contrast to that of the *awelitu* in the first verse, who descends from the mountains. The *rukya* is described as *Pescado cargallachi / Vino cargallachi* (“Carrying fish / Carrying wine”). The *awelitu* arrives with straw, *machka* (“flour”), and *sango* (*machka* with water and fat added), whereas the *rukya* arrives with fish, wine, or *chicha* (a mildly alcoholic beverage made from fermented maize); the products carried by the *awelitu* are not specifically mentioned in the verse, but Beatriz explained that this is indeed what happens during the festival. Thus, the theme of reciprocity is played out between the two halves of the village, who meet and exchange goods. The reciprocity, however, is not limited to the confines of the village itself. Rather, Mangas becomes a microcosm of the relations that have linked the highlands with the coast for millennia: the *rukya* is first described as coming from Huacho, a city on the coast, and later as from the *yunka*, a general term for the coastal regions; the *awelitu* was described as coming *hirkapita* (“from the hills”). The products carried by the *rukya* and *awelitu* are also typical of their respective regions. This communal depiction of the exchange of products between coast and mountains relates closely to Núñez’s theory that from 8000 BCE there was significant trade between coastal and mountain populations, with the former traveling to the Andes in search of camelids (llamas, alpacas, and vicuñas) and the latter traveling to the coast in search of the abundant maritime harvests (Núñez 1962, cited in Kolata 1993:56-57). Somewhere around the fourth millennium BCE, domestication of camelids made food-production more reliable, which resulted in more organized interaction between the two ecosystems, with camel caravans following well-defined routes between coast and mountains along a network of villages that followed the streams flowing down from the Andes (57). This network was probably established through kin relations between traders, since only this kind of arrangement could ensure that on arrival they would be given food and shelter as well as guaranteed trade (57).

Another—not incompatible—theory, that of Duviols, may also shed light on the origin of the practice depicted in Masha. Duviols (1973:176) postulates that the division of many Andean townships into two halves (moiety) resulted from tensions created by the incursion of nomadic herding groups (Llacuaces) into the territory of sedentary agriculturalists (Waris). The solution

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<sup>13</sup> According to Beatriz, the *rukya* depicts the Africans who were brought as slaves to work on plantations along the coast. Beatriz described the *awelitu* (“grandfather”) as a *brujo* (“witch,” a Spanish rendering of *yachaq* [“holder of divinatory powers”]). Thus, each figure can be interpreted as an ancestral symbol of the moiety that they represent.



was to divide the land clearly into two halves, with each half managed by one group: the higher land would be controlled by the herders, with the lower land comprising the domain of the agriculturalists (178). The system was maintained by each group having rights of access to the commodities produced by the other group. In Kolata's words (1993:102), "conflict was prevented by creating a dynamic, although potentially unstable, social organization with community authority invested equally in the two moiety leaders." The theories of both Núñez and Duviols link closely with what we observe in the words of the Masha songs. Núñez's explanation is highly consistent with the clear emphasis on trade between coast and mountain in the song. The fact that the *awelitu* and *rukyaana* are counterparts of each other strongly resembles Núñez's theory of kin-like relations between traders. The meeting between Kotos and Allawkay, as well as the exchange of products typical of different ecosystems, can be explained in terms of the complementarity between higher and lower lands as described by Duviols.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, Burga (1998:40) has also explained the division in Mangas according to Duviols' theory. Thus, whereas Núñez's theory offers a plausible explanation for the reciprocity between coast and mountain that is mentioned in the song, Duviols offers an interesting perspective on the division of the village into two halves. Barth also notes how ethnicity can be maintained through ecological interdependence, whereby different groups "may provide important goods and services for each other, i.e. occupy reciprocal and therefore different niches but in close interdependence" (1969:19).

In the theories of both Núñez and Duviols, the stress is on unity between distinct elements with the fundamental motive of survival. As Urton (1981:231) states for elsewhere in the Andes, "it is the dialectical relationship between communalism and differentiation which, in the first place, motivates work by everyone in the community on certain tasks but which at the same time insists that such tasks should be performed by people working in their different *ayllu* [community] groupings." The unity that results from this ecologically motivated process of approximation and differentiation is expressed in the current song by the first person (inclusive) possessive suffix *-ntsik*, which is deployed both for the *awelitu* ("grandfather") and for the *yana* ("black man"). Whereas this suffix denoted only Kotos affiliation in the earlier song, here it denotes affiliation with both districts, which have now come together as a single unit. A single community is therefore enacted through the shifting denotations of the same possessive suffix. Here we see clearly how the Quechua possessive, rather than conveying hierarchical "ownership," serves in these songs to define a sphere of relations that are realized for productive ends. The evidential suffix *-chi* conveys the sense of expectation, but not certainty, that the *rukyaana* will be bringing the commodities mentioned. The lack of certainty arguably reminds us that the world of the high Andes is capricious and that even the most seemingly predictable of circumstances cannot be guaranteed—hence the importance of conscientiously reaffirming relations to actualize them out of latency. The directional *-mu*, conveying movement towards the speaker, exemplifies the process of forming unity through increasing approximation. We witness this suffix in *aywaykaamun* ("is coming") and *qeshpikaamun* ("is appearing to us"). The locus of the opposition, the point of origin that gives the movement its relational meaning, is the suffix

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<sup>14</sup> While Kotos is physically higher than Allawkay, it is associated with lower lands because its flat terrain is more suitable for agriculture than the technically lower, but steeper, Allawkay.

*-pita* (“from”) in the two instances of *markapita* (“from the town/country/land of”). The fact that this approximation is latent but not always actual is emphasized by the phrase *kanan hunaqlla* (“today”), where the suffix *-lla* could be interpreted as both affective and limitative (“only today”).

The third verse begins by emphasizing once again the theme of relational approximation, in this case through the word *aywallaamun* (“is arriving”). The coming together of the group by virtue of custom and the existence of the custom by virtue of the willingness to unite are reinforced by the possessive in *kay costumbrillantsikchi* (“this custom of ours”). The line *kay nillapachi* (“saying this”)—from the verbal root *-ni* (“say”)—could refer to either the speech of the *rukyaana* who states that he is coming or that of the villagers who comment on his arrival. The threefold repetition of the evidential *-chi* again conveys an element of uncertainty—that he is expected to be arriving but it is not known for sure. I have translated the phrase *yarpay shonqullachi* as “mindful heart,” the “heart” being the principal denotation of *shonqu*. However, the seventeenth-century chronicler González Holguín suggests a much wider interpretation: “The heart and entrails, the stomach and consciousness, judgement and reason, memory, the core of wood, wilfulness and understanding” (González Holguín 1952 [1608], quoted in Husson 1985:111, my translation). Mannheim (1986:51, n.14) suggests that “essence” might be a better translation. For Montes, *chuyma*—the cognate of *shonqu* in Aymara (another major Andean language)—denotes “heart and everything that pertains to the inner state of the soul, emotion, sensibility, effort, judgement, understanding, knowledge, intelligence, memory, wisdom, disposition, and attitude” (Montes 1986:165, paraphrased in Gutiérrez Condori and Gutiérrez Condori 2009:40, my translation). *Shonqu*, then, combines the emotional and the rational, incorporating the pragmatic and affective nature of community whose basis is physical and psychological security.

The conflation of these two qualities is exemplified by the verb *yarpay* (“mindful”). The term *yarpay* reflects a sense of emotional engagement as well as moral responsibility, intertwined in the act of “remembering.” As Howard notes (2002:29-30):

Remembering in the Andes (*yarpary* in Quechua I; *yuyary* in Quechua II) is a culturally vital activity involving not only the telling of stories but also the performance of rituals and participation in festivals. Forgetting (*qunqay*), by contrast, is the way that neglect of social and ritual obligations is described, and it is punishable in the form of sickness, crop failure, even death.

Thus, the phrase *yarpay shonqullachi* communicates the sense that the *rukyaana* both cognitively acknowledges and emotionally feels his responsibility to, and integration with, the community.<sup>15</sup> This mindfulness reflects the age-old cooperation between the two halves, who base their complementarity on reciprocal engagement with the common aim of survival. This situation again recalls Howard in that the “cultural function of remembering in Andean ways of thinking is a regenerative one, whereby the past provides the symbolic resources for making sense of the present and projecting toward the future, in a way that allows at once for continuity and

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<sup>15</sup> The emotional element is also reinforced by the affective *-lla*.

change” (46). Thus, in *yarpay shonqullachi*, we see the inseparability of the pragmatic, emotional, and ethical, all orientated towards the fundamental goal of survival, a goal that is realized through reciprocal complementarity: unity in diversity. Münzel similarly notes the fusion of the “pragmatic” and the “ethical” among Amazonian groups (1986:196). But the dubitative *-chi* reminds us that this unity is not guaranteed and therefore requires care and willingness for it to be maintained.

*Arrival of People from Lima*

The following verse is from a song that describes the arrival of the organizers’ relatives from the national capital, Lima. Migration is a ubiquitous feature of contemporary Andean life, as people seek better opportunities in the coastal cities. This migration usually involves a cultural shift towards Hispanic norms, including loss of Quechua in favor of Spanish. The scale of the migration is indicated by the following statistics: in 1940, 35% of Peruvians lived in cities, 65% in rural areas; by 1982 these figures were reversed (von Gleich 1992:59). The following verse primarily concerns the reincorporation of migrants into their community of origin. The common cultural estrangement of migrants probably renders this reincorporation a particularly pertinent issue.

Kayllaqa nunalla	This person
“Mamallayki taytallayki	While saying
Rikyapaymushaq rirqapaymushaq”	“I will see
Nikyayllapashi aywaykaamun	Your mother, your father”
Capital markallapita	Is coming
Yarqarallaamunaq	From the capital
Vinollan cargashqalla	Carrying his wine
Licornin apashqallapashi	Transporting his liquor
Aywaykyaamun	He is coming

The first line defines the new arrival as *kayllaqa nunalla* (“this man”). We saw that the term *nuna* (“man, person”) is usually deployed for people from one’s own community; thus, its use here arguably conveys willingness to reincorporate this person into the group, reinforced by the two affective *-lla* suffixes. The adjective *kay* (“this”), normally used only for immediate objects or people, suggests a desire to welcome this person who is still on his way, as made clear by the last line: *aywaykyaamun* (“is coming”). The topicalizer *-qa* highlights the sense of immediacy conveyed by *kay*. The lines *mamallayki taytallayki / rikyapaymushaq rirqapaymushaq* (“I will see, I will see / your mother, father”) are quoted speech, indicated by the following word *nikyayllapashi* (“while saying”).<sup>16</sup> The citation of the arrival’s speech confirms his increasing approximation and his entering into the sphere of communication and reciprocity, both of which index and further facilitate his reincorporation into the community. We do not know whom the traveler is addressing, but the important point is that he is anticipating renewing

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<sup>16</sup> Again, this verse follows Quechua head-final word-order whereby quoted speech precedes the verb that indexes it, just as the object precedes the verb.

a relation with people in Mangas. Within the quoted speech, the directional *-mu* (movement towards the speaker) indicates a metaphorical, emotional approximation towards the community. The word *nikyayllapashi* contains the evidential marker *-shi*, which indicates third-hand “knowledge.” There is therefore still a degree of doubt about whether the quoted speech is accurate, but the very fact that someone has reported it suggests that a relation has already been formed. The traveler is described as *Capital markallapita / Yarqarallaamunaq* (“From the Capital / He left”), which alludes to his current abode in Lima. The suffix *-naq* in *yarqarallaamunaq* (“left for here”) indicates action completed in the past. This suffix is generally used for far-off, unwitnessed events, such as occur in myths or legends. Here, this suffix seems to emphasize the (cultural as well as physical) remoteness of Lima. The suffix also conveys the sense that the individual is following the practice of a long tradition with its origins in the remote past—as is indeed the case, given the millennia of trade between coast and mountains. Here, reciprocity is emphasized through the parallel lines *Vinollan cargashqalla / Licornin apashqallapashi* (“Carrying his wine / Transporting his liquor”). In the Andes, migrants who return temporarily to their community are expected to bring gifts that are impossible to find in the villages. This act is a way of reinforcing communal ties. Therefore, this song reaffirms the age-old tradition of reciprocity between mountain and coast in terms of the modern context of urban migration, where reciprocity—whether communicative, emotional, or material—is the vehicle of reintegration. Difference is therefore both a factor to be overcome partially by unity and also a facilitator of such unity: if the migrant had never left Mangas, he would not need to become reincorporated into the community, yet his access to commodities not found in Mangas is an essential factor in his reincorporation. Likewise, if Kotos and Allawkay were not perceived as distinct, there would be no rationale in the Masha festival (which brings them together). But their mutual acts of unity rely precisely on the reinforcement of their differences through complementary reciprocity.

The following examples of unity and difference were salient in this section:

- the transformation from *cargullayki* (“your charge”) in the song depicted in Section One to *cargullantsik* (“our [inclusive] charge”) in the first song of Section Two, which both expresses the concomitant formation of unity and catalyzes its further consolidation
- the phrase *cada watallan* (“every year”), which depicts the cyclical nature of the festival whereby productive relations are latent and require mutual willingness to be reactivated
- the shift in the denotation of the first person (inclusive) plural suffix *-ntsik*, from just one half of the village (in Section One) to the whole village (in Section Two), which both describes and enacts the synthesis between the two districts
- the reciprocity between the *rukyaana* (“black man”) and the *awelitu* (“grandfather”), who thereby partially reinforce and partially negate their mutual distinctness
- the mapping of this duality onto the relations of mountain/coast, Kotos/Allawkay, and rural/urban, which each convey a productive, pragmatic rationale for unity

- the interplay of directional *-mu* (“towards”) and locative *-pita* (“from”), which exemplifies the process of forming unity through increasing approximation

### Section Three: The Reinforcement of Difference

#### *The Bullfight (Penultimate Day)*

The next song is performed during a mock bullfight at the end of the festival. Each district constructs a model of a bull, and these models are both placed in the center of the town-square. (The division between Kotos and Allawkay runs through the square.) The members of each district then fight against members of the corresponding district, with the men actively engaging in combat while the women throw objects to hit the men of the opposing group. At the end of the fight, each side states that it has won, but there is never an adjudicated winner. As Burga states, the bullfight serves to “ritualize this ancient opposition, of antagonism and complementarity, between Waris and Llacuaces [the agriculturalists and herders, respectively]” (1998:103, my translation). This song depicts the Andean practice of *tinku*,<sup>17</sup> or ritualized warfare (Harrison 1989:52): “A pan-Andean phenomenon, *tinkuy* consists of a ritual battle between groups of men (and often groups of women) which may result in deaths.” A wider definition, however, is the “convergence of oppositional forces” (Seligmann 2004:131) in a spirit of cooperation and competition. Stobart (2006:140) notes how “*tinku* has been widely associated with the definition and maintenance of balanced relations, especially the dialectical dualism or ‘charged diametricality’ of the *ayllu* [Andean community]. . . . In this context the word *tinku* emerges as a form of ‘violent harmony.’” The further implications of *tinku* will become apparent in my discussion below.

Alli toromi torollaaqa	My bull is a strong bull
Allawkinupa torullaaqa	The bull of an <i>allauquino</i>
Paja castillo michikoq toru torum	My bull is a bull that eats tough straw
torullaaqa	My bull is a bull that eats the flowers of
Oqshapa tuktunta michikoq toru torum	<i>oqsha</i>
torullaaqa	It lives in Qeqishpunta
Qeqishpuntachawmi taarakoqmi	
Alli torupa tsurillanmi	The son of a strong bull
Alli vacapa wawallanmi	The son of a strong cow
Qeqishpunta chamoqllami	Arriving from Qeqishpunta
Gánalo gánalo	Defeat him, defeat him
Kotosino gana al allawkino	<i>Cotosino</i> defeats the <i>allauquino</i>

<sup>17</sup> This concept can be expressed as both *tinku* and *tinkuy*. *Tinku* is the lexical root; in this case, the addition of the suffix *-y* serves to form a verbal infinitive (“to converge”) that, in turn, can also serve as a noun (“the act of converging”).

Kotosino échale échale  
No te chupes

Give it to him, give it to him, *cotosino*  
Don't chicken out

The first verse begins with a description of the bull from Allawkay: *Alli toromi torollaaqa / Allawkinupa torullaaqa* (“My bull is a strong bull / The bull of an *allauquino*”). While Doña Clotilde sang every other verse of Masha from the perspective of Kotos, this (and the following) verse is sung from the perspective of Allawkay. Perhaps the most likely explanation is that Doña Clotilde is immersing herself in the ritual context of the battle, moving from one side to the other in this “liminal” situation. This alternation would be consistent with the purpose of *tinku* as uniting through opposition and with the fact that the *awayaq*s represent different districts in different years. The verses concerning the bullfight would be uttered in a kind of “call-and-response” manner, a verbal duel between the *awayaq* who that year represented Kotos and the *awayaq* representing Allawkay.

This first verse also communicates a strong link between communal identity and strength (and therefore survival). The parallelism reinforces the correlation between being *alli* (“strong”) and being from Allawkay; the evidential *-mi* conveys emphasis and certainty, and the affective *-lla* appropriates the bull through emotional engagement, illustrating once more the intertwining of the affective and the pragmatic. The fourfold repetition of the first person singular possessive (indicated by vowel-lengthening) in *torollaaqa* (“my bull”) suggests a close link between the vitality of the bull and that of the individual—particularly given the importance of the bull for agriculture. That the “bull” is in reality a model shows that the phrase is uttered not as a statement of fact but arguably as an enactment of communal solidarity. The phrase *paja castillo michikoq* (“that which eats tough straw”) describes the bull as eating the straw used to make *castillos*, temporary architectural structures that are constructed during traditional festivals. This straw is very tough, so only the strongest of animals can eat it. Thus, the strength of the bull (and of the community which the bull represents) is emphasized. The same emphasis is present within *oqshapa tuktunta michikoq* (“that which eats the flowers of *oqsha*,” a very tough grass [*Muhlenbergia peruviana*]). The phrase *Qeqishpuntachawmi taarakoqmi* (literally, “that which lives in Qeqishpunta”) refers to the location whence the *awelitu* (“grandfather”) descends, and hence the mountain origin of Allawkay. The double evidential *-mi* is highly marked since this suffix is normally used only once in a clause; here, it seems to ground the origin of the bull more firmly, whereby strength and fertility are intertwined with Allawkay’s communal identity.

Complementary unity is then evidenced in the next verse, where the bull is defined as *Alli torupa tsurillanmi / Alli vacapa wawallanmi* (“The son of a strong bull / The son of a strong cow”). The parallel lines coincide with parallel genders, reflected in the term *toru* (“bull”) and *vaca* (“cow”). Quechua, moreover, has separate terms for “son” and “daughter,” depending on which parent is referenced. *Tsuri* refers to the father’s son, and *wawa* to the mother’s son; here too, then, gender complementarity is indexed, showing that the single entity of the “young bull” is the fusion of binary elements. Duality is also represented in the relation of “parent” to “child.” Thus, a fourfold division is presented, resulting from the combination of two dual divisions:

young against old; male against female.<sup>18</sup> It is by virtue of this division that the bull is engendered—the reproductive unity of male and female means that the older generation creates a new one, just as in Section One the unity between husband and wife resulted in the creation of the festival, which in turn synthesized the divisions of Allawkay/Kotos, mountain/coast, and rural/urban. This process of synthesis lies at the heart of the Masha songs, where the separation between distinct elements is what allows reciprocal relations to exist and creates the dynamism necessary for the production of new elements synthesized from the interaction of the old.

The dynamic nature of entities, as communicated by the Masha verses, dialogues closely with Harrison's findings across many parts of the Andes that "the conceptualization of the contradictions and oppositions is a natural, normal manner of viewing the world. Things are not statically described but are seen as things in movement which recombine to make new wholes in meaningful juxtaposition" (1989:30). The repetition of *-mi* (the evidential denoting epistemic strength) adds force to the lines, grounding the relation between fertility and communal identity on an epistemological basis of certainty. The threefold structure of the verse also conveys the sense of a new element originating from two complementary ones. In the line *Qeqishpunta chamaqllami* ("Arriving from Qeqishpunta"), the verb *chamaq* ("arriving") projects the bull from its origin in Qeqishpunta to its destination in the main square, conveying movement and dynamism in the ontogeny of elements. And, on the main square, a new complementarity is created through antagonism, as the bull meets its counterpart from Kotos. The antagonism is paradoxically an expression of unity since the "bullfight" only makes sense if both sides share the same symbolic associations; after all, a "political confrontation can only be implemented by making the groups similar and thereby comparable" (Barth 1969:35). Allen is worth quoting at length on this point (2002:177):

Warfare of any kind expresses a group's social boundaries and is also a form of communication between the opposing groups. In *tinkuy*, one experiences an opponent's similarity to oneself as well as his or her differences. If there were no basic similarity between the combatants, they could not join in battle; but if there were no differences between them, they would not have a reason to fight. Any characteristics of the Andean *ayllu* . . . are expressed by means of the *tinku*: the *ayllu* coheres as a faction and defines its boundaries while simultaneously being incorporated into an *ayllu* of a higher order.

The Masha songs exhibit a very similar fusion of unity and difference. By antagonistically reinforcing their differences, Kotos and Allawkay define the parameters of productive exchange. Through this exchange, the districts combine to create a larger entity: Mangas. Likewise, Mirande defines the Aymara notion of *taypi* ("center") as having "a double force, centripetal and centrifugal, which allows opposites to unite without merging" (2005:364-65, my translation).

The final verse illustrates the new opposition (the fight) that results from the oppositions that created the bull in the first place (the bull and the cow). Unlike the other Masha verses, this one is in Spanish. The linguistic contrast reflects the contrast in tone—from a description of the

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<sup>18</sup> This situation recalls the fourfold division of the Incan Empire, which was named *Tawantinsuyu* ("Land of Four Quarters").

bull to the incitement of action—and the actualization of the bull’s potential. The fact that Spanish is used in more “serious,” “official” contexts means that its use here may serve to heighten the emotional tone; the contrast between the two languages may also reinforce the sense of complementary antagonism. Thus, bilingualism furnishes Andeans with extra rhetorical resources (Julca-Guerrero 2009:69): “Both Quechua and Spanish are used in various ways, essentially to create special poetic and expressive-communicative effects.” The first three lines—*Gánalo gánalo / Kotosino gana al allawkino / Kotosino échale échale* (“Defeat him, defeat him / The *cotosino* defeats the *allawkino* / Give it to him, give it to him, *cotosino*”)—could not be a stronger depiction of antagonism.<sup>19</sup> However, Beatriz told me that no winner is ever declared in these confrontations. Each half is, after all, equal. The focus, then, is not on victory as an ultimate goal, but on the process of interaction, the fight itself. The final line, *No te chupes* (“Don’t chicken out”), emphasizes the vitality of the fighter, specifically his courage. In the fight, we see that it is antagonism at one level (between two halves) that creates unity at another level (within each half), recalling Evans-Pritchard’s (1940) thesis on segmentary opposition among the Sudanese Nuer. However, the depiction of antagonism and unity here is more pervasive than the consolidation of one group by contrast with another. We have seen that opposition does not just unite the opposed groups *internally*, but paradoxically it unites the opposed groups *with each other* by foregrounding the difference that makes the unity productive and that also sets the dialogue in motion. As Bastien states of *nuwasi*, the Aymara cognate of *tinku*, “It is a way of uniting opposite sides in a dialectic that clearly defines and recognizes the other as well as establishes their interdependence” (1992:159).

The themes of unity and difference were evident in the following examples in this section:

- the first person possessive in *torullaaqa* (“my bull”), whereby communal strength is depicted through intimate association with the strength of the bull (where the symbolism involves a hiatus between the “group” and its “totem,” though it is arguably this hiatus that allows for a clearer, more objective—because partially externalized—appraisal of group-unity)
- the fourfold complementarity through difference in *Alli torupa tsurillanmi / Alli vacapa wawallanmi* (“The son of a strong bull / The son of a strong cow”), whereby reproductive male/female complementarity results in the production of a second generation
- the projection of this new element into a sphere of social relations in *Qeqishpunta chamoqllami* (“Arriving from Qeqishpunta”) that are mirrored by the verse’s threefold structure, thus indicating the production of a third element from the synthesis of two preceding elements

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<sup>19</sup> Incidentally, the verse also illustrates that Doña Clotilde once again positions herself from the Kotos perspective.



- the contrast between Quechua and Spanish, which indicates the creation of a new relational context (that is, the bullfight itself)
- the bullfight, which is an expression of unity as much as difference since the fight can only make sense if the two sides partake in the same “dialogue,” sharing the same communicative norms; the fact that there is no adjudicated winner shows that the focus is on the process of differentiation through interaction rather than wholesale defeat



Fig. 3. The main square of Mangas, which separates Kotos from Allawkay, and where the bullfight is enacted. Photo by Charles Maurice Pigott.

### Conclusion: An Ecological Appraisal of Meaning

In this essay I have illustrated how, in a selection of Andean songs, unity is predicated as much on difference as on similarity. Taken as discrete concepts, “unity” and “difference” seem difficult to reconcile since the former suggests fusion while the latter suggests divergence. However, from the standpoint of the Masha songs, there is no contradiction because what counts as an “entity” is not a discrete and monolithic block, but a form that emerges through interaction. Here the “entity” is to be taken as a contingent manifestation, consolidated to an extent but never so consolidated that it loses touch with the environment whence it originates.<sup>20</sup>

Moreover, in the Masha songs there is no division between the “physical” world and an “idealized” representation of that world in language. Instead, the language is at once expressive and enactive. The conceptual oppositions displayed in the songs (Kotos/Allawkay, coast/

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<sup>20</sup> The interplay of unity and difference in Andean societies is highly redolent of the philosophical writings of Merleau-Ponty and Derrida, particularly Merleau-Ponty’s (1964) notion of *chair* (“flesh”) and Derrida’s (1967) *trace* (“trace”).



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## **Cultural Circles and Epic Transmission: The Dai People in China**

**Qu Yongxian**

### **Introduction**

The Dai<sup>1</sup> ethnic group in China and the Thai people in Southeast Asia<sup>2</sup> can all be broadly divided into two cultural groups: a Buddhist cultural circle and another circle centered around indigenous religion. Within the Buddhist circle, the Dai people practice Theravada Buddhism, celebrating the Songkran<sup>3</sup> Festival and using a writing system created by their ancestors long ago with the result that poems were often recorded as written texts or books very early in their history. Within the indigenous circle, the Dai communities in China are generally referred to as “Hua-Yao Dai” (“Colorful-Waistband Dai,” in connection with their vivid clothing), and they adhere to folk belief or animism. These communities have little or no literacy education; consequently, their poetry has been handed down orally from generation to generation. Interestingly, in both of these Dai cultural circles, the poetry employs a key technique that can be termed “waist-feet rhyme” wherein the last syllable of one line rhymes with an internal syllable in the succeeding line. This feature—which is discussed in detail below—is embedded in both the oral and written traditions and is an important enabling device within the poetry of the Dai people.

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<sup>1</sup> The “Dai” ethnic group is officially recognized in China; however, internationally these peoples are often designated as “Tai” or “Thai,” especially in Southeast Asia. In this essay, I use “Dai” instead of “Tai” or “Thai” according to official Chinese regulation.

<sup>2</sup> I performed fieldwork in Northeast Burma, mainly in Kengtung and Tachilek, Shan State, and in northern and northeast Thailand from April 20-29, 2012, conducting interviews in Shan villages such as Ban Hant and Ban Kosai. From May 5-20, 2012, I again worked in northern and northeast Thailand—mainly in Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Nan, Sukhothai, Kalasin, Nakhon Phanom, Sakon Nakhon, Surin, and Sakon Nakhon—and also in some Thai villages, such as Ban Songkhwai, Ban Kotwa, Ban Maesamai. I engaged in additional fieldwork within northern Laos—mainly in Xiangkhouang, Louang Namtha, Oudomxai, Phôngsali, and Vientiane—and conducted interviews in some Thai villages, including Ban Nasy, Ban Puxi, Ban Pasak, Ban Luang, Ban Namfa, Ban Tongdy, Ban Thapao, Ban Donpoy, and Ban Lakham. Finally, fieldwork was performed in northwest Vietnam—mainly in Tỉnh Lào Cai, Tỉnh Lạng Sơn, Tỉnh Lai Châu, Tỉnh Điện Biên—and further interviews were conducted in Thai villages such as Ban Liang, and Ban Uva, among others.

<sup>3</sup> In Chinese (and from an outsider’s perspective) the festival is called “Po Shui Jie” (“Water-Sprinkling Festival”), but in the Dai language—especially in Xishuangbanna Prefecture—it is referred to as “Songkran Bi Mai” (“Songkran New Year”), just as it is in Thailand and Laos.



### Subgroups of Dai People in China

The Dai ethnic group is one of 56 minorities in China, with a population of 1,159,231 according to the Chinese National Census in 2000. Its people live mainly within Yunnan Province in southern China, especially in the Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture and the Dehong Dai and Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture. They also live in other areas, such as Gengma County, Menglian County, Jinggu County, Xinping County, Yuanyang County, Pu'er City, Lincang City, and so on, mostly residing in basins or valleys along the Nujiang River, Lancangjiang River, Jinshajiang River, Yuanjiang River, and Honghe River.

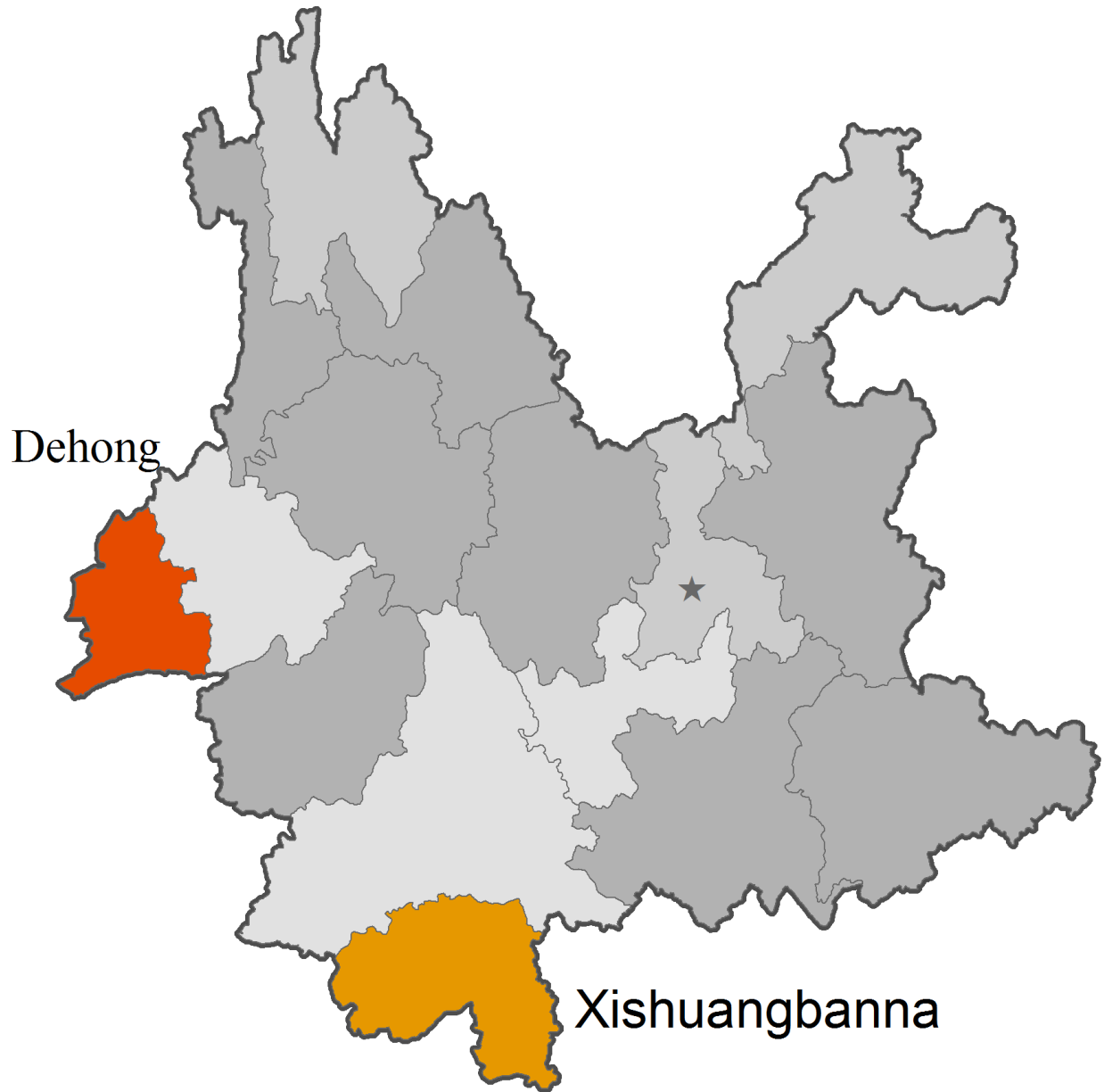


Map 1. Yunnan Province, China.

According to their own terminology and names, there are widely varying Dai branches in different areas, such as the Dai-lue<sup>4</sup> (“Dai living along the Lue River”) in Xishuangbanna Prefecture, the Dai-le<sup>5</sup> (“Dai living along the Lancang River upstream from Burma”) in Dehong

<sup>4</sup> [tai<sup>55</sup>lu<sup>31</sup>]. Because there are different Dai dialects and scripts, international scholars generally use the International Phonetic Alphabet—as I have done here and throughout the essay—to transcribe the Dai language. See further Appendix I and Appendix II.

<sup>5</sup> [tai<sup>55</sup>lɔ<sup>35</sup>]. In Chinese “Dai-le” is often wrongly pronounced as “Tai-na.”



Map 2. Dehong Prefecture and Xishuangbanna Prefecture, Yunnan Province.

Prefecture, the Dai-yat<sup>6</sup> (“Dai who lagged behind or separated from others”) and Dai-sai<sup>7</sup> (“Dai living in Gasa Town”) in Xiping County, the Dai-dam<sup>8</sup> (“Black Dai”) in Maguan County, and so on. However, some outsiders distinguish only three broader groups—the Shui-Dai (from the Chinese word *shui* [“water”] and thus understood as “Dai who live along rivers”), the Han-Dai (from *han* [“dry”] in Chinese and referring to Dai who live in farms within dry areas), and the

<sup>6</sup> [tai<sup>51</sup>jat<sup>24</sup>].

<sup>7</sup> [tai<sup>55</sup>saai<sup>55</sup>].

<sup>8</sup> [tai<sup>55</sup>dam<sup>33</sup>].

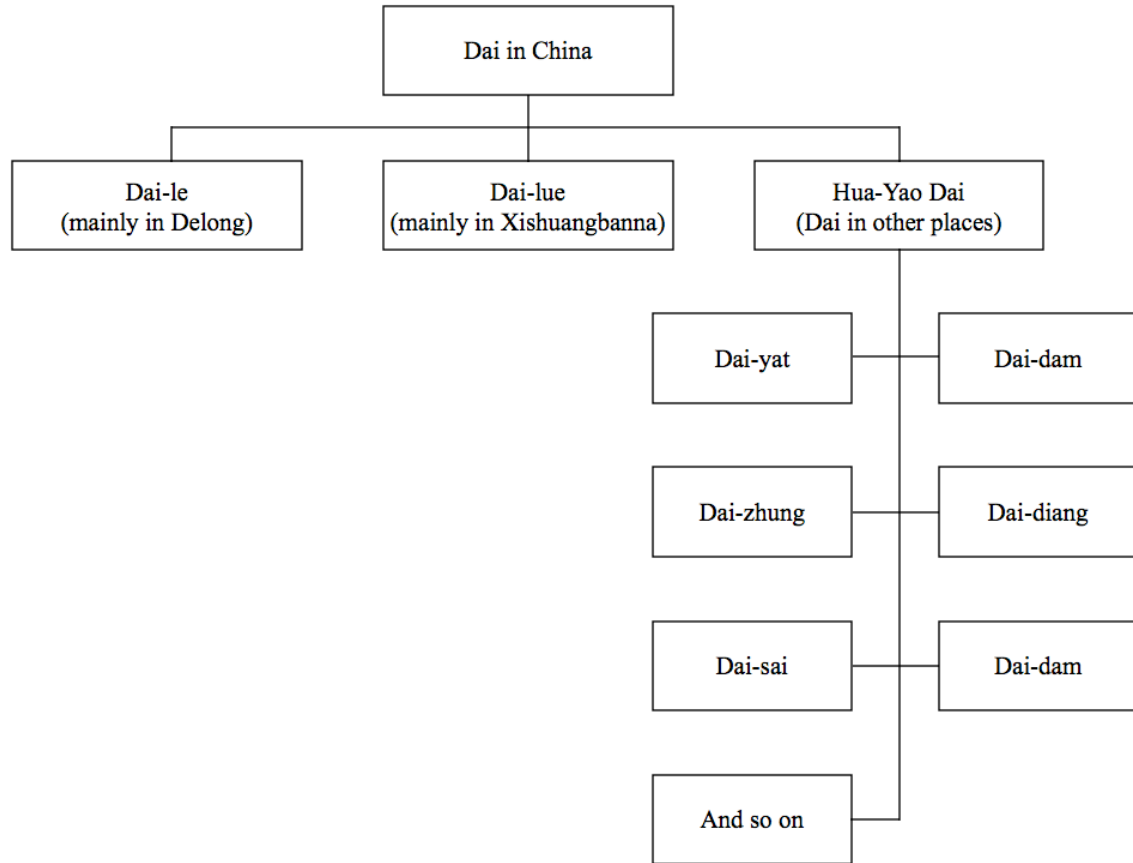


Fig. 1. The branches of Dai in China.

Hua-Yao Dai (a “catch-all” category for all other Dai subgroups)—but such classification is not accepted among the Dai people themselves.

Why are there so many branches of the Dai population in China? The historical reasons are complicated, but the following narrative provided by Thao’ enkai, a 50-year-old man from Luosa Town, Magua County, may contain relevant information of a previous migration (Qu 2010):

A long time ago, all Dai people lived in a kingdom named Meng si.<sup>9</sup> There were so many people residing together that they battled each other for food, water, and other resources. As a result, some Dai subgroups left southwards led by their chief men, searching for a new world. Some people were strong enough to be the vanguard team; some people were too weak to catch up. Among these migrants, some people were nobles in precious dress and they marched more slowly. Therefore, they made an agreement: the vanguard team should cut down the banana stems as road

<sup>9</sup> Meng si (also referred to by some other Dai as “Meng xi” or “Meng qi”) is considered to have been the capital of the ancient Dian Kingdom and is now known as Kunming City in Yunnan Province. There are many meanings of “meng” that range from “kingdom” to “city,” as, for example, in the Dai word “Mengkok” used to refer to the Thai capital Bangkok.

marks so that the laggard groups might follow them by these marks. However, when they found that the banana stems had grown new leaves, they thought the vanguard team had gone too far to be caught. So they decided not to pursue anymore; they then stopped and stayed with other kinds of ethnic groups, such as the Hani and Yi peoples. For instance, “Dai-yat” means “the laggard Dai;” it is one of these left-behind Dai groups.

This is a famous story spread among many Dai communities with varying details,<sup>10</sup> and we may make some tentative conjectures accordingly. The Dai people may have migrated southward along rivers, passing through jungles on the way. Eventually they could not associate with each other any longer, and most of them migrated to southeast Asia, with a small number of them lagging behind and sharing the area with other ethnic groups. As a result of these various movements, different Dai groups may have seen their own culture influenced to different degrees by the cultures of others, and the Dai people thus developed along different branches that now bear their own unique characteristics with regard to dialects, religions, customs, dwellings, foods, and so on.

At present, the Dai language in China has been categorized into four distinct dialect groups. The Dai-lue dialect is used by 360,000 people, most of whom live in Xishuangbanna Prefecture; 480,000 people speak the Dai-le dialect, mainly within Dehong Prefecture; the Hong-Jin dialect is employed by 150,000 people, mainly in the Honghe River and Jinshajiang River basins;<sup>11</sup> and the Jinping dialect is found mainly in Jinping County and is used by more than 20,000 people.<sup>12</sup> Among the four dialects, the Dai-le dialect is the most widely spoken. For instance, Dai people in Lingcang, Jinggu, Menglian, Lancang, and some other areas all speak the Dai-le dialect because they migrated long ago to each of these locations from Mengmao.<sup>13</sup> At the same time, the Dai-le dialect is similar to the Shan language in Shan State, Burma,<sup>14</sup> and to that of the Tai-Ahoms living in Assam State, India.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> For instance, the story is also told in places such as Mosha Town, Xinping County, and even in Northern Laos. It is also found in some publications (see, for example, Feng Huaiyong 2008) and on some internet sites.

<sup>11</sup> Because there are so many diverse subgroups in these areas, their languages are further divided into five local subdialects: Yuan xin, Wuyong, Maguan, Yuanjiang, and Lu shi.

<sup>12</sup> On the classification of dialects, see Luo Meizhen 1993.

<sup>13</sup> Mengmao, also called Mengmaolong, is considered to have been the capital of the Dai's ancient Guozhambi Kingdom from 567 to 1448 CE; it is now called (in Chinese) Ruili City in Dehong Prefecture. For further details about the Guozhambi Kingdom, see Dehong Dai Study Society 2005.

<sup>14</sup> For example, when I did my fieldwork in Kengtung and Tachilek Counties, Shan State, during April 2012, I could communicate with the Shan villagers in the Dehong Dai language.

<sup>15</sup> Many Tai-Ahoms scholars have been visiting Dehong Prefecture in recent years in order to trace their history and ancestral culture; they believe that their ancestors migrated from Mengmao to Assam State, and they have scriptures called *Buranjis* written in old Tai scripts that record such a history. For more details see <http://taiahoms.ning.com>.

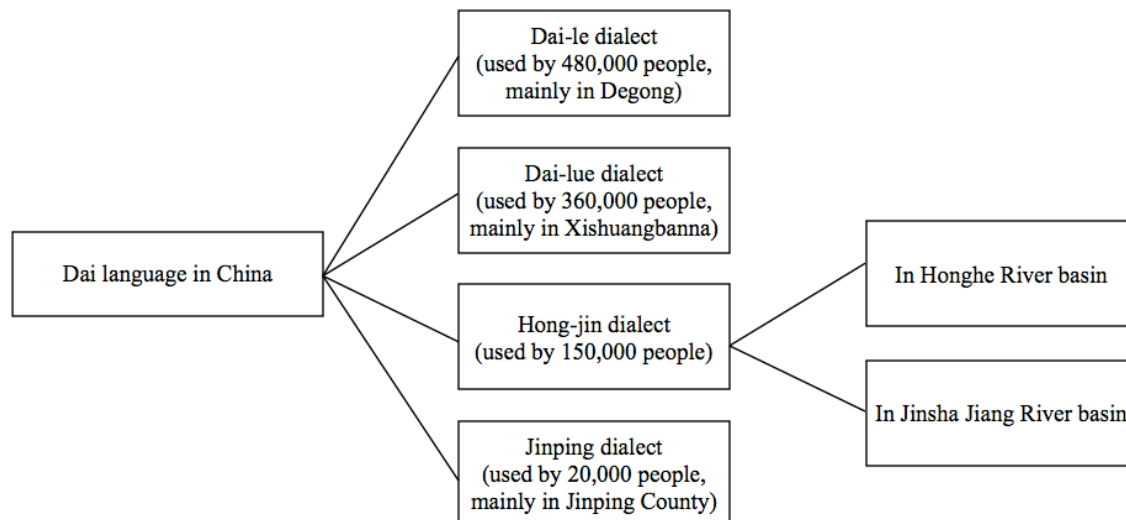


Fig. 2. The four dialects of the Dai language.

### The Dai People in Two Cultural Circles

As mentioned earlier, a large number of the Dai people—mainly in Xishuangbanna and Dehong Prefectures—lie within a Buddhist cultural circle, having been influenced by Theravada Buddhism from Burma or Laos, and they therefore share similar characteristics such as their celebration of the Songkran Festival and the employment of writing systems to record and transcribe the Buddhist scriptures. The Dai people in China have actually created and developed four separate kinds of scripts, and three of them are currently in use: the Dai-le script (called “Duo-tho nook” [“Bean-sprout-shaped script”] by the Dai) used mainly in Dehong, the Dai-lue script (also called “Duo-tham” [“Classic script”]) employed primarily in Xishuangbanna, and the Dai-pong script (also referred to as “Duo-mon” [“Round-shaped script”]) used mainly in Mengmao.

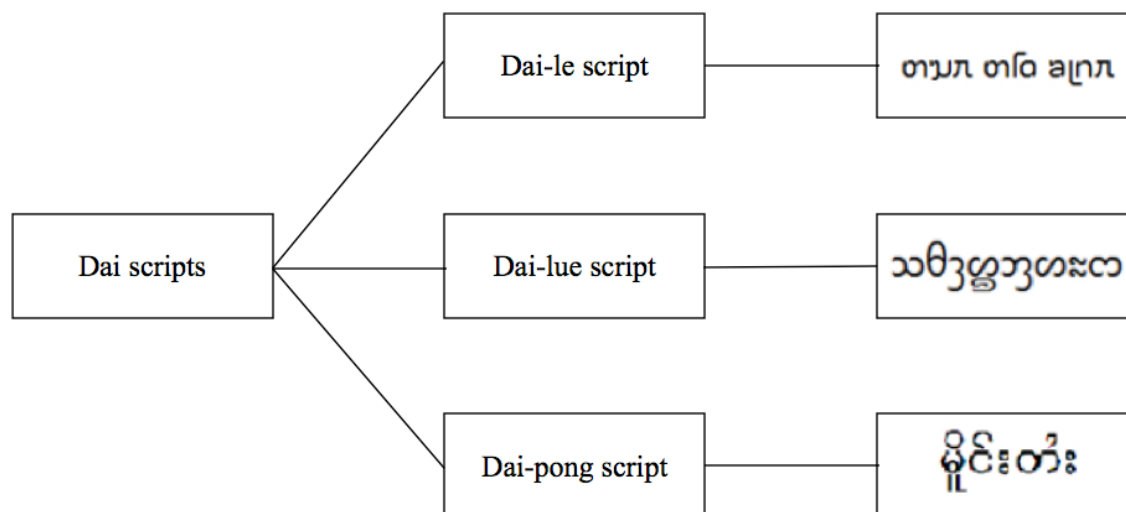


Fig. 3. Three kinds of Dai scripts in current use.

The Dai-le script is close to the Dai-pong script in both shape and phonetic system, and both of them are similar to the Shan script. The Dai-lue script shares similarities with the Lao and Thai scripts. Although these scripts display differences in their shapes, they all stem from Brahmic script. At present the reformed Dai-le and Dai-lue scripts are referred to as the New Dai scripts, which are used by publishing houses, schools, internet sites, and other official domains. However, the traditional Dai scripts are used more widely among the general population, particularly in temple settings.<sup>16</sup>

Just a small number of Dai people live within the indigenous religious cultural circle, mainly along the Yuanjiang and Honghe Rivers; most of them are Hua-Yao Dai in Yuanjiang County, Xinping County, Yuanyang County, such as the Dai-yat, Dai-sai, Dai-zhung, Dai-la, and Dai-dam mentioned above. Such Hua-Yao Dai subgroups migrated southward into northwest Vietnam<sup>17</sup> and northern Laos,<sup>18</sup> constituting a



Fig. 4. A Dai-luo elder who was pasturing cattle when I arrived at Lengdun Town, Yuanyang County, Honghe Prefecture. Photo by author. For more information on this and other photos, consult the eCompanion to this essay.

<sup>16</sup> Buddhist monks must learn the traditional Dai script in order to help villagers transcribe the Buddhist scriptures written via this method. Many Buddhist scriptures are preserved in temples (called “Zhuang” in Dehong and “Wat” in Xishuangbanna), and the monks often recite or chant these scriptures for people in ceremonies, especially during the three months of Vassa.

<sup>17</sup> The Thai people are identified officially as one of 54 ethnic groups in Vietnam, and they reside in the northwest region, mainly in Điện Biên, Lai Châu, Sơn La, and Lào Cai Provinces. During my fieldwork there (July 14-24, 2012) I found that the Thai people in Vietnam can be divided into three subgroups—the Black Thai (“Thai-dam”), White Thai (“Thai-khao”), and Red Thai (“Thai-diang”)—that all refer to themselves as [tai<sup>55</sup>], and they do not hold to Theravada Buddhism. They are similar to the Dai-dam and Dai-khao in Jinping County, Yunnan Province, Southern China (where I performed fieldwork during July 25-30, 2012). As a Dai, I can chat easily with these Thai villagers in the Dai language.

<sup>18</sup> Many people consider there to be three main groups in Laos: the biggest one is the Lao-luong group whose members reside in valleys and maintain a rice-planting culture; the second is the Lao-thing group (including such peoples as the Khmu) settled among the mountainsides and holding to slash-and-burn cultivation; and the third is the Lao-song group (mainly the Hmong and Yao peoples) found among the highest mountains and employing both shifting and swidden cultivation methods. Within such a categorization, the Thai people are placed within the Lao-luong group. During my fieldwork in Xiengkhuang, Luang Phabang, and Louang Namtha Provinces (July 3-14, 2012), I found that the Thai people in Laos can themselves be divided into two main parts. On the one hand, the Lue, who are actually from Xishuangbanna, practice Theravada Buddhism and are virtually indistinguishable from the Dai people; on the other, there is the Putai group, consisting of Black Thai, White Thai, and Red Thai from Vietnam. However, both groups refer to themselves as [tai<sup>55</sup>], and I could chat with the villagers in both the Thai and Dai languages.

special Putai<sup>19</sup> group including mainly Thai-dam (“Black Thai”), Thai-diang (“Red Thai”), and Thai-khao (“White Thai”). These Putai people then continued a migration into northeast Thailand. Although these Dai are usually divided into different branches, they do indeed share some similar characteristics: first, all of these Hua-Yao Dai subgroups adhere to indigenous religious practices and therefore do not believe in Buddhism or celebrate the Songkran Festival. Rather, they enjoy traditional Chinese festivals, such as the Spring Festival and the Mid-Autumn Festival. They are clearly much more profoundly influenced by Chinese culture than by Buddhist culture.<sup>20</sup> Second, they inhabit relatively smaller regions. For example, the Dai-sai dwell mainly in Gasa Town, Xiping County; the Dai-zhung are found in Lijiang Town, Yuanjiang County; and the Dai-khao are in Mengla Town, Jinping County. And very importantly, these Hua-Yao Dai do not in general employ any scripts for written communication or recording purposes.<sup>21</sup>

### Different Cultural Circles, Different Epic Traditions

The Dai peoples within the Buddhist cultural circle have similar epic traditions, and these epic traditions have been influenced by Buddhism. For example, in Xishuangbanna there is the creation epic *Ba Ta Ma Ga Pheng Shang Luo* (“The God Yinphra Creates the World”),<sup>22</sup> and in Dehong there exists another creation epic, *Gulao De Hehua* (“The Ancient Lotus”).<sup>23</sup> Despite their different names, these creation stories exhibit great similarities in terms of content. In both epics there is an original couple—the husband’s name is Bu sang ka xi<sup>24</sup> and the wife’s name is

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<sup>19</sup> The Putai people reside in northeast Thailand, mainly in Kalasin, Nakhon Phanom, and Sakon Nakhon Provinces. During my fieldwork in these places (May 15-30, 2012), I found that all Putai people there maintain a particular culture—as with the Putai in Laos—wherein they are deeply invested in indigenous religious practices but also influenced by Buddhist culture at the same time. For instance, they celebrate the Mangfei Festival as a call for rain in May or June, just after the Songkran Festival in mid-April.

<sup>20</sup> They also employ the traditional Chinese calendar and have absorbed many Chinese words into their dialects, such as the name Yuhuangdadi (the supreme deity of Taoism). Most of them also use traditional Chinese family naming practices.

<sup>21</sup> The Dai-dam and Dai-khao in Jinping County have previously used a script; it came from northwest Vietnam as the Thai people migrated northward back into Southern China. A few Thai elders still use this script in Vietnam, but this Jinping Dai script is in danger of extinction within China, and few people can read and write it today.

<sup>22</sup> *Ba Ta Ma Ga Pheng Shang Luo* is the Chinese pinyin transcription of this epic’s title; in the Dai language itself, the epic’s name is pronounced as [pap<sup>31</sup>tham<sup>55</sup>maak<sup>11</sup>kaa<sup>11</sup>phəŋ<sup>11</sup>saŋ<sup>35</sup>lo<sup>55</sup>]. The epic is found for the most part in Xishuangbanna Prefecture, and it has been published in several versions; see, for example, Ai Wenbian and Ai Lin 1981. Dai people will invite a singer home to sing this epic when they celebrate the completion of a new house, and this creation epic is a necessary element within the repertoires of the professional folk singers (*zhanga*) in the region.

<sup>23</sup> *Gulao De Hehua* is the Chinese title, but in the Dai language it is called [mo<sup>33</sup>luŋ<sup>35</sup>kam<sup>11</sup>phaa<sup>11</sup>]. The epic is found primarily in Dehong Prefecture, and because there are no professional singers in Dehong, this kind of epic is preserved by means of manuscripts in temples, with the monks usually reciting the epic for villagers from August to November annually. This epic has not yet been published.

<sup>24</sup> The Dai call him [puu<sup>11</sup>saŋ<sup>35</sup>kaa<sup>33</sup>sii<sup>35</sup>], or [puu<sup>11</sup>saŋ<sup>35</sup>kaai<sup>33</sup>] for short. [puu<sup>11</sup>] means “grandfather.”

Ya sang ka sai<sup>25</sup>—and just as Adam and Eve in the Bible, they become the first couple in a Secret Garden, created by the supreme god—in this case, Yinphra.<sup>26</sup> It is my belief that Yinphra in these epics is actually the god Indra from Brahmanism. Additionally, *Gulao De Hehua* explains the Ancient Age as a Lotus Age, and the lotus is, of course, an important symbol of Buddhism.

Second, these epic traditions have also been influenced by Indian culture. For instance, as several Chinese scholars have shown, the heroic epic *Langa Xihe* (“The Monster with Ten Heads”)<sup>27</sup> from Xishuangbanna and its Dehong counterpart, *Langa xishuanghe* (“The Monster with Twelve Heads”),<sup>28</sup> have both been influenced by the famous Indian *Ramayana* epic.<sup>29</sup> But thanks to the existence of their scripts, the Dai people record most of their epics as Buddhist scriptures, and the oral poetry has thus become textualized. In the Dai language these epic texts are referred to as [lik<sup>53</sup>] or [tham<sup>55</sup>].<sup>30</sup>

In contrast, within the indigenous religious cultural circle, the epic tradition has not been influenced by Buddhism or Indian culture, and these Dai people have never heard of the above epics. In this circle, all narrative poetry is transmitted as oral songs, called [xaam<sup>55</sup>], and the songs exhibit little outside influence other than that exerted by the Chinese culture. Interestingly, though the epics of the Buddhist cultural circle are not found within the circle of indigenous religion, the opposite is untrue, and the songs of the indigenous religious cultural circle do indeed make their way to other Dai communities. For example, though the song *Ebing Yu Sangluo* (“Ebing and Sangluo”)<sup>31</sup> goes by different names in different locations—in Dehong

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<sup>25</sup> The Dai refer to her as [jaa<sup>33</sup>saan<sup>35</sup>kaa<sup>33</sup>saai<sup>35</sup>], or by the shortened form [jaa<sup>33</sup>saan<sup>35</sup>kaai<sup>33</sup>]. [jaa<sup>33</sup>] means “grandmother.”

<sup>26</sup> When Yinphra created these humans from clay, he originally forgot to make the wife’s breast, an omission he rectified by incorporating some clay from the husband’s palm; people now claim that this is why men always wish to touch a woman’s breast!

<sup>27</sup> *Langa xihe* is the Chinese transcription, but in the Dai language it is actually pronounced as [laan<sup>11</sup>kaa<sup>11</sup>sip<sup>31</sup>hoo<sup>35</sup>]; [laan<sup>11</sup>kaa<sup>11</sup>] means “monster” and [sip<sup>31</sup>hoo<sup>35</sup>] means “ten heads.”

<sup>28</sup> *Langa xishuanghe* is again the Chinese version; its actual pronunciation in the Dai language is [laak<sup>11</sup>kaa<sup>11</sup>sip<sup>31</sup>son<sup>35</sup>hoo<sup>35</sup>]. [sip<sup>31</sup>son<sup>35</sup>hoo<sup>35</sup>] means “twelve heads.”

<sup>29</sup> Such studies have focused on the relationship between *Langa Xihe* and the *Ramayana*, on the different versions of *Langa Xihe*, or on the transformation process of specific characters. See, for example, Li Jiang 2010.

<sup>30</sup> [lik<sup>53</sup>] and [tham<sup>55</sup>] both refer to the Buddhist scriptures in general, including all epos. Actually, Dai people do not have a distinct word for “epic;” instead, they have the word [aa<sup>33</sup>pom<sup>11</sup>] for “story,” the word [xuuu<sup>55</sup>] for “history,” and the word [xaam<sup>55</sup>] for “song.”

<sup>31</sup> *Ebing Yu Sangluo* is the Chinese title of this song, pronounced in Dai as [o<sup>31</sup>piŋ<sup>11</sup>saam<sup>35</sup>lo<sup>55</sup>]. [o<sup>31</sup>piŋ<sup>11</sup>] is the name of a poor, beautiful, and young girl, who is the fifth girl in the family ranking. [saam<sup>35</sup>lo<sup>55</sup>] is the name of a charming wealthy young man, and he is the third boy in his family ranking. [saam<sup>35</sup>lo<sup>55</sup>] falls in love with [o<sup>31</sup>piŋ<sup>11</sup>] when he travels to her hometown of Kengtuang, but his mother disapproves of their love because they are not in the same social stratum. [o<sup>31</sup>piŋ<sup>11</sup>] goes to find [saam<sup>35</sup>lo<sup>55</sup>] after she has conceived, but she had been hurt by his bad-hearted mother and then died in the forest while giving birth. [saam<sup>35</sup>lo<sup>55</sup>] chooses to die for love when he learns the truth, cutting his throat beside her coffin. Both of them then ultimately transform into two bright stars in the sky, now called [o<sup>31</sup>piŋ<sup>11</sup>] star and [saam<sup>35</sup>lo<sup>55</sup>] star.



Prefecture it is called *Ebing Sangluo*; in Xiping County the Dai-sai call it *Lang'e Sangluo*,<sup>32</sup> in Maguan County the Dai-dam call it *Lang'e Luosang*; and in Yuanjiang County the Dai-la call it *Zhausang Nang'e*<sup>33</sup>—its actual content (of a tragic-romantic, *Romeo and Juliet* type) remains virtually the same in both the Buddhist and indigenous religious cultural circles. Such songs were transmitted orally for many years before ever being written down, and this long evolutionary process has now led to songs that range from relatively simple poems to epics spanning many thousands of lines.

In the different cultural circles, then, the Dai people transmit their poetry in various ways, with written and oral traditions now coexisting in many areas. In Xishuangbanna and Dehong Prefectures, within those circles that do make use of written transmission, one can actually find hundreds of thousands of handwritten copies of epics, mainly in temples. Often an elder will copy poems for villagers to use in worship or prayer; *Kalong* (“Big Bird”)<sup>34</sup> and *Lang Jinbu* (“The Lady Who Eats Crabs”)<sup>35</sup> are, for instance, the most common songs that villagers employ in conjunction with asking for offspring. At present, the local government’s Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Center works to obtain and protect these precious manuscripts written in the Dai traditional scripts, and local scholars are working to transcribe the traditional scripts into the new scripts while also producing translations. Consequently, many Dai epics and songs have now been published in both the Dai and Chinese languages; examples include the aforementioned *Ba Ta Ma Ga Pheng Shang Luo* and *Langa Xihe*, as well as *Xiangmeng* (“The Hero Xiangmeng”),<sup>36</sup> *Qitou Qiwei Xiang* (“The Elephant

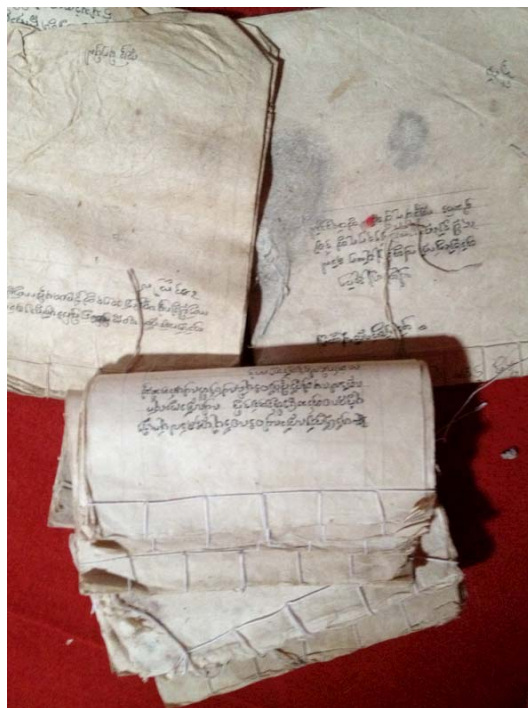


Fig. 5. Manuscripts employing traditional Dai scripts. Banyan village, Menghai County, Xishuangbanna Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province. Photo by author.

<sup>32</sup> [laaŋ<sup>55</sup> >> o<sup>31</sup> saam<sup>35</sup> loo<sup>55</sup>]; [laaŋ<sup>55</sup>] is “lady,” and [>>o<sup>31</sup>] is the girl’s name—the fifth one in family ranking. [saam<sup>35</sup>] refers to the third one in the ranking system, and [loo<sup>55</sup>] is the boy’s name.

<sup>33</sup> [tsau<sup>31</sup> saam<sup>35</sup> naaŋ<sup>55</sup> >> o<sup>31</sup>]; [tsau<sup>31</sup>] is analogous to “gentleman” or “lordship.”

<sup>34</sup> *Kalong* [ka<sup>33</sup> luŋ<sup>35</sup>] is Dai; [ka<sup>33</sup>] is a kind of bird/crow, and [luŋ<sup>35</sup>] means “big” or “huge.” Sometimes this song is also called [ka<sup>33</sup> phək<sup>11</sup>], with [phək<sup>11</sup>] meaning “white” and implying that the bird is sacred, affordable only to the king. This song has not yet been published as a separate volume, but the story is found in some publications under the Chinese title of *Wu Ke Jin Dan De Gu Shi* (“The Story of Five Golden Eggs”) or *A Luan De Lai Li* (“Who is A Luan?”). See Ai Feng et al. 1995.

<sup>35</sup> *Lang Jinbu* [laaŋ<sup>55</sup> tsin<sup>33</sup> puu<sup>33</sup>] is Dai; [laaŋ<sup>55</sup>] is “lady,” [tsin<sup>33</sup>] means “eat,” and [puu<sup>33</sup>] is “crabs.” In Chinese publications the name is translated as *Yi Bai Ling Yi Duo Hua* (“101 Flowers”).

<sup>36</sup> *Xiangmeng* [seŋ<sup>35</sup> məŋ<sup>55</sup>]; [seŋ<sup>35</sup>] is “diamond,” and [məŋ<sup>55</sup>] is “kingdom,” referring to the prince. This heroic epic has been published in several versions both in the Chinese and Dai languages; see further Wang Song 2007.

with Seven Heads and Seven Tails”),<sup>37</sup> and *Qianban Lianhua* (“The Lotus with One Thousand Petals”).<sup>38</sup>



Fig. 6. An elder (pictured in the center) selling his manuscripts during a ceremony on October 11, 2009, in the Menghuan pagoda, Dehong Prefecture. Photo by author.

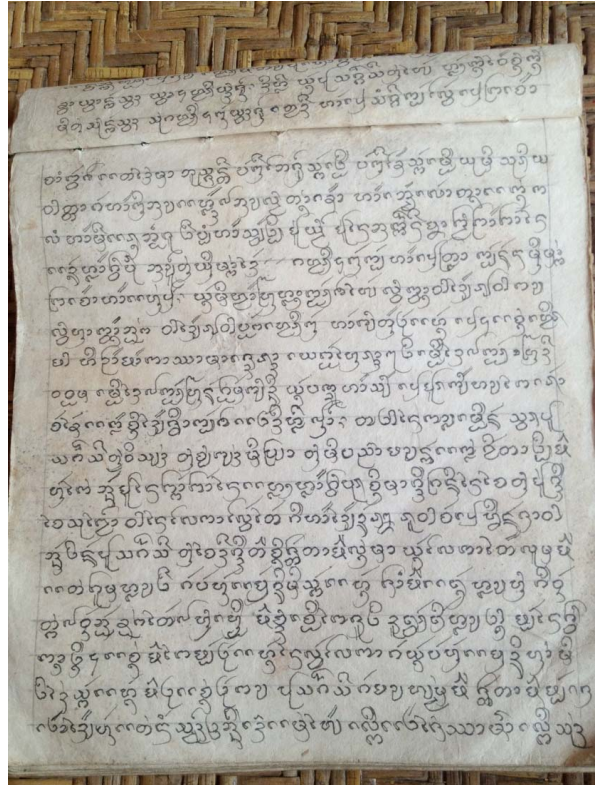


Fig. 7. The manuscript of *Ba Ta Ma Ga Pheng Shang Luo* (written in traditional Dai-lue script), preserved in the temple of Banyan Village, Mengzhe County, Xishuangbanna Prefecture. Photo by author.



Fig. 8. A performance of *Na Du Xiang* (“The Precious Door”) as part of the celebration for a new house in Mangshi Town, Dehong Prefecture, on September 28, 2009. Photo by author.

All of the narrative poetry described above derives from folk stories, Buddhist Jatakas, or a combination of the two sources. For those songs employing Buddhist material, it is easy to imagine that long ago monks adapted Jatakas to fit within the form of Dai songs as a tool for more easily explaining Buddhist tenets while at the same time also adapting Dai folk stories for

inclusion within Buddhist manuscripts. In Dehong Prefecture, there are now hundreds of A-luan poems—such as *Qingwa A-luan* (“The Golden Frog A-luan”), *Jin Lingyang A-luan* (“The

<sup>37</sup> *Qitou Qiwei Xiang* is a Chinese translation, but the Dai call this song [tsaan<sup>31</sup>tset<sup>11</sup>ho<sup>35</sup>tset<sup>11</sup>haan<sup>35</sup>]; see Dao Jinxiang 1988.

<sup>38</sup> *Qianban Lianhua* is again the Chinese translation; however, the Dai refer to it as [mo<sup>33</sup>heŋ<sup>35</sup>kaap<sup>11</sup>]. The song has been published in several versions; see, for instance, Dao Jinxiang and Dao Zhengnan 1981.

Golden Gazelle A-luan”), and *Da Yezi A-luan* (“The A-luan Who Sold the Huge Leaf for Life”)<sup>39</sup>—and all of these songs are clearly related to the written tradition of the Buddhist Jatakas. On the other hand, there are still Dai folk singers performing epics and other songs orally; these singers are called *zhangha* or *moha*,<sup>40</sup> both terms meaning an “expert in singing.” In Xishuangbanna, the *zhangha* perform their songs primarily within the context of important ceremonies, such as the ceremony for a newly completed house, the wedding ceremony, the *sheng he shang* (“monk promotion”) ceremony, and so on. And in Dehong, the *moha* usually dramatize songs such as *Lang Thuihan*<sup>41</sup> and *A-luan Gongguan*<sup>42</sup> in varying festival contexts.

In the indigenous religious cultural circle, where the Dai people rely on oral rather than written traditions, folk singers regularly engage in performances of narrative poetry. For example, each May in Xiping County the Dai-sai and Dai-yat celebrate the Hua-jie Festival, where people will sing songs with each other, and elders often sing ancient songs in conjunction with daily rites (see Fig. 10).<sup>43</sup> The Dai-la folk singers in Yuanjiang County also celebrate a special festival called the Mengmian-Qingge Festival, when they sing songs while hiding their faces behind beautiful handkerchiefs decorated by hand



Fig. 9. The *zhangha* Yuyan, a professional singer famous among the Dai-lue people in Xishuangbanna. Photo by author.

<sup>39</sup> In the Dai language the word is pronounced as [ɣa<sup>33</sup>lɔŋ<sup>55</sup>], though it is actually Burmese in origin and refers to a hero who is brave, kind-hearted, and handsome; usually he is the incarnation of Buddha. Many of the songs about [ɣa<sup>33</sup>lɔŋ<sup>55</sup>] have been published as books; see Ai Wenbian 1988. *Qingwa A-luan* is [ɣa<sup>33</sup>lɔŋ<sup>55</sup>kop<sup>11</sup>xam<sup>55</sup>] in Dai; [kop<sup>11</sup>xam<sup>55</sup>] is “golden frog.” This song is centered around the story of Buddha being incarnated as a golden frog. *Jin Lingyang A-luan* is [ɣa<sup>33</sup>lɔŋ<sup>55</sup>ŋe<sup>55</sup>xam<sup>55</sup>] in Dai; [ŋe<sup>55</sup>xam<sup>55</sup>] means “golden gazelle” and this song thus narrates the incarnation of Buddha as a golden gazelle. Finally, *Da Yezi A-luan* is [ɣa<sup>33</sup>lɔŋ<sup>55</sup>tɔŋ<sup>33</sup>lɔŋ<sup>35</sup>] in Dai, with [tɔŋ<sup>33</sup>lɔŋ<sup>35</sup>] meaning “huge leaf” and the tale thus revolving around Buddha’s incarnation as a poor boy who sold a type of huge leaf in exchange for life.

<sup>40</sup> [tsaŋ<sup>33</sup>xap<sup>53</sup>] or [mo<sup>35</sup>xam<sup>55</sup>].

<sup>41</sup> *Lang Thuihan* is the Dai title, and it is called [laaŋ<sup>55</sup>thui<sup>55</sup>xam<sup>55</sup>] in the Dehong Dai language, but in Xishuangbanna people call the song *Zhao Shu Thun* [tsau<sup>31</sup>shuu<sup>11</sup>thun<sup>55</sup>], and it has another well known translation as *The Peacock Princess*. It has been published in several versions; see Ai Die et al. 2009.

<sup>42</sup> [a<sup>33</sup>lɔŋ<sup>55</sup>kuŋ<sup>33</sup>kɔn<sup>33</sup>]; this song concerns the story of Buddha being incarnated as a poor boy named [kuŋ<sup>33</sup>kɔn<sup>33</sup>].

<sup>43</sup> Hua-jie Festival is a Chinese name, literally translated as “Flower-Street Festival.” During this festival people dress in colorful costumes and gather in the street to make new friends, shop, or engage in conversation. The street thus looks just like a “flower-street.” The festival also provides an opportunity for adults seeking lovers; during the festival anyone—married or not—is free to hunt for a lover. Love songs are covertly performed, and women will feed their lovers sticky rice, salted egg, and fried ricefield eel, while men will give their lovers a silver bracelet, ring, or other jewelry as gift. The couple can then have further contact or even sex. Dai-yat people are free to find lovers before marriage, but after becoming married, they can renew these former relationships only during the Hua-jie Festival.

with cross-stitched patterns (see Fig. 11).<sup>44</sup>



Fig 10. A Dai-yat elder performing during an evocation ceremony on July 28, 2010, in Mosha Town, Xinping County, Yuxi City. Photo by author.



Fig. 11. The Mengmian-Qingge Festival is held only among the Dai-la group during mid-May every year in Yuanjian County. Photo by author.

### Key Features of Rhyme in the Dai Epic Tradition

Several Chinese scholars have previously investigated the evolution of Dai literature, with one of the most prominent being Wang Song, who discusses four relevant periods of this evolution in his 1983 monograph *Daizu Shige Fazhan Chutan* (“A Study on the Evolution of Dai”). The main points of his exposition—with which I agree—are as follows. In the first period, there was only oral tradition in the form of myth, ballad, and other simple songs. During the second period, all of these simple songs evolved into long narrative poetry; however, they still remained exclusively in the realm of oral tradition. Then, with the arrival of Buddhism during the seventh through fourteenth centuries, the Dai people created their scripts, and their literature entered its very important third period when much of the poetry began to be recorded and textualized. Finally, the fourth period extends from 1919 up through the present, and it is during this period that Dai drama

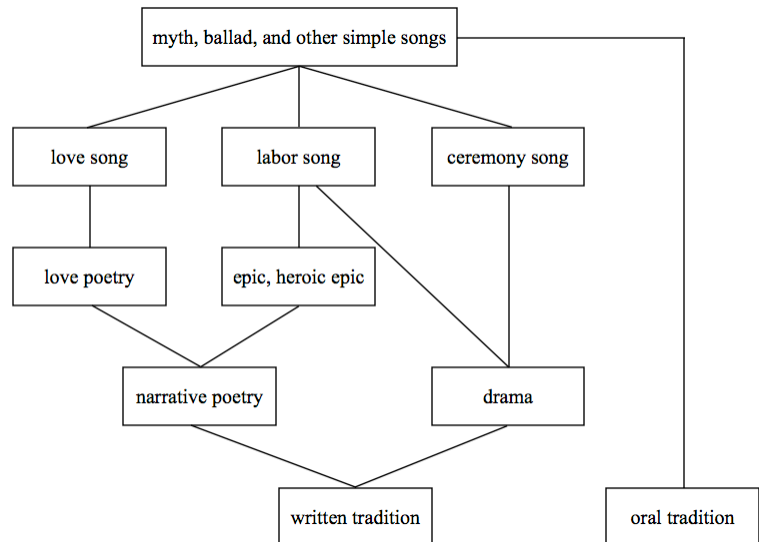


Fig. 12. The evolutionary history of Dai literature. Based on Wang Song 1983.

<sup>44</sup> In Chinese, *mengmian* means “mask” and *qingge* means “love song.” During the festival, men and women gather under large trees in the village, and they can sing call-and-response style either individually or in groups while also enjoying food and drink. The songs are highly formulaic in content, diction, and melody.

emerges as a new thing, thriving principally in Dehong Prefecture.

Whether more connected today with oral tradition or written practices, all types of Dai poetry still share certain important features. First, though the length of the poetic line is unrestricted and can be shorter or longer as desired, the number of syllables in a single line is always odd and not even. Taking verses from *Galong* (written in Dai-le script) as an example, we can see that both the first and second lines consist of 13 words:<sup>45</sup>

- 1. ສັມ ມາ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ  
 ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ  
 tsem<sup>33</sup>an<sup>33</sup>pi<sup>33</sup>lum<sup>33</sup>van<sup>55</sup>jaam<sup>55</sup>li<sup>33</sup>ŋaam<sup>55</sup> ku<sup>33</sup>  
 sen<sup>55</sup>pəŋ<sup>33</sup>tse<sup>55</sup>tsom<sup>11</sup>
- 2. ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ  
 ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ  
 tsan<sup>11</sup>tak<sup>53</sup>saw<sup>33</sup>tsu<sup>33</sup>xan<sup>11</sup>naa<sup>11</sup>tsau<sup>31</sup> lok<sup>53</sup>hak<sup>53</sup>  
 xon<sup>35</sup>lom<sup>11</sup>kop<sup>53</sup>vo<sup>55</sup>

Second, every two poetic lines constitute one unit of rhyme and express a single viewpoint. In the verses below from the poem *Zhau Mahe* (“The Quick-Witted Man Named Mahe”),<sup>46</sup> for instance, the first and second lines rhyme with each other on the syllable [ɔm<sup>35</sup>] (which is marked in bold type), and the third and fourth lines rhyme with each other on the syllable [aa<sup>11</sup>].<sup>47</sup>

- 1. ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ  
 ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ  
 tsau<sup>31</sup>phu<sup>11</sup>lan<sup>33</sup>pen<sup>33</sup>von<sup>33</sup>hup<sup>53</sup>tsən<sup>33</sup>ŋam<sup>55</sup> **tsəm<sup>35</sup>**  
 se<sup>33</sup>taan<sup>55</sup>hon<sup>35</sup>haan<sup>55</sup>hau<sup>55</sup>lai<sup>55</sup>**phəm<sup>35</sup>**  
 pən<sup>33</sup>ŋep<sup>53</sup>
- 2. ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ  
 ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ  
 tsu<sup>33</sup>taan<sup>55</sup>xun<sup>35</sup>hon<sup>35</sup>ho<sup>35</sup>xam<sup>55</sup>te<sup>11</sup>  
 let<sup>53</sup>laa<sup>11</sup>**tsaa<sup>11</sup>**
- 3. ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ  
 ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ ສັມ  
 lan<sup>33</sup>vaan<sup>33</sup>ho<sup>35</sup>hə<sup>35</sup>lam<sup>53</sup>peu<sup>33</sup>**maa<sup>11</sup>** pən<sup>55</sup> kum<sup>55</sup>

Third, the most consistent type of Dai rhyming technique is to employ what in Chinese is called *yao-jiao yun*, or “waist-feet rhyme,” wherein the last syllable of a first line functions as a line-ending rhyme-unit corresponding to an internal rhyming syllable within the second line, usually designated as the third syllable from the end of line. The above passages from *Galong* and *Zhau Mahe* exemplify this type of rhyme, as do the verses below from *E’bing Yu Sangluo*.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup> These verses from *Galong* are from a handwritten copy that was produced by Li Mingliang, more than 50 years old, who lives in Xiangpa village, Mangzhang Town, Yingjiang County, Dehong Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province. There are no line numbers in this Dai manuscript. I translate these lines as follows: “At the propitious moment, the king named the beloved son as Hanna; it is a classic name in the buffalo kingdom.”

<sup>46</sup> *Tsau Mahe* [tsau<sup>31</sup>maa<sup>11</sup>ho<sup>35</sup>] is the Chinese pinyin transformation of the Dai language title, which refers to a quick-witted man who always helps people solve their problems.

<sup>47</sup> I translate this passage as follows (from *Zhau Mahe* 1997:4): “The King his Majesty is sitting in the throne; even his name can overawe people to kneel. The king’s name is Deletlatsa; he has a great reputation, living in the resplendent palace.”

<sup>48</sup> The passage (from *E’bing Yu Sangluo* 1960:10) can be translated as follows: “keŋtən is a prosperous place; the merchants from all corners gather here. The beautiful and fertile land keŋtən, cows and horses bring various merchandise here with their bells ringing every day.”

- |                                              |                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. ၼဝတ ၼၵဝ ၵၢၵလ ၵၢၵၵ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ <b>မၵၵ</b> ,   | lat <sup>53</sup> lai <sup>31</sup> keŋ <sup>55</sup> ton <sup>55</sup> maan <sup>31</sup> peu <sup>11</sup> mon <sup>33</sup>                |
| 2. ၵၢၵၵ ၵၢဝ ၵၢမ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ <b>ၵၢၵ</b> ၼၵဝ ၼၵမ. | kon <sup>55</sup> ka <sup>53</sup> kam <sup>53</sup> tek <sup>11</sup> hon <sup>33</sup> lai <sup>35</sup> lum <sup>55</sup>                  |
| 3. ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢၵလ <b>တၵၵ</b> ,            | maan <sup>31</sup> peu <sup>11</sup> mon <sup>33</sup> keŋ <sup>55</sup> ton <sup>55</sup>                                                    |
| 4. ၼဝ ၼၵ တၵ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢၵ ၼၵ ၵၢၵ     | li <sup>33</sup> lu <sup>33</sup> hu <sup>35</sup> faaŋ <sup>55</sup> heŋ <sup>11</sup> hōŋ <sup>35</sup> lōŋ <sup>55</sup> mon <sup>33</sup> |
| တၵဝ။                                         | ton <sup>31</sup>                                                                                                                             |

However, in addition to waist-feet rhyme, simple end-rhyme does also appear occasionally in Dai poetry, as in the passage below from *Lang Jinbu*, where the two lines rhyme on the end syllables [laa<sup>55</sup>] and [maa<sup>55</sup>]: <sup>49</sup>

- |                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. မၵ ၼမ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ | mə <sup>33</sup> lam <sup>53</sup> maa <sup>11</sup> haa <sup>11</sup> tsaa <sup>11</sup> tsau <sup>31</sup> xai <sup>11</sup> faa <sup>53</sup> laŋ <sup>33</sup> |
| တၵၵ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ               | tsum <sup>33</sup> thiŋ <sup>55</sup> pəŋ <sup>11</sup> məŋ <sup>55</sup> laa <sup>55</sup>                                                                        |
| 2. ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၼဝ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ    | tsaŋ <sup>11</sup> sop <sup>11</sup> li <sup>33</sup> seŋ <sup>35</sup> vaan <sup>35</sup> kaan <sup>35</sup> tsu <sup>55</sup>                                    |
| တၵ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ                | laaŋ <sup>55</sup> pəŋ <sup>55</sup> me <sup>55</sup> lat <sup>53</sup> xo <sup>31</sup> maa <sup>55</sup>                                                         |

Further examples from diverse Dai poeties—from Xishuangbanna and Dehong but also from other Dai subgroup locations—can help demonstrate the degree to which all of these poeties follow the same rules for rhyme.

Xishuangbanna is well known as a residence region of the Dai people, with the Dai-lue group being prominent there. The Dai-lue dialect is different in tone from the Dai-le dialect, and their two scripts are different in shape; however, the verse and rhyme structures of the poetry remain similar. The following passage is from the famous heroic epic *Xiangmeng*:<sup>50</sup>

- |                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ          | hoo <sup>55</sup> tsai <sup>55</sup> kvaan <sup>13</sup> seŋ <sup>55</sup> tii <sup>55</sup> hak <sup>51</sup> phai <sup>35</sup>               |
| 2. ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ          | tii <sup>55</sup> dan <sup>35</sup> naan <sup>51</sup> naat <sup>33</sup> keŋ <sup>13</sup> teet <sup>55</sup>                                  |
| ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ             | tsai <sup>11</sup> sa <sup>55</sup> lli <sup>55</sup> naw <sup>35</sup> teeu <sup>51</sup> vii <sup>51</sup> ni <sup>33</sup> naa <sup>51</sup> |
| လၵ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ          | leek <sup>33</sup> tsuu <sup>33</sup> vaa <sup>33</sup> vaa <sup>33</sup> naan <sup>51</sup> xam <sup>51</sup> fə <sup>55</sup>                 |
| ဃာပု ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ        | phaap <sup>35</sup> məŋ <sup>51</sup> lum <sup>33</sup> faa <sup>11</sup>                                                                       |
| 3. ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ | piin <sup>55</sup> kuu <sup>33</sup> tsau <sup>13</sup> phəŋ <sup>35</sup> faa <sup>11</sup> sa <sup>55</sup> mə <sup>55</sup>                  |
| ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ    | »en <sup>35</sup> teem <sup>51</sup> hoon <sup>51</sup>                                                                                         |
| 4. ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ | tii <sup>55</sup> tsaŋ <sup>33</sup> xun <sup>55</sup> loon <sup>55</sup> phoŋ <sup>11</sup> see <sup>55</sup>                                  |
| ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ ၵၢဝ ၵၢဝေ    | naa <sup>51</sup> xa <sup>33</sup> tsəŋ <sup>35</sup> jai <sup>35</sup>                                                                         |

In these verses we can see that the poetry not only employs the traditional waist-feet rhyme, but it does so in an even more complex fashion, with the final syllable of every line (rather than every other line) being followed by a corresponding internal rhyme in the subsequent line. Rhyme structures in the poetry from Xishuangbanna can thus be understood as more

<sup>49</sup> A loose translation of the two lines is as follows: “Then the king is sitting in the throne, and he speaks to the lady tenderly.” These verses are found on page 20 of a handwritten copy produced by Li Mingliang (see note 45).

<sup>50</sup> I translate this passage as: “Look at the queen Nangxamfei; she is so beautiful like a goddess; she accompanies the king in the great palace every day. The bodyguard and the Ministers lined up, one by one to swear allegiance to them.” The verses are from Ai Ping 1986:36.

rigorous and perhaps even more aesthetically pleasing than in the poetry from Dehong, and one possible reason for this increased complexity may be the greater frequency with which the songs are performed orally in Xishuangbanna, even alongside the tradition's textualization. The rules for rhyming in oral poetic narratives seem to be much more regular and strictly adhered to than in the case of written poetry. Here is a further example from *Xiangmeng*, with all of the interlinked rhyming units underlined (Ai Ping 1986:37):

- |                                                                     |                                                                         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. ထပ်၌ ဂုဏ်သေ့သျှင် ဂေဇာသေ့ ဂေဇာသေ့ ဂေဇာသေ့ ဂေဇာသေ့                | The queen consistently abides by the Buddhist discipline;               |
| 2. ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့  | She prays to Buddha and gods,                                           |
| 3. ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့  | Asking for children;                                                    |
| 4. ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့  | The gods are delighted;                                                 |
| 5. ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့  | Then the queen gets the boy as a gift from gods;                        |
| 6. ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့  | She becomes debilitated day by day,                                     |
| 7. ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့  | Like a flower is fading,                                                |
| 8. ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့  | Because the fetus is growing every day in her body;                     |
| 9. ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့  | The big day arrives at last, at a wonderful moment,                     |
| 10. ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ | She gives birth to a cute prince;                                       |
| 11. ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ | The minister records the important thing,                               |
| 12. ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ | And he names the prince a brave name,                                   |
| 13. ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ ဂုဏ်သေ့ | His name is Rama, the great prince; he is the eldest child of the king. |

In Dehong Prefecture, the Dai people also maintain a thriving oral tradition, and the singing of such poetry is ever-present. For example, when one village celebrates the completion of a new temple, pagoda, road, entertainment center for the elderly, or even a bridge, members of other villages will arrive bearing gifts and beating gongs and drums in congratulation; they will then also choose a representative (usually a 30- to 50-year-old female) to sing songs flattering to the host. The host will in turn provide a gift and select someone to sing a courteous song in response. In addition to such spontaneous performances, the government also often provides public singing stages during state holidays such as National Day, International Working Women's Day, or the Spring Festival, during which the government will invite famous folk singers to sing songs praising the party's policy, socialist system, and beautiful nature.

The following song is of the first, more spontaneous type and was performed in the Dai language by a Dai-le elder named Qu Zaiwu in February 2008. In this gracefully recited poem celebrating a newly completed house (in Zhanxi Town, Yingjiang County, Dehong Prefecture) the complexly interlinked rhyme structure is also present:

1. תִּבְּל . . .
2. תחלת מַלְחָמָה וּמָוָה מְחַסֵּת אֶת כָּל הַחַיִּים  
ule, מֵתָּה מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת
3. חַיִּים מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת, **טַבֵּל** מֵכֹּל,
4. **מַיִם** תְּחִלָּתָם מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת.
5. מֵעַל מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת  
טַבֵּל, מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת
6. **מַלְחָמָה** וּמָוָה מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת, **טַבֵּל** מֵעַל,
7. **מַלְחָמָה** מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת. **מַלְחָמָה** מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת.
8. **מַלְחָמָה** מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת, **מַלְחָמָה** מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת,
9. **רִמְמוֹת** מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת.
10. **מַיִם** מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת.
11. **מַלְחָמָה** מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת.
12. **מַלְחָמָה** מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת,
13. **מַלְחָמָה** מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת, **מַלְחָמָה** מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת,
14. **מַלְחָמָה** מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת, **מַלְחָמָה** מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת,
15. מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת.
16. **מַלְחָמָה** מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת, **מַלְחָמָה** מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת,
17. **מַלְחָמָה** מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת, **מַלְחָמָה** מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת,
18. מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת.
19. מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת,
20. מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת  
**מַלְחָמָה**,
21. **מַלְחָמָה** מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת.
22. מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת  
**מַלְחָמָה**,
23. **מַלְחָמָה** מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת.
24. מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת,
25. מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת.
26. **מַלְחָמָה** מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת,
27. **מַלְחָמָה** מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת.
28. **מַלְחָמָה** מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת, **מַלְחָמָה** מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת,
29. מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת.
30. **מַלְחָמָה** מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת,
31. מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת.
32. **מַלְחָמָה** מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת,
33. **מַלְחָמָה** מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת.
34. **מַלְחָמָה** מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת,
35. **מַלְחָמָה** מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת,
36. **מַלְחָמָה** מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת, **מַלְחָמָה** מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת מְחַסֵּת,

O . . .

- A huge fire destroyed the world,  
flaming everywhere;  
Everything was exterminated, nothing left in the land,  
Just water left everywhere.  
The god dropped some lotus seeds  
upon the original land;  
The lotus seeds sprouted and grew up,  
They bloomed with four petals of golden color.  
Four petals became four directions,  
And mountains emerged as pillars of the world.  
Water became five rivers,  
And flooded the land.  
No human being existed yet,  
Not even kinds of trees;  
We know only the “He xam” grew before the  
elephant emerged;  
Rattan grew, twining the trees.  
We know only “Yaliang” grew before the buffalo  
emerged;  
Buffalo eat all the leaves of “Yaliang,”  
Leaving the limb only.  
There was no king among the humans;  
Just the rabbit sat on the moon;  
The moon waxed and waned.  
The eight Sanglu Sanglai gods come down to  
earth at last,  
Flying down from heaven.  
Four gods become females;  
Four gods become males.  
People reproduce themselves,  
Build the Kingdom Ho Hong.  
People went through mountains to search for wet  
land;  
They stacked the wood to make fire.  
They heaped the embankment to make the rice field,  
And assarted the wild hill to make the dry field.  
They took three bunches of rice shoots to cultivate  
And took three bunches of straw to cover the roof.  
Some people migrated to distant Sibö and Hojing—  
Both places have fertile land—  
And some people migrated to Gengma and Hobeng;



- |                                                                     |                                                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 37. རྗེ་ཡི་སྤོང་སྤོང་བྱོལ་བྱོལ་ཡི་ཕྱི་ལོ་                           | So the god finished creating the world.                                                         |
| 38. རྗེ་ཡི་མའོ་མའོ་མའོ་མའོ་ལྗོང་ལྗོང་                               | Hundreds of thousands of villages emerged,                                                      |
| 39. རྗེ་ཡི་ཇུག་ཇུག་ཡང་ཇུག་ཇུག་ཡོང་ལོ།                               | And various households emerged.                                                                 |
| 40. རྗེ་ཡི་མཐོང་མཐོང་མཐོང་མཐོང་ལྟོགས་ལྟོགས་ལྟོགས་ལྟོགས་ལྟོགས་ལྟོགས་ | Thinking about that, my dear friend, you have several sons living together;                     |
| 41. མཐོང་མཐོང་ལུག་ལུག་ལྟོགས་ལྟོགས་ལྟོགས་ལྟོགས་ལྟོགས་ལྟོགས་          | People always say that two boars can't eat in one groove, and two sons can't live in one house. |
| 42. རྗེ་ཡི་སྤོང་སྤོང་ལྗོང་ལྗོང་ལྗོང་ལྗོང་ལྗོང་ལྗོང་                 | The house is too crowded for you,                                                               |
| 43. རྗེ་ཡི་སྤོང་སྤོང་ལྗོང་ལྗོང་ལྗོང་ལྗོང་ལྗོང་ལྗོང་                 | so we build a new house here. . . .                                                             |

The Dai-yat are a subgroup who lagged behind during the southward migration and today live in Mosha Town, Xinping County, Yunnan Province, in the valley near the Ailao Mountain. They have not been influenced by Buddhism and have no script, so they have maintained their singing tradition even until the present without the influence of outside forces. Here again we find the interlinked rhyme structure (though in this case employing syllables in various line positions for the internal rhyme unit) in a love song from the Hua-jie Festival.<sup>51</sup>

- |                                                                                                                                                                  |                                              |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| 1. he <sup>11</sup> kun <sup>53</sup> həŋ <sup>31</sup> he <sup>11</sup> hɛu <sup>24</sup>                                                                       | Sing the song one by one,                    |
| 2. siŋ <sup>55</sup> xam <sup>53</sup> keu <sup>24</sup> kən <sup>53</sup> khə <sup>53</sup>                                                                     | Listen to the girl and boy,                  |
| 3. he <sup>11</sup> kun <sup>53</sup> həŋ <sup>31</sup> he <sup>11</sup> tswaŋ <sup>11</sup>                                                                     | Sing the song one by one,                    |
| 4. siŋ <sup>55</sup> xam <sup>53</sup> nu <sup>24</sup> kwəŋ <sup>31</sup> kən <sup>53</sup>                                                                     | This verse answers that.                     |
| 5. ka <sup>24</sup> həŋ <sup>31</sup> lei <sup>11</sup> ti <sup>31</sup> ko <sup>33</sup> loŋ <sup>55</sup> hɛu <sup>24</sup>                                    | I long to sing yet feel anxious;             |
| 6. ka <sup>24</sup> keu <sup>24</sup> lai <sup>11</sup> ti <sup>31</sup> la <sup>33</sup> ko <sup>33</sup> loŋ <sup>55</sup> xam <sup>53</sup>                   | I love to sing though out of verse.          |
| 7. loŋ <sup>55</sup> xam <sup>53</sup> tok <sup>11</sup> vai <sup>33</sup> khau <sup>11</sup>                                                                    | Forgetting verses as rice drops down,        |
| 8. aai <sup>33</sup> ti <sup>55</sup> kun <sup>53</sup> thau <sup>11</sup> va <sup>24</sup> hu <sup>31</sup> va <sup>24</sup> vaai <sup>53</sup>                 | I am so embarrassed before the elder people. |
| 9. aai <sup>33</sup> ti <sup>55</sup> tsu <sup>11</sup> səŋ <sup>55</sup> sau <sup>53</sup> va <sup>24</sup> hu <sup>31</sup> jaŋ <sup>31</sup>                  | So bashful to confront the girl,             |
| 10. ko <sup>33</sup> loŋ <sup>55</sup> xam <sup>53</sup> tok <sup>11</sup> vai <sup>33</sup> ko <sup>24</sup>                                                    | Let the songs be like leaves flying away.    |
| 11. aai <sup>33</sup> ti <sup>55</sup> tsu <sup>11</sup> ko <sup>24</sup> su <sup>11</sup> va <sup>24</sup> hu <sup>31</sup> va <sup>24</sup> vaai <sup>53</sup> | So shy to face my lover,                     |
| 12. aai <sup>33</sup> ti <sup>55</sup> tsu <sup>11</sup> səŋ <sup>55</sup> sau <sup>53</sup> va <sup>24</sup> hu <sup>31</sup> jaŋ <sup>31</sup>                 | So shy to sing songs with you.               |

Beyond my fieldwork in southern China, I also performed fieldwork in northeast Thailand, northwest Vietnam, northeast Burma, and Northern Laos, and the findings of this essay are applicable to the more general situation throughout Southeast Asia. The Thai people in Thailand, Laos, and Burma are in the Buddhist cultural circle, while the Thai people in northwest Vietnam along with some Thai people in northern Laos are in the indigenous religion's cultural circle, but all of them share a similar poetic tradition with the same epics, songs, stories, and rhyme structures as those discussed here as being important among the Dai.

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<sup>51</sup> On the festival, see note 43. This particular song was sung in March of 2011 by a Dai-yat elder named Bai shaochang; he was born in 1938 in Mosha Town, Xinping County. I transcribed this song in IPA and then translated it into English.

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Appendix I: Dehong Dai script (Dai-le script)

Consonants

ᄁ	ᄃ	ᄅ	ᄇ	ᄉ	ᄋ	ᄍ	ᄏ	ᄒ	ᄔ
ka	xa	ŋa	tsa	sa	ja	ta	tha	la	pa
ᄖ	ᄘ	ᄚ	ᄜ	ᄞ	ᄠ	ᄢ	ᄤ	ᄦ	
pha	ma	fa	va	ha	ʔ <sub>a</sub>	kha	tsha	na	

Vowels

	ᄁ	ᄃ	ᄅ	ᄇ	ᄉ	ᄋ	ᄍ	ᄏ	ᄒ	ᄔ
	a	i	e	ɛ	u	o	ɔ	ɯ	ə	au
ᄖ	ᄖᄁ				ᄖᄉ	ᄖᄋ	ᄖᄍ	ᄖᄏ	ᄖᄒ	
ai	aai				uui	oi	ɔi	uɯ	əi	
o	lo	ᄏo	ᄒo	ᄔo				ᄖo	ᄘo	
au	aa	iu	eu	ɛu				uɯ	əu	
ᄘ	ᄘᄃ	ᄘᄅ	ᄘᄇ	ᄘᄉ	ᄘᄋ	ᄘᄍ	ᄘᄏ	ᄘᄒ	ᄘᄔ	
am	aam	im	em	ɛm	um	om	ɔm	uɯm	əm	
ᄚ	ᄚᄃ	ᄚᄅ	ᄚᄇ	ᄚᄉ	ᄚᄋ	ᄚᄍ	ᄚᄏ	ᄚᄒ	ᄚᄔ	
an	aan	in	en	ɛn	un	on	ɔn	uɯn	ən	
ᄜ	ᄜᄃ	ᄜᄅ	ᄜᄇ	ᄜᄉ	ᄜᄋ	ᄜᄍ	ᄜᄏ	ᄜᄒ	ᄜᄔ	
aŋ	aaŋ	iŋ	eŋ	ɛŋ	uŋ	oŋ	ɔŋ	uɯŋ	əŋ	
ᄞ	ᄞᄃ	ᄞᄅ	ᄞᄇ	ᄞᄉ	ᄞᄋ	ᄞᄍ	ᄞᄏ	ᄞᄒ	ᄞᄔ	
ap	aap	ip	ep	ɛp	up	op	ɔp	uɯp	əp	
ᄠ	ᄠᄃ	ᄠᄅ	ᄠᄇ	ᄠᄉ	ᄠᄋ	ᄠᄍ	ᄠᄏ	ᄠᄒ	ᄠᄔ	
at	aat	it	et	ɛt	ut	ot	ɔt	uɯt	ət	
ᄢ	ᄢᄃ	ᄢᄅ	ᄢᄇ	ᄢᄉ	ᄢᄋ	ᄢᄍ	ᄢᄏ	ᄢᄒ	ᄢᄔ	
ak	aak	ik	ek	ɛk	uk	ok	ɔk	uɯk	ək	

Tones

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Mark		ᄁ	e	o	ᄃ	ᄅ
Tone	33	55	11	31	53	35
Examples	ᄖᄁᄃ ("big leaf")	ᄖᄃᄃᄃ ("remember")	ᄖᄃᄃᄃ ("lighting")	ᄖᄃᄃᄃ ("watering")	ᄖᄃᄃᄃ ("belly")	ᄖᄃᄃᄃ ("jump")

## Appendix II: Xishuangbanna Dai script (Dai-lue script)

## Consonants

High-pitched consonant	Low-pitched consonant	Phonetic symbol	High-pitched consonant	Low-pitched consonant	Phonetic symbol
ꨁ	ꨂ	ʔ	ꨃ	ꨄ	ph
ꨅ	ꨆ	k	ꨇ	ꨈ	m
ꨉ	ꨊ	x	ꨋ	ꨌ	f
ꨍ	ꨎ	ŋ	ꨏ	ꨐ	v
ꨑ	ꨒ	ts	ꨓ	ꨔ	l
ꨕ	ꨖ	s	ꨗ	ꨘ	h
ꨙ	ꨚ	j	ꨛ	ꨜ	d
ꨝ	ꨞ	t	ꨟ	ꨠ	b
ꨡ	ꨢ	th	ꨣ	ꨤ	kv
ꨥ	ꨦ	n	ꨧ	ꨨ	xv
ꨩ	ꨪ	p			

## Vowels

Single vowel				Compound vowel			
Short vowel		Long vowel					
ꨫ	a	ꨬ	aa	ꨭ	ai	ꨮ	aai
ꨯ	i	ꨰ	ii	ꨱ	ui		
ꨲ	u	ꨳ	uu	ꨴ	ui	ꨵ	yi
ꨶ	e	꨷	ee	꨸	oi	꨹	oi
꨺	ɛ	꨻	ɛɛ	꨼	au	꨽	aa
꨿	o	꨾	oo	꨿	iu	꨻	eu
꨻	ɔ	꨼	ɔɔ	꨾	ɛu	꨿	yu
꨾	u	꨿	uu				
꨻	ɣ	꨼	ɣɣ				

## Tones

	High-pitched			Low-pitched		
	1	5	3	2	6	4
Mark		꨻	e		꨻	e
Tone	55	35	13	51	33	11
Examples	꨻ ("leg")	꨻꨻ ("fence")	꨻e ("slave")	꨻ ("couch grass")	꨻꨻ ("tree crotch")	꨻e ("defame")

## **From the *Árran* to the Internet: Sami Storytelling in Digital Environments**

**Coppélie Cocq**

This essay investigates the use of storytelling in the process of cultural and linguistic revitalization through specific contemporary examples drawn from the Internet. By examining instances of adaptation of Sami tales and legends to digital environments, I discuss new premises and challenges for the emergence of such narratives. In particular, within a contemporary context characterized by an increasing variety of media and channels, as well as by an improvement in minority politics, it is important to examine how expressive culture and traditional modes of expression are transposed and negotiated. The rich Sami storytelling tradition is a central form of cultural expression. Its role in the articulation of norms, values, and discourses within the community has been emphasized in previous research (Balto 1997; Cocq 2008; Fjellström 1986); it is a means for learning and communicating valuable knowledge—a shared understanding. Legends and tales convey information, educate, socialize, and entertain. Their role within contemporary inreach and outreach initiatives is explored in this essay from the perspective of adaptation and revitalization. As I emphasize, the explicit goals in minority politics are factors that have an effect on the selection and adaptation of Sami expressive culture. From this perspective, the Internet is approached as a place of creation and negotiation for traditional storytelling through a case study that I hope will offer a relevant contribution to other indigenous communities. Additionally, this study illustrates how the potential of the Internet has to be nuanced and interpreted in relation to offline practices regarding such materials and traditions.

### **Stigmatized Cultures, Endangered Languages, and Revitalization**

The Sami population lives in the Sápmi area that encompasses northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the Kola Peninsula in Russia. According to the Swedish Sami parliament, the Sami population is about 80,000-95,000, but the lack of a census based on ethnicity makes this estimate imprecise. In the definition applied by the Sami parliaments, language and self-ascertainment are the criteria that characterize who is Sami. The prerequisites for the Sami minorities in the four countries have varied and affected different Sami groups to various extents, but policies of cultural assimilation were a common denominator until the Second World War (Elenius 2006:149-249; Lundmark 2008:141-84). As a result, the Sami identity and symbols associated with it were stigmatized, and the Sami languages are today endangered. Since the

1970s revitalization movements have taken place. A first wave characterized by a strong political awareness resulted in the establishment of Sami parliaments in Norway, Sweden, and Finland (Bjørklund 2000:20-48).

In the context of the early twenty-first century, many minorities and indigenous peoples benefit from a more favorable ideological and political climate. Injustices, infringements, and violations of rights—as well as loss of languages—are most often problems that governments are striving to solve—by giving minority groups an increased degree of participation in decision-making and representation, for instance. A positive change in attitudes has even been concretized at the international level by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and at the European level by the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. At national levels, the recognition of official minority languages alongside additional language legislation has occurred in Sweden, Norway, and Finland.

As Scheller and Vinka (forthcoming) point out, “benevolent legislation is often a prerequisite [to language revitalization], but matters of implementation are as vital.” Further, revitalization requires changing community attitudes (Grenoble and Whaley 2006:13). It is in this context that Sami initiatives for the revitalization of language and culture take place and come to expression in many domains (Pietikäinen 2008; Scheller 2011). Revitalization is a “conscious effort . . . to construct a more satisfying culture” (Wallace 1956:265), “a group-level attempt to recapture an idealized past in order to reintegrate it with an uncertain future” (Balzer 1999:75).

Bearing in mind the close relationship between identity and language in Sami identity management (cf. Seurujärvi-Kari 2012), revitalization should be understood here as a process that includes both cultural and linguistic aspects. The requirement of a change in attitudes (cf. Grenoble and Whaley 2006), conscious efforts (cf. Wallace 1956), and future-oriented attempts (cf. Balzer 1999) applies to efforts towards strengthening a language and language acquisition as well as towards increasing the visibility of a specific culture and assessing its value.

### **Contextualizing Contemporary Storytelling**

The process of globalization and the development of various additional media for communication imply that new forms of storytelling take place in many societies, whereas traditional social activities and gatherings—former arenas for storytelling—have often decreased. Technological changes of the twenty-first century and the practices they have brought about have motivated new discourses in the epistemological and cognitive consequences for the relationship between media technology and cognition (cf. Appadurai 1996; Foley 2002, 2010a; Sauerberg 2011), and as underscored in recent publications (Blank 2009; Page and Thomas 2011), new media platforms involve new narrative practices—in both the production and the consumption of narratives.

The production of knowledge related to minorities in Sweden has undergone a process similar to what can be observed elsewhere in the world regarding accessibility, diffusion, and globalization. The variety of conduits of information technology has allowed for a growing number of information technology (IT) projects by and for indigenous people, aiming at the

development of networks, the preservation of traditional cultures, and the maintenance of languages and education (Dyson et al. 2007; Landzelius 2006). In this context, I wish to investigate the continuity of the communicative function of contemporary narratives in digital environments as an effect of the relocation of storytelling events from the *árran*—the fireplace at the center of the Sami tent and a place for gathering—to the web, today a daily meeting place for many. Linguistic and cultural revitalization is expressed through an increasing number of cultural events and initiatives that promote Sami languages and culture; indeed it is a process that takes place in many different arenas, including the Internet. The possibilities and challenges of online revitalization through media technology therefore deserve closer examination.

The adaptive capacity of legends has been observed in previous research that has emphasized the broad range of possible applications for narratives in different contexts (Dégh 1994:33; Ingwersen 1995:89). The continuity of Sami storytelling traditions is unmistakable; for instance, children are well acquainted with the mean ogre Stállu, who is present not only in traditional narration contexts, but also on television shows for children, in children's literature, and even at museum exhibitions.<sup>1</sup> The persistence of Sami traditional narratives through time has included modification and adaptation; today they occur in different shapes, influenced in their form and content by a new medium and by a specific audience. Such persistence and adaptation can be better understood through studying selected Sami-produced websites that make use of elements of storytelling in order to promote language acquisition and to convey knowledge about the minority in Sweden. In Sami-produced websites and digital environments, recurrent references to the oral traditions, characters, and properties of storytelling stress the significance and continuity of the narrative tradition. Taking as a point of departure the fact that innovation does not exclude preservation (Dégh 1994:12; Selberg 1993:202), the following analysis of digital examples highlights how Sami narratives have been preserved and modified.

Theories of adaptation provide an angle of approach that enables us to reflect on the many facets of transcoding (Hutcheon 2006) inherent in transforming a piece of work to another media. The complex processes and consequences of the adaptation of oral narratives to digital media involve issues highly significant for this present essay, and since these issues must always be kept in mind as they continually operate in the background, discussions raised by the Theory of the Gutenberg Parenthesis (TGP) must be taken into consideration. This provocative concept, coined by Lars Ole Sauerberg (2010) and based on Marshall McLuhan's *Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962) as well as on Walter Ong's (1982) notion of secondary orality, underscores the similarities between oral traditions before the Gutenberg revolution and digital productions after the internet revolution. The concept of a parenthesis emphasizes the parallels between the two periods and the resumption of a somewhat interrupted continuum that takes place in the twenty-first century. The TGP research forum investigates the consequences of this phenomenon on our modes of perception and cognition.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A Stállu exhibition can be seen at the Ájtte (Swedish Mountain and Sami) Museum at Jokkmokk. The *Várjjat Sámi Musea* in Varanger (Norway) has a Stállu playroom, the *Stálllobiedju*.

<sup>2</sup> This forum is located at [http://www.sdu.dk/en/om\\_sdu/institutter\\_centre/ikv/forskning/forskningsprojekter/gutenberg\\_projekt/](http://www.sdu.dk/en/om_sdu/institutter_centre/ikv/forskning/forskningsprojekter/gutenberg_projekt/).



Further nuance for these ideas can be found in the work of John Miles Foley (2002, 2010a, 2010b) through his investigations of how cyber-editions might represent oral performances and how oral traditions and the Internet correspond to each other as technologies that “mime the way we think” through their prioritizing of the pathways and processes “in contrast to the fixed spatial organization of the page and book.”<sup>3</sup> Foley’s medium-based model for oral traditions (2002, 2010b:19-20) and his categorization of verbal marketplaces, or “agoras,” provides a model for a better understanding of both oral tradition and internet technology. Similarities and contrasts between the oral, textual, and electronic agoras underscore how the various technologies influence each other and their continuum.

The analysis that follows examines Sami websites that utilize storytelling and is complemented by empirical data collected through a survey and interviews in order to include the users’ perspectives. The survey, spread electronically among users of Sami-produced websites, asked about expectations and experiences in relation to explicit goals expressed in minority politics such as visibility, identity, representation, and transmission of traditions. Survey results were further supplemented by interviews with producers of digital material for Sami websites.<sup>4</sup> The examples presented below are all sites for language acquisition and are the Sami initiatives referred to within the survey.

### Digitally Mediated Narratives

Our first example, *Cugu*, is an internet-based, digital-born multimedia narrative (located at <http://www.ur.se/cugu/>). The story of two Sami children looking for their puppy (called Cugu) gives users the opportunity to travel not only through the Sami landscape, but also through a world inhabited by mythological beings from the Sami storytelling tradition. The site is produced by *Driva produktion* and the Swedish Educational Broadcasting Company (UR), and it presents the story as a fairy tale. The narrative follows a linear structure through different chapters, and the role of the storyteller is filled by various participants: the Sami writer and filmmaker John Erling Utsi; a producer, Birgitta Lindström; and an illustrator, Maria Beskow. *Cugu* includes interactive features that the user can choose to follow or



Fig. 1. Screenshot of *Cugu* homepage <http://www.ur.se/cugu>.

<sup>3</sup> <http://pathwaysproject.org/pathways/show/HomePage>

<sup>4</sup> The survey was conducted in February and March of 2011; for a synthesis of the results (in Swedish), see <http://challengingtraditions.wordpress.com/surveyenkatt/sammanstallning-av-enkatsvaren/>. Eight interviews were conducted to include the perspectives of producers and cultural workers.

leave out of the experience. It is in North Sami<sup>5</sup> and provides a Swedish translation through a PDF file. This digital story thus contains both narrative elements and game-like exercises about aspects of language, and it thereby illustrates the “interactive, option-driven experiences” (Foley 2010b:22) of the electronic agora; the oral and the textual are embedded in the electronic.

One narrative motif, for instance, involves underground beings known as the *háldit* as part of an interactive exercise where the user must identify items that should not be accepted unless one wishes to remain in the world of the *háldit*. This narrative detail is, of course, a reference to Sami legends and traditional knowledge about how one should behave in a situation when encountering such beings. For instance, Johan Turi wrote in 1910 how people seeking shelter beneath some rocks sometimes come upon a beautiful home and are invited to eat. “And if one eats,” he wrote, “then one can never leave. But if one refuses to eat, then [the underground beings] cannot keep one there” (Turi 2011 [1910]:154). The interactive exercise in *Cugu* makes allusion to these beings, warning of the risk of accepting food from the *háldit*.

*Gulahalan* (“I make myself understood”) is a site (<http://www.ur.se/gulahalan/>; see Fig. 2) for language acquisition in the form of a textbook, produced by UR and the Sami Education



Fig. 2. Screenshot of *Gulahalan* homepage (<http://www.ur.se/gulahalan/>).

Center in Jokkmokk. The web design makes use of patterns of design from Sami handicraft. Similarly, the colors in the design—red, blue, green, and yellow—correspond to the ones that are used traditionally in Sami costumes and that appear on the Sami national flag.

The site is divided into different sequential chapters, with a glossary and grammar exercises. It includes audio features, texts, and interactive exercises about vocabulary, numerals, and the like. The site also includes ten recorded narratives that can be used for practicing listening comprehension. Some of them are short interviews about a variety of topics such as Sami folk beliefs or sport. Others are called “traditional Sami stories” (*traditionella samiska berättelser*); three of these are based on a collection of North Sami legends from the end of the nineteenth century (Qvigstad 1927:327, 405), and two are readings from *Sámi Deavsttat* (“Sami Texts”) (Turi and Turi 1918:129-31), one of the books by the storyteller and writer Johan Turi. The web user thus becomes acquainted with traditional legends including, for instance, a tale that gives us an explanation for the different types of reindeer. This story about the origin of the wild reindeer published in Qvigstad’s work (1927:327) revolves around two sisters, Háhčēšeadni and Njávešeadni, and their reindeer. One day the reindeer of the first sister, unsatisfied with its treatment, decides to leave and thus becomes a wild reindeer; Njávešeadni’s reindeer, on the other hand, chooses to stay and becomes domesticated. This tale is embedded in *Gulahalan* and is quite faithful to the text published in 1927. Such stories on the website are mediated following the pattern of a radio program and are not instances of digital narratives to the same extent as

<sup>5</sup> The site has recently been translated into Lule Sami: <http://www.ur.se/tjutju/>.

*Cugu*; instead, their multimediality consists of the sum of the different features of the website and the way storytelling is included within the frame of the textbook.

*Noaidegiisá* (“The Magic Coffin,” found at <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/default.aspx?programid=3124>) is a series of legends and tales for children that are broadcast on the Internet and the radio. The programs are available on a website that provides pictures and some complementary information for each episode, with *Noaidegiisá* being the North Sami part of a larger series of narratives broadcast by the Swedish radio in the five official minority languages, with tales and legends specific to each community.<sup>6</sup> We find, for instance, the story of Stállu marrying a tree stump. In this legend, the mean ogre is lured by the Sami, who make him believe he is marrying a “pretty girl” that is in fact just a tree stump arranged with a girl’s clothes. The story narrates how the silly giant talks to his wife and does not notice he has been fooled until later when he wishes to go to bed with her. He then becomes furious, runs out naked, and eventually freezes to death (Turi 2011 [1910]:148).

Although the narratives on the *Noaidegiisá* website are specific to each language group, the website’s design follows the same layout for each of the five different versions in the minority languages and therefore uses few symbols or features referring specifically to Sami principles of form as did the previous examples of *Cugu* and *Gulahalan*. However, the few illustrations that are present tend to be more particularized as they depict specialized landscapes and animals, as well as protagonists wearing the Sami *gákti*, the traditional costume (with its characteristically big red pompom on the cap) associated most closely with the north Sami area of Karesuando. The site’s audio settings include *yoik* (a traditional form of Sami singing and storytelling) and drums, and an introductory text in Swedish describes Sami myths and stories as “at home and almost everywhere in the Sami society”<sup>7</sup> and also emphasizes a close relationship between Sami culture and nature. The stories were written for the series, but versions of the narratives and similar narrative elements can be found in most collections of Sami legends.<sup>8</sup>

*Cujaju* is a website (<http://www.cujaju.no/>) where short YouTube films are embedded. The website is about *yoik* and is—as is made clear on the site’s information page—an effort to make this traditional form of singing and storytelling accessible and understandable for young children. It is directed by Rachel Andersen, produced by Sonar Film and the Senter for Nordlige Folk (“Center for Northern Peoples”) in Norway, and financed by the Sami parliament. On the site’s main page, an outdoor scene with a hare, mosquito, and bear functions as an index to other *yoiks* on YouTube by allowing users to click

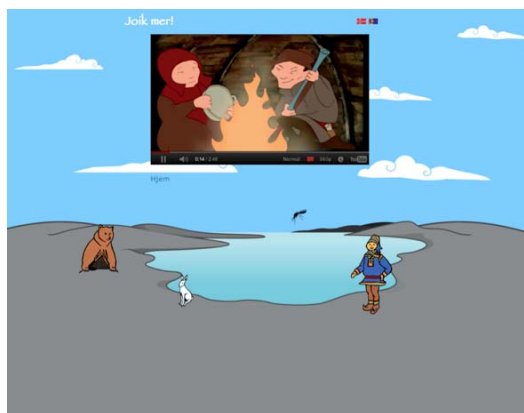


Fig. 3. Screenshot of *Cujaju* homepage (<http://www.cujaju.no>).

<sup>6</sup> Since 2000, the five official national minority languages of Sweden are Finnish, Yiddish, Romani, Meänkieli, and Sami.

<sup>7</sup> <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=3129&artikel=4326826> (my translation).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Qvigstad 1927.

on the pictures of animals. The story of *Cujaju* is also provided as a short text that can be accessed via a link. The site is available in Norwegian and North Sami.

Although the Sami *yoik* is often referred to as a form of singing and discussed in terms of its musical qualities (Graff 2007; Jones-Bamman 1993), it is also a form of storytelling (Stoor 2007). The website *Cujaju* highlights musical and narrative qualities. The core story is a traditional tale about the hunter Garral and his meeting with *draugfolket*, beings from Sami tales. The animated film of 2½ minutes begins in a Sami tent where we first see the seal hunter preparing for the journey that he then undertakes to the shore. The Sami tent is the only building; an outdoor landscape with its bird song, audible wind, and resounding sea is the setting for the rest of the story. The webpage frames the narrative with aural and visual elements; paratextual features as well as text-based descriptions are present.

These selected sites are mentioned by many of the users that responded to the survey. *Cujaju*, *Cugu*, *Noaidegiisá*, and *Gulahalan* refer directly to vernacular Sami storytelling traditions, including characters, topics, settings (landscape), and musical background (*yoik* and drums). These examples are also all in line with the goals of minority politics, that is, the promotion of the Sami languages and the strengthening of Sami identity (Regeringskansliet 2008/2009:158, 2009:724). Issues related to language and traditions are also a main concern among visitors to Sami websites, as the survey shows, and learning Sami and finding information about the situation of the Sami are primary aims for visitors to these websites. In addition, language acquisition and the transmission of culture and traditions are especially highly positioned in the expectations for children's interaction with these sites.

The websites illustrate the wide variation, overlap, and interplay between the different “verbal marketplaces.” Foley's medium-based model of oral traditions enables us to approach multimediality in the recent Sami-produced webspaces in relation to a strong oral tradition that is stressed as a point of reference in the selected examples discussed above. The oral is central with regard to both the features used for conveying the legends (recordings) and the references made to the origin of the stories. But the written word is still the main means for introducing and framing these stories. The electronic format combines audio-visual and interactive features with the oral and the written. The study of the sites and how they interplay with the storytelling tradition exemplifies the multiple uses of a variety of registers and channels of communication that Foley describes as “a matter of code-switching” (2010b:20).

### **The Continuity of Oral Storytelling**

The attractive features of traditional storytelling—along with a wish to educate and inform the general public about minorities and indigenous peoples—have triggered adaptations of legends and tales for the digital medium in many instances.<sup>9</sup> The Internet can be a strong pedagogical tool that enables teachers or producers to successfully combine entertainment and information in a manner that triggers motivation and learning. The Internet is also a suitable medium for storytelling thanks to the multimedia possibilities it offers through the combination

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<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Leavy 2007 and also the Conne River Project (<http://www.storiesofconneriver.ca/>).

of several forms of already-existing media (Punday 2011:20-21). Sami storytelling on the Internet is expressed in many different forms, with various degrees of multimediality and diverse targeted audiences. The websites selected above exemplify this variation and, at the same time, illustrate recurrent narrative features. In the case of *Cugu*, the writer John Erling Utsi describes the tale as a synthesis of elements of traditional Sami storytelling (Sameradion 2010), and entities such as underground beings and Stállu are indeed drawn from the Sami storytelling repertoire. The narratives on *Gulahalan* also refer to legends and tales from previous publications (cf. Turi 2011 [1910]; Qvigstad 1927).

The strong intertextuality between the digital examples presented here and their text-based sources might seem to imply that the contemporary examples have remained confined to the pattern of written text, without freeing themselves totally from a “textual taxidermy” (Foley 2005:233). In the cases of *Gulahalan* and *Noaidegiisá*, for instance, the Internet is only a mode of diffusion and access, and the narratives in *Gulahalan* are simply versions transposed from the printed source into another medium without any greater modifications. But *Cugu* and *Cujaju* were created to use internet applications: *Cugu* illustrates the potential of digital-born narratives with interactive features and the possibilities for flexibility and variation; as for *Cujaju*, the site explores the possibilities of film and platforms such as YouTube for a visual representation of *yoik*. The use of graphics and animation is yet another mode of negotiation between sources and intertexts (cf. Hayles 2003). In *Cugu* and *Cujaju*, words are no longer prominent: even though the sites are in North Sami, even non-Sami speakers can navigate the digital environment. In the case of *Gulahalan* and *Noaidegiisá*, on the other hand, words are central, a reality reflected both in the content and in the limited use of multimedia features.

Interactivity enables interplay and interaction between storyteller, audience, and story to a greater extent than a written and printed text. The examples chosen in this essay do not make use of all the layers of interactivity explored by Ryan (2011:35-62) since they do not involve internal participation or collaborative interaction. Nevertheless, the degree of interactivity is higher in a digital environment or on a website where the participant can make choices and create his or her own relationship with the narratives than it is with a written text.

The chosen websites also point toward the continuity of storytelling as a social practice and as a natural part of life—even though mediated in various ways—and the adaptation of traditional Sami narratives is simply part of the larger cultural production that now takes place in digital environments. The computer and the Internet as media, in comparison with the book as a medium, provide a wider range of tools to create and transmit knowledge. Storytelling in the “postparentetical period,” as Sauerberg (2010:232-34) would call it, presents similarities with “preparentetical” storytelling and primary orality (Ong 1982:6). The continuum and similarities between oral traditions and internet technologies stressed by Foley are here demonstrated by the mix of tradition and individual, a distributed authorship, the intended audience, and process-oriented storytelling events. A story is no longer contained within a book and reduced to a text (Foley 2005:233); it is now a dynamic process that the reader becomes part of through interaction. The readers and the audience are viewed not as passive recipients, but rather as active participants (cf. Page and Thomas 2011:8). These contemporary instances not only highlight the continuity of the storytelling tradition, but they also expose new prerequisites,

assumptions, and intentions. A narrative event can, thanks to multimediality, resemble an oral performance to a greater extent than a printed text or even an audio file.

Although the parallels between oral and digital storytelling are many and there is an undoubted continuity from oral to written to digital forms, any interpretation of digital narratives must also include—in addition to intertextual and contextual aspects—their hypertextual and paratextual features. A story of course emerges out of a context and makes reference to previous legends and tales; the examples focused upon in this study are based on sources documented from another historical context, but they are in dialogical relation to contemporary master narratives such as Sami identity discourse in a context of revitalization. But in the case of digitally mediated narratives, the position of a story on a website and embedded links there also place a specific account in a hypertextual context that needs to be taken into consideration. The chosen sites are produced, linked, and placed on websites with specific intentions; their connection to the Swedish Educational Broadcasting Company, for example, underscores the educational purposes of *Gulahalan* and *Cugu*. As for paratextual features, the study of the intermediality and multimediality of stories emphasizes how visual and aural elements also contribute to establishing a relationship with other narratives. For instance, the use of traditional Sami designs, the employment of colors from the traditional Sami costume, and the inclusion of *yoik* and drums all work to create associations with Sami identity.

Even though an adaptation is “likely to be greeted as minor and subsidiary and certainly never as good as the ‘original’” (Hutcheon 2006:6), the intertextual and dialogical relationship between digital narratives and previous publications of Sami folklore collections makes it difficult to approach new productions as autonomous items. Accordingly, this relationship should be studied as horizontal rather than hierarchic. The recent online productions of *Cujaju*, *Cugu*, and *Noaidegiisá* combine diverse aspects of the storytelling tradition in such a way that new multimedia stories emerge. Interestingly, instances that contain a high degree of intertextuality (Tarkka 1993:175) make less use of the multimedia opportunities and interactivity. Narratives based on printed versions of stories recorded some 100 years ago seem less flexible in their adaptation to the Internet, as is well illustrated by *Gulahalan* and *Noaidegiisá*. Respect for authorship and issues related to authenticity and ownership might partially explain this phenomenon (cf. Welch 2009); as Page and Thomas point out (2011:10), “conventions of authenticity online still prevail.”

The possibilities that digital environments offer for creation are not fully exploited in all of the websites examined in this study, and—as mentioned above—their employment varies greatly. There is a rather high degree of multimediality in *Cugu*, and the *Gulahalan* site makes use of different media side by side, with the storytelling using mainly audio. As for *Noaidegiisá*, the Internet is used as a means for diffusion and access, not as a tool for creation. *Cujaju* provides another instance of multimediality where the main source, a *yoik*, is turned into an animated film. While *Gulahalan* and *Noaidegiisá* are closer to textual technology, combining original printed texts and recordings with a web platform, *Cujaju* illustrates a broader technological range, and *Cugu* best illustrates how internet technology can represent oral traditions successfully in relation to navigational paths and process-oriented performances.

### Premises and Challenges

A story as a performance is partly shaped by its audience (see, for instance, Bauman 1986:11-12), independent of the medium. Although the readers of a digitally mediated narrative cannot necessarily be explicitly identified, there is an implicitly targeted audience. In order to successfully approach the narratives as storytelling events it is important to include this assumed audience in the analysis of our selected sites. The contemporary adaptations are based on traditional legends and tales; written versions were published at the turn of the twentieth century, and these versions thus represent an early adaptation from an oral source to the book format. The narratives collected 100 years ago were part of the Sami tradition that addressed members of the community, including both adults and children. But minority language politics have a predominant didactic goal in contemporary forms of storytelling, and there has therefore been a necessary adjustment in the intended audience and the role of media in the transmission of these tales. On the sites I have examined, content and composition are now designed primarily for promoting language acquisition, and in this context storytelling is assigned a specific meaning.

The main difference between older texts and contemporary instances of Sami storytelling—such as those found in our selected websites or in recent publications (for example, Birkeland 1988; Utsi 2011)—is their intended audience. Cruel and salacious details in older narratives indicate that some stories were not aimed especially at children, but at a broader audience. All generations used to be involved in such narrative events. But in their newer digital media forms, the Sami legends and tales are intended especially for children. Traditional narratives have been adjusted to employ a more accessible register, and Sami storytelling has been somewhat redefined as a genre with a shift in focus. Side effects of the shift that can be observed today include the disappearances of details and a narrowing of variations in order to adjust legends and tales to young readers.

This adaptation of traditional stories entails the greater elaboration of visual representations. Adaptation to the audience can be observed in the pictures of the characters that visual media deliver. Portrayals of the mean, foolish ogre Stállu, for instance, differ greatly between older representations and recent illustrations. In more recent publications such as children's books (for example, Birkeland 1988; Utsi 2011), digital stories (as available on the *Cugu* website), or short films on television (Fig. 4), the visual representations do not typically render the cruelty found in the descriptions of older narratives. The transformation of the Stállu figure in mass media adaptations are motivated by assumptions and values proper to a contemporary and global context. The expected audience—in this case, children—induces the choice of a certain genre



Fig. 4. Stállu in the short film *Stállu ja garjá*.

and the components associated with it.

The contemporary contexts for the development and emergence of storytelling and media consumption provide another explanation for the discrepancies between the narration as documented 100 years ago and the ones we find today on the Internet. Differences between oral, written, audiovisual, and multimedia variants of storytelling are related not only to the transmission medium used—be it the Internet or a book—but also to the context in which they are consumed. Narration today does not occur under traditional conditions: children may sit alone in front of the computer or read on their own, whereas storytelling would traditionally occur only when a group is gathered. Cruel details narrated within a safe environment might now be inappropriate for children hearing stories on their own; in the case of the Stállu lore, for instance, the more terrible parts of narratives have been censored in order to adapt them for children, and in general recent storytelling events often offer “cuddly” versions of the legends. In books for children, the murders, death, and cruelty have been replaced by an ambiguous ending. For example, the traditional story mentioned earlier of Stállu marrying a tree stump has more recently been narrated in a children’s book (Birkeland 1988) and in *Noaidegiisá*, whose graphic ending is less explicit. The reader does not get to know exactly what happens to Stállu—we are told only that he “disappears”—whereas his death by freezing is detailed in Turi’s 1910 version.

Online creations therefore provide examples for how the oral, visual, written, and digital interplay and influence each other, resulting in narrative practices that strengthen the continuity of Sami storytelling but also contribute to its novelty. Additionally, such online productions are in interplay with offline conditions and prerequisites such as minority politics, an intended audience, and consumption patterns. A richer understanding of the performance of the digital stories would therefore include a deeper receptionalist approach for gaining a better awareness of who the users are or how the websites are used differently by adults and children. Such an investigation would require more extensive user data and would require a separate article of its own.

### **Internet Technologies, Oral Traditions, and Revitalization**

This essay has examined contemporary storytelling in Sami webspaces through selected examples. But we should also investigate further the role that such digital environments can play in ongoing processes of revitalization in relation to minority politics, user expectations, and the community. As we shall see, these sites work well to exemplify the reciprocity of contextual factors, that is, how revitalization objectives and minority politics shape contemporary Sami storytelling.

One effect of the growth of online Sami productions is that the visibility of the Sami minority has increased. Long an invisible minority in their own countries, today, thanks to new forms of literature and storytelling in mass media, information about Sami traditions, culture, and history is accessible to a broader audience. For the marginalized Sami minority, the actualization of languages and traditions in mass media appears essential, and it has also been a significant point of legislation (Regeringskansliet 2009).



A consequence of the spreading of knowledge—and one of the objectives of Sami media producers as well—is the affirmation and consolidation of a Sami identity. A recent report about the situation of the Sami people in the Sápmi region (Anaya 2011) underscores the importance of promoting minority languages, and the close relationship between language and identity. The study of Sami-produced websites using traditional storytelling indicates how central certain aspects are in the articulation of a Sami identity: as we have seen, there are the obvious aesthetic factors involved in the visual associations of *duodji* (handicraft) and the *gákti* (traditional clothing), but within many sites there is also an emphasis on features relating to the land and the landscape, thus materializing the Sápmi region itself.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, references to tradition and traditional knowledge are many, even as these traditions and knowledge are being redefined in a contemporary context.

Anaya (2011) has identified the decrease in the variety of the Sami languages as an area of concern but mentions mass media as a tool for revival; such media have a central role in the promotion of languages, and their effect on the dissemination of words and pedagogical communication is well established. Digital media are also significant in the preservation and vitality of these languages: they constitute a site of creativity and renewal. Terminology related to contemporary topics or technology can easily be shaped and spread through the Internet. But in terms of standardization and modernization of language, the use of new media for storytelling deserves further investigation, with several Sami languages and identity revitalization processes needing to be taken into account.

A majority of the survey participants expressed the view that there is not enough Sami available on the web, and especially not enough of the less-spoken Sami languages (South Sami, Lule Sami, and Ume Sami) in particular.<sup>11</sup> Looking specifically at the explicit aims of the Sami media, a majority of those who completed the survey expressed that the websites (both Sami sites in general and sites for children specifically) do not succeed fully in the task of supporting language acquisition.<sup>12</sup> Even though productions in Lule Sami and South Sami have increased over the last five years, they are outnumbered by North Sami productions, and often North Sami is used synonymously for Sami, with other minor Sami languages remaining disregarded. Moreover, the dialectal variations of the North Sami language, spoken in three different countries, run the risk of being overlooked because of the implicit standardization of language caused by the centralization of Sami media production.

The process of revitalization cannot be studied solely online. It is a process initiated and put into practice offline; it is triggered by people and relates to many arenas of life. The Internet is a single part of it as a place for creation and a meeting place. There is, nevertheless, a strong connection between what happens online and offline. In the survey, 79.5% answered “agree” or “agree to some extent” to the statement “there is a manifest connection between the websites and reality.” The Internet gives indications about ongoing processes and phenomena that should be

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<sup>10</sup> For some of the implications of this process, see Cocq 2013.

<sup>11</sup> It emerges from the survey results that 75% believe the Sami languages are not well represented on the Internet (“inclined to disagree” or “disagree”).

<sup>12</sup> 67.5% respond “to some extent” or “to a lesser degree” to the question “Do the Sami websites meet the goal of supporting language acquisition?”

studied in relation to offline activity. But as discussed above, there is also skepticism among users about the potential of digital media in the ongoing processes of linguistic revitalization in the Sami communities.

As for the adaptation of narratives, Sami storytelling is currently at a crossroads of different influences: a strong tradition is being challenged by an explicit effort toward adaptation with respect to new media, a new audience, and a new context for the revitalization, promotion, and development of threatened languages. Survey results indicate that the main expectations of users are not fully met by what is offered online today, and even though there is a strong belief in the Internet and its potential for language teaching, doubts remain among users with regard to the possibility of developing the narrative tradition through digital media. The narrowing definition of the targeted audience in recent adaptations of storytelling risks the loss of variation in a strong storytelling tradition. The communicative dimension of storytelling appears secondary in contemporary examples, whereas the entertainment dimension—traditionally a rhetorical means rather than an explicit goal—is primary today. Prior to this shift, storytelling was a central social practice in the transmission of social norms and codes of the community. Narratives did not function simply to entertain, but also to educate and socialize. The transcoding that takes place when involving a new audience, new technologies, and new consumption patterns affects the form and content of narratives in many ways. Offline narrative practices remain the strongest bearer of language revitalization, and it is their extensive use and unquestioned bond to tradition that motivates online productions dedicated to the same aims.

The examples focused upon in this study illustrate the possibilities and challenges of the Internet for narrative practices and endangered languages. The richness of storytelling and the Internet's potential for the adaptation, creation, and diffusion of narratives provide a promising foundation for the continuity and development of the strong Sami storytelling tradition. The digital technologies and practices themselves are in a phase of exploration and development, as can be observed in their use by many other minority communities as well. Indigenous peoples around the world make use of digital media, and the example of the Sami can contribute to the search for new insights into the Internet as a locus for storytelling and oral traditions more generally. Internet technologies do not simply provide a wide range of tools better suited than the written text for representing oral traditions; despite their shortcomings, digital media also offer empowering strategies, paths to revitalization, and the ability to represent more fully the true diversity and heterogeneity of the cultures and languages that surround and enable them.

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## Poetry's Politics in Archaic Greek Epic and Lyric

David F. Elmer

*In memoriam John Miles Foley*<sup>1</sup>

### The *Iliad*'s Politics of Consensus

In a recent book (Elmer 2013) examining the representation of collective decision making in the *Iliad*, I have advanced two related claims: first, that the *Iliad* projects consensus as the ideal outcome of collective deliberation; and second, that the privileging of consensus can be meaningfully correlated with the nature of the poem as the product of an oral tradition.<sup>2</sup> The *Iliad*'s politics, I argue, are best understood as a reflection of the dynamics of the tradition out of which the poem as we know it developed. In the course of the present essay, I intend to apply this approach to some of the other texts and traditions that made up the poetic ecology of archaic Greece, in order to illustrate the diversity of this ecology and the contrast between two of its most important "habitats," or contexts for performance: Panhellenic festivals and the symposium. I will examine representative examples from the lyric and elegiac traditions associated with the poets Alcaeus of Mytilene and Theognis of Megara, respectively, and I will cast a concluding glance over the *Odyssey*, which sketches an illuminating contrast between festival and symposium. I begin, however, by distilling some of the most important claims from my earlier work in order to establish a framework for my discussion.

Scholars have been interested in the politics of the Homeric poems since antiquity. Ancient critics tended to draw from the poems lessons about proper political conduct, in accordance with a general tendency to view Homer as the great primordial educator of the Greeks. Thus Philodemus, in the first century BCE, wrote a treatise called *On the Good King according to Homer*, extracting lessons from both poems about the appropriate exercise of power; Dio of Prusa has Alexander of Macedon expounding to his father, Philip, Homer's

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<sup>1</sup> This article is a lightly revised version of a paper delivered as the twenty-sixth annual Lord and Parry Lecture at the University of Missouri's Center for Studies in Oral Tradition on March 13, 2012. Though I feel it is an inadequate tribute, I offer it to the memory of my gracious host on that occasion, John Miles Foley, whose work has been a constant source of inspiration for me.

<sup>2</sup> This work focuses on the *Iliad* but also includes a short appendix on the *Odyssey*.



preeminent virtue as an instructor of princes (*Oration 2*).<sup>3</sup> Modern scholars have tended instead to treat the poems as documents for early Greek history—or rather, prehistory. In the wake of Milman Parry’s demonstration of the thoroughly traditional character of Homeric poetry, it has come to seem plausible that the poems, by preserving a tradition that antedates our earliest written texts in alphabetic Greek, may offer a precious glimpse into the prehistory of Greek politics. Historians are thus able to offer the poems as evidence for the political forms and structures of late Bronze Age and early Iron Age Greece. Still the best-known example of this kind of argument is Moses Finley’s *The World of Odysseus* (1978 [1954]), which founds a number of claims about the society of the so-called Dark Age (roughly 1100-800 BCE) on nothing more than the testimony of these two literary texts.<sup>4</sup>

The appeal of such an approach is readily apparent—it holds the promise of providing access to a period for which textual sources are otherwise lacking—but so are the perils. One must always exercise caution when seeking to correlate a literary text with historical realia.<sup>5</sup> This is particularly true when no external documentary evidence is available as a control. In the case of Homeric poetry, an additional problem arises from the very same circumstance that seemed to open up the possibility of a prehistory of Greek politics in the first place, namely, the indebtedness of the Homeric poems to a very lengthy oral tradition, as demonstrated by Milman Parry and Albert Lord. It is in the nature of such a tradition to preserve within its inherited and formulaic diction traces of chronologically diverse periods, so that the “Homeric World” described by Finley is really an amalgam of elements from very different eras.<sup>6</sup> For example, within the world of the *Iliad*, the boar’s tusk helmet worn by Odysseus in Book 10—a Bronze Age piece of equipment that would not have been seen in Greece after, say, the fifteenth century BCE—can happily coexist with Iron Age weapons and implements that first came into use centuries later. A similar kind of synthesis can be observed with regard to marriage customs, burial practices, and combat techniques. But if this is the case, how confident can we be that the poems reflect a single, identifiable historical context with respect to political structures?

My reading of politics in the *Iliad* attempts to resolve these interpretive difficulties by correlating the poem’s political dynamics not with a single, identifiable historical context but rather with the dynamics that shaped the Iliadic tradition as it developed over time. The *Iliad*, as I

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<sup>3</sup> Asmis 1991 offers an English translation and commentary on Philodemus’ treatise; see also Murray 1965, which emphasizes connections with the world of contemporary Roman politics.

<sup>4</sup> Finley 1978 [1954]. For other examples of this historicizing approach, see Morris 1986; van Wees 1992; Donlan 1997; and Raaflaub 1998.

<sup>5</sup> Tim Whitmarsh, responding to a review in the *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, gives an eloquent statement of the problem (*BMCR* 2012.02.54, <http://bmc.brynmawr.edu/2012/2012-02-54.html>): “Of course literary works allude in all sorts of ways to contemporary structures and events, but as a rule they do so in opaque, multifarious, and sometimes self-contradictory ways. If we are to give a historicist account of such works, we have to do more than simply join the dots between features internal to the text and external reference points; we need, rather, to grasp (as best we can; this, I concede, is also an elusive quest) the nature of the particular form of textuality in question, and ask what kind of (phantasmatic, or kaleidoscopic) ‘history’ is being projected.”

<sup>6</sup> Snodgrass 1974 (reprinted with introductory comments in Snodgrass 2006) remains a cogent exposition of the “composite” nature of the world represented by the Homeric poems. For a critical response to Snodgrass, see Morris 1986:105-15. Some writers (for instance, Allan 2006:9 n.40) go so far as to characterize the world of the Homeric heroes as a “fiction.”

have said, is the end product of a lengthy tradition, out of which the poem as we know it gradually evolved. This tradition can be conceptualized as a kind of long-term process of collective decision making, in which an emerging consensus among performers and audiences determined what counted as a legitimate performance of the story of Achilles' wrath. The rhapsodes who performed Homeric poetry and their audiences were undoubtedly aware of their participation in an ongoing process of negotiation over the norms of Iliadic narrative. Such an awareness would have arisen naturally in the context of the large regional and supra-regional festivals in which Homeric poetry appears to have evolved, and which can be loosely grouped together under the rubric of "Panhellenism."<sup>7</sup> These festivals, which were the premier venue for the performance of the Homeric poems, attracted visitors from the many diverse communities that made up the Greek world, each of which had its own distinctive heroic traditions. Performers at these festivals were faced with the task of presenting poetry that somehow connected with all of these traditions while corresponding exactly to none.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, audiences would implicitly be asked to suspend their local allegiances by accepting and endorsing a performance that took a broader, more Panhellenic perspective. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* demonstrably reflect the cosmopolitan outlook of such Panhellenic audiences, and this reflection is a direct result of the negotiation that would take place at every recurrence of a Panhellenic event such as the Panathenaic festival in Athens and could over time produce a masterpiece of cultural synthesis like the *Iliad*. At events such as these, audiences and performers would, as I have said, be made aware of their participation in an ongoing process of negotiation over the synthetic, Panhellenic narrative.<sup>9</sup> And it is precisely this awareness, I claim, that is reflected in the *Iliad*'s distinctive representation of political deliberation and collective decision making.

Approaching the politics of the *Iliad* in this way resolves the difficulty of finding a specific historical point of reference since the chronological depth that makes that task so difficult is now precisely the point: the poem's politics encode an awareness of the poem's evolution over time. Moreover, this approach helps us to make sense of one of the more curious features of politics in the *Iliad*, which is the unique value the poem appears to set on *consensus* as the optimal form of collective decision making. Consensus-based decision making is *not* a particularly prominent feature of historical Greek political cultures. In classical Athens, for example, reliance on the majority principle permitted the flourishing of an adversarial political culture that set no great store by solidarity. Meanwhile, the general preoccupation with civil

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<sup>7</sup> On Homeric poetry as a Panhellenic phenomenon, see the formulation of Nagy 1999 [1979]:7-8. Various festivals have been indicated as possible contexts for the composition and development of the Homeric poems. The Panathenaia features prominently in Nagy's own "evolutionary model," for which see Nagy 1996:chs. 5-7; Frame (2009:515-647) argues that the poems were composed in the context of the Panionia; Whitman (1958:76, 81) mentions both of these festivals, along with the Delia. (The poems may in fact reflect multiple performance contexts.) All of these festivals may be considered "Panhellenic" to various degrees (*pace* Davison 1955:12 on the limited appeal of the Panathenaia). For Panhellenism as a relative concept, see Nagy 2009:275.

<sup>8</sup> I adapt here the phrasing of Nagy's characterization of Homeric poetry as a Panhellenic tradition (1999 [1979]:7): "this poetic tradition synthesizes the diverse local traditions of each major city-state into a unified Panhellenic model that suits most city-states but corresponds exactly to none."

<sup>9</sup> For the *Iliad* as an example of the "synthetic narrative" of Panhellenic heroic traditions, see Marks 2010.

conflict (*stasis*) we observe in early Greek literature suggests that consensus was not ordinarily a feature of archaic political life.<sup>10</sup> Egon Flaig, author of a study on the “consensus principle” in the *Iliad*, has stressed the extent to which this principle does *not* match up with the political cultures of the historical Greek city-states (1994:30). As I have emphasized, however, the negotiation over the Panhellenic narrative tradition of the *Iliad* that took place at large festivals such as the Athenian Panathenaia *can* meaningfully be characterized in terms of consensus, for in such a context the most successful performance would be the one that appealed most broadly to audiences with diverse local interests.

Thus far my discussion has been fairly abstract. Let me begin to introduce more concrete detail by explaining, in the first place, just how and where we can detect the privileging of consensus that I claim characterizes Iliadic politics. My comments will also, I hope, be interesting as an illustration of the formulaic technique described by Parry and Lord.

Discussions of the political system represented in the Homeric poems typically focus on the power of the ruler, who often seems to impose his own will on the group. Exhibit A is Agamemnon, who in Book 1 rejects a request to ransom a captive woman in spite of the approval of the Greek army as a whole and then forcefully appropriates a captive woman belonging to Achilles over the objections of his advisors. But closer examination reveals a clear and unambiguous set of signals that—in all cases in which a proposal is put before a group—it is in fact collective will that is decisive. The key here is a system of formulaic expressions that describe the responses of audiences in decision making contexts. There are in the *Iliad* exactly five ways in which an audience may respond to a deliberative proposal, each characterized by a distinctive verb. Listed according to representative types (some of which exhibit minor variations), they are:<sup>11</sup>

1. ὡς ἔφαθ', οἱ δ' ἄρα πάντες ἀκὴν ἐγένοντο σιωπῇ

He spoke thus, and they were all silent

3.95, 7.398, 8.28, 9.29<sup>12</sup>

2. ἔνθ' ἄλλοι μὲν πάντες ἐπευφήμησαν Ἀχαιοί

Thereupon all the other Achaeans expressed support

1.22, 1.376

3. ὡς ἔφαθ', οἱ δ' ἄρα πάντες ἐπίαχον υἴες Ἀχαιῶν

He spoke thus, and all the sons of the Achaeans shouted in response

7.403, 9.50; cf. 2.333, 2.394

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Loraux 2002:30: “The egalitarian *polis* of consensus . . . exists because actual cities are divided.”

<sup>11</sup> All translations in this essay are my own. Greek quotations are taken from the following editions: Allen 1931 (*Iliad*); Burnet 1902 (*Republic*); Lobel and Page 1955 (Alcaeus); von der Muehll 1962 (*Odyssey*); Young 1971 (*Theognis*).

<sup>12</sup> In addition to these four occurrences in deliberative contexts, the formula is used six times to characterize responses to a challenge, to an appeal for individual action, or to a particularly astonishing speech (specifically, Achilles’ rejection of Agamemnon’s offer of compensation): see 7.92, 9.430, 9.693, 10.218, 10.313, and 23.676.

4. ὡς Ἴκτωρ ἀγόρευ', ἐπὶ δὲ Τρῶες κελάδησαν  
Hector spoke thus, and the Trojans roared in response  
8.542, 18.310

5. ὡς ἔφαθ', οἱ δ' ἄρα πάντες ἐπήνησαν βασιλῆες  
He spoke thus, and all the kings approved  
7.344, 9.710; cf. 2.335, 3.461, 4.29, 4.380, 16.443, 18.312, 21.290, 22.181, 23.539-40

Of these five responses, the first—“they were all silent”—is unambiguously negative and signals the immediate rejection of a proposal. If an audience reacts with silence, we know immediately that the proposal in question will not be put into effect. The remaining four responses all appear to be positive, but in fact—and this is the crucial point—only one of them, the last, designates a definitive ratification. I have translated the key verb *epaineîn* as “approve,” but this is actually a poor approximation of the powerful social force encapsulated in this verb, a force that might justifiably be equated with our notion of “consensus.” Only in the case of this response is a proposal immediately and without further qualification put into effect. Each of the other apparently positive responses can be shown to be deficient in some respect, and each is, moreover, restricted to a fairly specific set of circumstances so that none duplicates exactly the function of another. So rigid is this system and so direct the connection between audience response and the outcome of an assembly that explicit notice of a proposal’s efficacy becomes redundant once the audience’s reaction has been reported: silence automatically means rejection, while the *epaineîn* formula—and that formula alone—indicates a decisive ratification that automatically carries a proposal into effect.

The deficiencies affecting the three positive responses that are less than fully decisive can help to clarify just what is so special about the fifth response. One of these deficiencies emerges clearly in a scene I have already mentioned—Agamemnon’s rejection of a proposal to ransom a captive woman, which is, moreover, the event that sets the entire plot of the *Iliad* in motion. At the very beginning of Book 1, Chryses, priest of Apollo, comes to the Greek camp to sue for his daughter’s release (1.17-25):

Ἀτρεΐδαι τε καὶ ἄλλοι εὐκνήμιδες Ἀχαιοί,  
ὕμιν μὲν θεοὶ δοῖεν Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχοντες  
ἐκπέρσαι Πριάμοιο πόλιν, εὖ δ' οἴκαδ' ἰκέσθαι·  
παῖδα δ' ἐμοὶ λύσαιτε φίλην, τὰ δ' ἄποινα δέχεσθαι,  
ἄζόμενοι Διὸς υἱὸν ἐκηβόλον Ἀπόλλωνα.  
ἔνθ' ἄλλοι μὲν πάντες ἐπευφήμησαν Ἀχαιοὶ  
αἰδεῖσθαι θ' ἱερῆα καὶ ἀγλαὰ δέχθαι ἄποινα·  
ἀλλ' οὐκ Ἀτρεΐδῃ Ἀγαμέμνονι ἦνδανε θυμῷ,  
ἀλλὰ κακῶς ἀφίει, κρατερὸν δ' ἐπὶ μῦθον ἔτελλε·

“Sons of Atreus and you other well-greaved Achaeans,  
may the gods who dwell on Olympus grant  
that you sack Priam’s city, and return home safely.

But release my dear child, and accept this ransom,  
 showing reverence for Apollo, the far-shooting son of Zeus.”  
Then all the other Achaeans expressed support (*epeuphēmein*)  
 for respecting the priest and accepting the bright ransom.  
 But this did not please (*handanein*) the heart of Agamemnon son of Atreus;  
 he rudely dismissed the priest and enjoined on him a harsh word of command.

In these lines, the army at large expresses their support for Chryses’ request, but, we are told, “this did not please the heart of Agamemnon.” The crucial difference between this response, designated by the verb *epeuphēmein*, and the one designated by the verb *epaineîn* is that in this case the response most emphatically does not include all members of the group. It falls short of the kind of total group cohesion that characterizes the *epaineîn* response, and it is precisely this cohesion that permits us to speak of “consensus” in connection with the one decisive mode of collective approval. There are two things I would like to emphasize about this critical scene in Book 1. The first is the way the narrator speaks of what “pleases” Agamemnon. Throughout the *Iliad* and elsewhere in archaic Greek poetry, “pleasure” is a byword for the kind of strong personal preference that fractures a political community or social group, a preference that obstructs the formation of a consensus.<sup>13</sup> References to what is “pleasing” or “displeasing” frequently highlight the fault lines in a community—perhaps because these sentiments are always experienced on a fundamentally individualized and personal basis and are not therefore easily collectivized. I mention this motif now because it will later prove to be significant in relation to the poetry of Theognis. The second thing I would like to stress about *Iliad* 1 is that, even if the collective response is not sufficient to guarantee the immediate approval of Chryses’ request, Agamemnon is not therefore entitled to do as he pleases—he is still bound in an important sense by collective will. When Apollo afflicts the army with a plague and another assembly is convened to meet the crisis, Agamemnon is compelled to release the woman, his own preference notwithstanding. In other words, the absence of collective support for the course of action he pursues dooms that course of action to failure. In this way the poem emphasizes that collective will—and, more to the point, *consensus*—is absolutely essential to the achievement of any collective purpose.

The poem begins, as I have said, with Agamemnon’s attempt to impose his own will over and against that of the group. If the rule that governs collective decision making in the *Iliad* is that the will of the group should ultimately be decisive, then Agamemnon’s behavior at the beginning of the poem is an attempt to suspend the norms of deliberative practice. This attempt fails, and the rest of the poem can be regarded as a gradual movement toward the restoration of those norms, and in particular toward the restoration of consensus as the default way of reaching a decision. Interestingly, however, the poem never quite arrives at this implied goal. Even when consensus is achieved, it is always limited in some crucial respect. Up until the very last lines of the poem, a fully cohesive collective will remains something much desired but never completely

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<sup>13</sup> I am speaking in particular of the semantics of the verb *handanein* (“please”), but I hasten to add that this “counter-consensual” use of the verb, while consistently observable in the Homeric corpus, is not universal, even in explicitly political contexts. The phrase ἔφαδε πόλι (“it pleased the city,” using the aorist of *handanein*) is broadly attested in Cretan inscriptions in connection with decisions enacted by the community. Cf. Ruzé 1983:302.

realized. This incomplete teleology is one feature that connects the representation of politics within the poem to the experiences of audiences in the real world: as Johannes Haubold (2000) has stressed, the communities depicted within the Homeric poems present an imperfect image of a potential that is implicitly realizable only by the historical Greek communities for whom the poetry was performed. It is in the world of the audience, in the consensus they achieve over the contours of the Iliadic tradition, that the desire for a cohesive collective will reaches fulfillment.

Another indication of the way in which the poem's politics reflect real-world negotiations over the shape of the tradition can be found in depictions of the Olympian gods as they debate the events unfolding on the plain of Troy. These debates always focus on events crucial to the plot of the *Iliad* and to the larger Troy tradition. In them, we see the gods discussing and negotiating what the Troy tradition should look like. We can take as an example a scene from Book 4, in which Zeus attempts to provoke Hera by proposing that the gods debate whether or not to exempt Troy from its fated destiny (4.5-29):

αὐτίκ' ἐπειράτο Κρονίδης ἐρεθιζέμεν Ἥρην  
κερτομίους ἐπέεσσι παραβλήδην ἀγορεύων·  
· · ·  
ἡμεῖς δὲ φραζώμεθ' ὅπως ἔσται τάδε ἔργα,  
ἢ ῥ' αὐτίς πόλεμόν τε κακὸν καὶ φύλοπιν αἰνὴν  
ὄρσομεν, ἢ φιλότητα μετ' ἀμφοτέροισι βάλωμεν.  
εἰ δ' αὖ πως τόδε πάσι φίλον καὶ ἡδὺ γένοιτο,  
ἦτοι μὲν οἰκέοιτο πόλις Πριάμοιο ἄνακτος,  
αὐτίς δ' Ἀργεῖην Ἑλένην Μενέλαος ἄγοιτο.  
· · ·  
Ἥρην δ' οὐκ ἔχαδε στήθος χόλον, ἀλλὰ προσηύδα·  
αἰνότατε Κρονίδη ποῖον τὸν μῦθον ἔειπες·  
· · ·  
ἔρδ'· ἀτὰρ οὐ τοι πάντες ἐπαινέομεν θεοὶ ἄλλοι.

Straightaway the son of Kronos tried to provoke a quarrel with Hera, speaking maliciously with taunting words:

“  
· · ·  
Let us consider how these matters will be:  
will we again stir foul war and dread slaughter,  
or should we establish friendship between them?  
If, somehow, this should be dear and sweet to all,  
let the city of lord Priam live on,  
and let Menelaos take back Argive Helen.”

Hera's breast could not contain her anger; instead, she said:  
“Most dread son of Kronos, what sort of speech have you uttered?

Do as you like, but we other gods do not all approve (*epaineîn*).”

This scene provides the basis for Egon Flaig’s study (1994) of the “consensus principle”: Zeus makes an unpopular proposal but is compelled by the objections of Hera to come around to a position that is acceptable to all. It is the distinctly metapoetic character of this debate—that is, the way in which it comments on one of the fundamental assumptions of the Iliadic tradition itself, namely, the destruction of Troy—that permits us to see here an image of the formation of agreement on Iliadic norms among historical audiences. The gods are discussing what the *Iliad* should look like—should it, in fact, lead to the destruction of Troy? Notice that, while Hera evokes consensus with her use of the verb *epaineîn*, she does so in order to withhold her consent. Consensus is not explicitly achieved in this scene; that is because the true consensus over the Iliadic tradition belongs to the poem’s audiences.

At least one representative of an ancient audience for Homeric poetry appears to have understood this scene in the way I am suggesting—that is, as a subordination of poetic tradition to collective will—and that person is no less an authority than Plato himself. In Book 2 of the *Republic*, Socrates speaks explicitly about shaping the Homeric poems so that they conform to the requirements of life in his ideal city. As he makes a set of increasingly specific suggestions about the kinds of poetic narrative that are to be included in the educational curriculum for the city’s guardians, he makes use of a variety of expressions to capture the notion of “inclusion” or “exclusion.” But when he comes to speak about specific changes that must be made to the *Iliad* in particular in order to make it serviceable to the state, he adopts a distinctly Iliadic way of speaking. In fact, he alludes directly to the passage we have just been examining (*Rep.* 379e2-4):

τὴν δὲ τῶν ὄρκων καὶ σπονδῶν σύγχυσιν, ἣν ὁ Πάνδαρος συνέχεεν, εἴαν τις φῆ δι’ Ἀθηνᾶς  
τε καὶ Διὸς γεγονέναι, οὐκ ἐπαινεσόμεθα. . . .

But if anyone should say that the violation of the treaty oaths and libations, which Pandaros confounded, came about through the agency of Athena and Zeus, we will not approve (*epaineîn*). . . .

Socrates’ remark points directly to the exchange between Zeus and Hera, the immediate aftermath of which is the dispatching of Athena to ensure that Pandaros violates the Trojans’ truce with the Achaeans, thereby propelling events once more toward their inevitable conclusion, the destruction of Troy. Moreover, Socrates echoes Hera’s very words in insisting that the citizens of Kallipolis “will not approve” any telling of the story that attributes Pandaros’ actions to divine influence. Like Hera, Socrates uses the verb *epaineîn* to indicate more than mere disapproval: he means to say that the citizens of his ideal city will not accept the *Iliad* as it is into their repertoire of civic traditions (just as Hera and her faction will not accept Zeus’ proposed *Iliad*, an *Iliad* that ends in reconciliation rather than destruction). Socrates repeats this characteristically Iliadic locution the very next time that he comes to speak of a critical adjustment to the plot of the *Iliad*.<sup>14</sup> By appropriating the *Iliad*’s political vocabulary in this way,

<sup>14</sup> *Rep.* 383a7-8: πολλὰ ἄρα Ὀμήρου ἐπαινοῦντες, ἀλλὰ τοῦτο οὐκ ἐπαινεσόμεθα, τὴν τοῦ ἐνυπνίου πομπὴν ὑπὸ Διὸς τῷ Ἀγαμέμνονι (“So, though we approve much in Homer, this we will not approve: Zeus’ sending of the dream to Agamemnon”).

Plato makes clear that he is imagining the shaping of a poetic tradition in terms of the Iliadic depiction of consensus.<sup>15</sup> It is a nice twist of irony that he has Socrates expunge from his authorized *Iliad* the very scene that seems to license within the poem the subordination of poetic tradition to community standards.

Plato is thinking, I suggest, not just in terms of a written text, but also in terms of a performance tradition. And his basic assumption—that a community has the ability to shape its performance traditions—corresponds to the way that very many traditions work cross-culturally. Carl von Sydow, one of the founders of modern folkloristics, stressed the powerful influence exercised on traditions by what he called “passive tradition-bearers”—those members of a community who, although they may not be competent or authorized themselves to perform and transmit to others a given element of tradition, are nevertheless knowledgeable about it to a greater or lesser extent, and are therefore able to judge and evaluate the activities of “active tradition bearers,” whose competence extends to performance (1948:12-15). Many traditions have ways of making explicit the control exercised by such passive tradition-bearers over the realization of a tradition in performance. One relevant example is provided by the Kuba people of central Africa. On those ceremonial occasions when the chief offers an authoritative performance of the community's historical traditions, there is a highly formalized, even ritualized, way of expressing collective approval. Jan Vansina reports their ritualized expressions of communal assent as follows (1965:207 n.4):

“We have indicated to those whose work it is to take up the words of the king. And/you/notables/if you have anything to say, then say it,” says the king. At the end he asks: “My mother's clan, is it not thus?” “The mountains are thus, are thus,” is shouted in reply. The king continues: “And you, come along. Confirm what I have said.” The dignitaries *mbeem* and *mbyeeng* rise and declare that he has spoken the truth.

The response formula “the mountains are thus, are thus” and the declarations of tribal officials make explicit the role of the community in controlling and affirming group traditions. The *Iliad*'s language of consensus is only a slightly veiled way of pointing to the same collective power to authorize and shape a tradition, and in Plato's hands it becomes just as explicit as these Kuba formulas.

### **The Politics of Symptotic Poetry and Song**

My argument so far has been that the *Iliad*'s representation of political dynamics reflects the dynamics of the poetic tradition that produced the *Iliad*, and, specifically, that the value the poem sets on consensus corresponds to the experiences of Iliadic tradition-bearers, both active and passive, in the particular performance context of the large Panhellenic festivals. These festivals, however, were by no means the only context for the performance of traditional poetry

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<sup>15</sup> I do not mean to suggest that Plato's ideal city is to be ruled by consensus, but only that Plato is exploiting the *Iliad*'s discourse of consensus in order to stress the subordination of poetic tradition to standards accepted as valid for the community as a whole.



in the archaic period. In fact, much of our extant corpus of archaic Greek poetry—especially when it comes to what is generally classed as “lyric” poetry—seems not to have belonged to the festival repertoire. Instead, many (if not most) surviving lyric poems and songs belonged to what we would call the “symptotic” repertoire, that is, the repertoire of songs customarily performed at the symposium, the male drinking-party that was an institution of central importance in the city-states of the archaic period.<sup>16</sup> The surviving poems and songs clearly derive from oral performance traditions, and in some cases we can actually observe signs of the development of these traditions over time in a way that parallels the development of the Homeric corpus.<sup>17</sup> As a result, we are entitled to ask whether the poetry of the symposium does not similarly reflect the circumstances of its development, and whether it too might not contain an image of the social and political world that reflects in some way the dynamics of the performance culture in which it is rooted.<sup>18</sup>

Among the poets frequently associated with performance at symposia, two stand out for the prominence of political motifs in their poetry: Alcaeus of Mytilene, on the island of Lesbos, and Theognis of Megara, a Doric city near Athens. In speaking of individual poets tied to specific places, I do not mean to suggest that the poems associated with these figures should be understood as expressions of the biographical experience of a particular person at a particular place and time. Alcaeus and Theognis are as much traditional personae as they are historical persons, and the poems attributed to them undoubtedly give voice more to the tradition as a whole than to a particular author’s point of view. The tradition may have originated in a particular community and social environment—late seventh-century Mytilene, say—and so it may be considerably less Panhellenic in orientation than the Homeric tradition. The important point, however, is that these poems reflect the concerns and experiences not so much of an original composer as of the many composers and audiences that transmitted them in performance. Given that these poems originated in a “song culture” in which poems and songs were transmitted independently of written texts, the only way to account for their survival is to

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<sup>16</sup> Kurke (2000:86) asserts that the bulk of what remains of Greek lyric is sympotic poetry. For the purposes of this discussion, I treat “lyric” as a broader category than “melic” (or “sung”) poetry; I include within it the corpus of elegiac poetry, which could be sung or not, depending on the context, but which was certainly not performed to the accompaniment of the lyre (as the term “lyric” ought strictly to imply). On elegy as a sung medium (performed to the accompaniment of the *aulos*, or reed pipe), see Faraone 2008:6-7, espec. n.22. Bowie (1986) argues that, while the symposium is the only securely attested performance context for the poems of the surviving elegiac corpus, there existed in antiquity also a form of long, narrative elegy intended for performance at public festivals such as the Panathenaia. The existence of this “public” form of elegy can be expected to have heightened awareness of the distinctive features of sympotic elegy, especially with regard to the representation of political and social entities.

<sup>17</sup> See, for instance, Nagy 1985 on the Theognidea, the corpus of elegiac poems attributed to Theognis of Megara: the so-called “Meliora” show signs of belonging to a more Panhellenic phase of the tradition than the so-called “Deteriora.” Nagy’s argument implicates other elegists (for instance, Solon) in the development of elegiac poetry in the context of oral performance.

<sup>18</sup> It is important to note that “the poetry of the symposium” is not necessarily restricted to lyric genres. Aloni (2010) argues that Hesiod’s *Works and Days* derives from a sympotic tradition of performance. Significantly, Aloni includes in his evidence numerous parallels with the poetry of Theognis, one of two poets I discuss below. Aloni’s observations on Hesiod’s politics could easily be correlated with my arguments about the sympotic origin of similar motifs in the poetry of Theognis and Alcaeus.

suppose that they resonated enough with a variety of performers and audiences to maintain their position in the performance tradition over time until they could be collected in writing.<sup>19</sup> In the case of Theognis, for example, we find references to historical events spanning many generations; the poetry of Theognis clearly represents a Megarian tradition of considerable chronological depth. When I speak of “Theognis” or “Alcaeus,” then, I speak of the traditions represented by these figures.

Theognis and Alcaeus share more than just a preoccupation with politics. They also share a particular perspective on the politics of their communities: both speak from the point of view of the disenfranchised, alienated aristocrat, and in both cases the speaker’s experience of political estrangement is tied to some betrayal by former friends, that is, a rupture in the social group to which the speaker once belonged.<sup>20</sup> Consider these lines from a poem of Alcaeus, fragments of which were recovered from an ancient papyrus (fr. 130 LP, lines 16-20):

... ὁ τάλαις ἔγω  
ζῶω μοίραυ ἔχων ἀγροϊωτίκων  
ἡμέρων ἀγόρας ἄκοσαι  
καρυ[ζο]μένας ὠγεσιλαΐδα  
  
καὶ β[ό]λλας . . .

... in misery  
I live a rustic life,  
longing to hear the herald’s summons  
to the assembly, O son of Agesilaos,  
  
and to the council . . .

The speaker is in exile, longing to be reintegrated into the political community to which he once belonged, represented here by the “assembly” and civic “council.” Fragments of other poems permit us to reconstruct a quasi-biographical narrative into which this situation can be fitted: as a member of an opposition faction, Alcaeus repeatedly suffered exile, at one point because of the rise to power of one of his own former associates, Pittakos. In a fragment transmitted in Aristotle’s *Politics*, Alcaeus depicts Pittakos’ rise to power as a matter of the collective will of the Mytileneans (fr. 348 LP):

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<sup>19</sup> Kurke (2000:60-62) presents a succinct version of this argument; see also the incisive remarks of Aloni (2010:136-38) with regard to the apparent historical and biographical specificity of Hesiod’s *Works and Days*. The term “song culture” originates with Herington 1985.

<sup>20</sup> The similarity between the ways in which alienation is expressed in the poetry of Theognis and Alcaeus is noted by Nagy (1993). Nagy’s explanation for this connection differs from the one presented here, although our arguments are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

τὸν κακοπατρίδα  
 Φίττακον πόλιος τὰς ἀχόλω καὶ βαρυδαίμονος  
 ἐστάσαντο τύραννον, μέγ' ἐπαίνεντες ἀόλλεες

That base-born

Pittakos they have made tyrant of a city that forgets its anger and suffers the weight  
 of an evil fortune, with a tremendous expression of collective approval (*epainenai* = *epaineîn*).<sup>21</sup>

What is most striking about these lines is that the Homeric word for consensus—the verb *epaineîn*—is here used in what seems to be a very un-Homeric way to describe the unity of a *splintered* community, a community from which the poet and his friends are excluded. This usage is un-Homeric to the extent that Homeric poetry regards the cohesion signaled by the verb as something total and absolute. We might note, however, that Alcaeus' lines resonate more profoundly if we hear in them an echo of Homeric usage: projecting an Iliadic vision of total solidarity onto the Mytileneans serves to emphasize the alienation of the speaker and his social group that much more.

The image of Megara conjured in the poetry of Theognis is, like Alcaeus' Mytilene, an image of a fractured, divided community. The speaker of these poems, however, typically presents himself not as an exile but as a man still enmeshed in the life of his city, attempting to find some semblance of security amid its rival factions and shifting loyalties.<sup>22</sup> Once again, a political vocabulary recognizable from the *Iliad* provides a prominent index of social and political disorientation. Now, however, it is not the language of unity that resonates, but the language of discord and disaffection. I stressed above the way the *Iliad* signals Agamemnon's disruption of social cohesion by highlighting the individual preference that “pleases” him, and him alone. Theognis does something similar, referring again and again to the “pleasure” and “displeasure” of his fellow citizens as a way of pointing to the conflicting interests that divide the community against itself. And it is Theognis himself who does or does not please, as in these lines (367-70):

οὐ δύναμαι γῶναι νόον ἀστῶν ὄντιν' ἔχουσιν·  
 οὔτε γὰρ εὖ ἔρδων ἀνδάνω οὔτε κακῶς·  
 μωμεῦνται δέ με πολλοί, ὁμῶς κακοὶ ἠδὲ καὶ ἐσθλοί·  
 μμείσθαι δ' οὐδεὶς τῶν ἀσόφων δύναται.

I am not able to judge the disposition of the townsmen,  
 for neither treating them well nor doing them harm do I please (*handanein*) them.  
 Many blame me—bad and good men alike—  
 but no one who is without wisdom (*asophos*) is able to imitate (*mimeîsthai*) me.

<sup>21</sup> In the Aeolic dialect of Alcaeus, the present and imperfect tenses of the so-called “contract verbs” of Attic-Ionic (a class to which *epaineîn* belongs) are expressed according to the athematic conjugation of the so-called “-μι verbs.” That is, Alcaeus uses the Aeolic form corresponding to Homeric *epaineîn*.

<sup>22</sup> Theognis' repeated emphasis on the lack of any secure social relationship makes him a kind of “resident exile.” Trusting no one, he is cut off from social networks; not even his beloved Kyrnos is a reliable *philos*.

Of particular interest here is the way that the disapproval of Theognis' fellow citizens is correlated with their inability to "imitate" him. The word for "imitation" here is *mimeîsthai*, the word that ultimately gives us the term *mimesis*. In the context of archaic Greek poetry it has unmistakable performative connotations. Characterizing those who disapprove of him as "without wisdom," another term with poetic and performative connotations, Theognis is saying not just that they won't be able to "imitate" him, but that they won't be able to *perform* him—that is, perform the poetry of the Theognidean tradition.<sup>23</sup> In other words, these verses are constructing the divisions within the society of Megara in terms of groups constituted in and through poetic performance. And the key to being included in the select group of qualified performers of Theognidean poetry is whether or not Theognis "pleases."

An even richer example of the same device can be observed in the poem that has prompted more commentary than any other in the Theognidean corpus, the so-called "Seal of Theognis" (19-26):

Κύρνε, σοφιζομένοι μὲν ἔμοι σφρηγίς ἐπικείσθω  
 τοῖσδ' ἔπεσιν, λήσει δ' οὐποτε κλεπτόμενα,  
 οὐδέ τις ἀλλάξει κάκιον τοῦσθλοῦ παρεόντος·  
 ὦδε δὲ πᾶς τις ἐρεῖ· 'Θεύγνιδός ἐστιν ἔπη  
 τοῦ Μεγαρέως· πάντας δὲ κατ' ἀνθρώπους ὀνομαστός·'  
 ἀστοῖσιν δ' οὐπω πᾶσιν ἀδεῖν δύναμαι·  
 οὐδὲν θαυμαστόν, Πολυπαΐδη· οὐδὲ γὰρ ὁ Ζεὺς  
 οὔθ' ὕων πάντεσσ' ἀνδάνει οὔτ' ἀνέχων.

O Kyrnos, as I practice my art, I will set a seal  
 on these verses—no theft will go unnoticed,  
 nor will anyone be able to substitute a worse one for the good one that is there.

And everyone will say: "these are the verses of Theognis  
 of Megara; his name is recognized among all men."

But I am not yet able to please (*handanein*) all the townsmen.  
 This is hardly surprising, O son of Polypaos; for neither does Zeus  
 please (*handanein*) all, either sending rain or withholding it.

These lines are remarkable for the direct way in which they speak about their own status as poetry. Each line would repay careful study. One could, for instance, explore at length the way the speaker ascribes a rigid fixity to his verses. Since oral traditions are very often characterized by the fluidity of their texts, which are constantly recomposed in performance, one might wonder whether this assertion does not belie my description of Theognidean poetry as the record of an oral performance tradition. And yet the speaker's declaration could be paralleled by the evidence of many verifiably oral traditions in which performers profess to maintain the integrity of their

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<sup>23</sup> For the performative connotations of *asophos* ("without wisdom") and *mimeîsthai* ("imitate") in these lines of Theognis, see Nagy 1996:223 and 2004:44.

songs with word-for-word accuracy,<sup>24</sup> and in any case the claim to rigid fixity is itself belied by the internal evidence of the Theognidean corpus, which exhibits many examples of precisely the kind of variation and “multiformity” that characterizes oral traditions.<sup>25</sup>

This is just one of many lines of inquiry opened up by this brief poem. I would like to focus, however, on the contrast between the universal fame the speaker envisions for himself in the future and the much more limited success he claims to enjoy here and now in the fractured community of Megara. That limited success and the social fragmentation it implies is once again indexed with reference to Theognis’ ability to “please”—an ability that he claims is never universalizable, since not even Zeus himself is able to “please all.”

Gregory Nagy has suggested that we may understand this contrast in terms of a tension between the Panhellenic aspirations of Theognidean poetry and its connection to the local traditions of Megara.<sup>26</sup> Without a doubt, this is a very productive way of approaching these lines: the text envisions a degree of acceptance among all Hellenes that is on a par with the Panhellenic reception of Homeric poetry, and this eventual Panhellenic acceptance is brought into a certain relation with the status of Theognis’ poetry within his own community. But there is more to be said, I think, about the reason why the poet’s here-and-now is characterized not by acceptance but by rejection, and why the speaker seems unable to attain in the present the kind of unified audience he imagines in the future. This is the specific problem I would like to address, in part by correlating Theognis’ professed alienation from his fellow-citizens with the similar situation of Alcaeus.

One might seek to account for the convergences in the poetry of Theognis and Alcaeus in terms of parallel historical circumstances, or even in terms of certain common developmental trends that are thought to have been widespread among the city-states of the late archaic period. I am thinking here of such commonplaces as the rise of tyranny as a political form and the disruption of traditional social hierarchies by the introduction of coined money. I prefer instead to account for these convergences in terms of a shared performance context, namely, the symposium. My reasoning on this point is identical to the reasoning I applied above in connection with the nature of poetic personae in the “song culture” of archaic Greece: in order to survive, these poems must have resonated with a variety of performers and audiences over time, and so they are unlikely to have preserved references to specific historical circumstances unless those references could also be made meaningful to potentially very different audiences at different times and places.<sup>27</sup> Without discounting the meaning and importance of historical references in their original contexts, we must also take into account the trans-contextual

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<sup>24</sup> A very famous example is provided by the Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian singers interviewed by Parry and Lord, many of whom claimed to be able to repeat a song they had heard *riječ za riječ*, “word for word.” On the meaning of this expression in context, see Foley 1990:44-45, 49-50.

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, the “doublets” 39-42~1081-82b and 619-20~1114a-b, explained by Nagy 1983:88-90 in terms of the workings of oral poetry.

<sup>26</sup> See Nagy 1985, espec. §§16-19. For the possible reflection within the Theognidean corpus of relatively more and relatively less Panhellenic phases of the tradition, see Nagy 1983:90-91.

<sup>27</sup> Nagy 2004 considers the sympotic transmission of Alcaeus in the light of this general approach to the dynamics of archaic and classical Greek song culture.

reconfiguration of meaning that, in the final analysis, is the only thing that permits us to explain the survival of the poetry. The constant in the early transmission history of Alcaeus and Theognis is performance at the symposium. The symposium itself, it should be stressed, was not a single, homogeneous phenomenon: there is evidence for its practice at a variety of social and institutional levels.<sup>28</sup> But by attending to certain consistent features of *performance* at the symposium we may isolate factors that can account for the shared political sensibilities of the poetry of Theognis and Alcaeus.

The salient feature of the symposium for my purposes is that it was the occasion for the gathering of a small group of men—typically somewhere between fourteen and thirty—who perceived themselves as being united by a common social bond.<sup>29</sup> This bond could have political overtones: symposia were an important means by which political parties and factions, such as the one to which Alcaeus is represented as belonging, could cement loyalties among members. But even in the absence of such overtones, the symposium provided the scene for the staging of solidarity among a select group of closely interconnected individuals. And this was true regardless of the political aspirations or the social status of the participants. The various rituals of commensality by which the symposiasts demonstrated their solidarity—including collective prayers, toasts, the coordinated consumption of wine, and, of course, the performance of song and poetry—all served to set apart the intimate bonds uniting the members of the sympotic group from the relatively weaker ties that linked them to the community at large. Which is to say that the symposium staged not only solidarity but also separation and difference—difference from the broader civic community, which was in many ways a far less intense form of association.<sup>30</sup>

It is, I suggest, in the contrast between the symposium as an enclosed, secluded, intimate context for performance and the large, public festivals at which Homeric poetry was typically performed that we find an explanation for the preoccupation of sympotic poetry with political alienation. Panhellenic festivals were inclusive events that gave attendees the experience of participation in a broad collectivity that transcended even the boundaries of civic communities. This experience, as I have said, has left its imprint on the Iliadic vision of politics, which is a vision that privileges a maximally inclusive consensus.<sup>31</sup> The poetry of the symposium was no less sensitive to the occasion for its performance; but in this case, the tradition-bearers who shaped the poetry did so in a context that stressed the isolation and exclusivity of a small, select social group differentiated from the community at large. In fact, the performance of sympotic poetry was one of the principal means by which participants reinforced this sense of separateness. The performer who re-created the persona of Alcaeus or Theognis at the

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Hobden 2009.

<sup>29</sup> On the spatial constraints of “sympotic space,” see Bergquist 1990, an investigation of the architectural expression of the need to foster “visual and auditory coherence” (39) among symposiasts—a need that imposes certain limits on the size of the gathering.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Bowie 1986:34: “The symposium is a social institution in which groups within the city strengthened their mutual bonds and expressed their identity as a group—and their difference from other groups—in a context which involved both ritual and relaxation.”

<sup>31</sup> There are limits on this inclusivity; in Elmer 2012 I discuss the temporary establishment and ultimate failure of a “Greek and Trojan super-community” in *Iliad* Books 3 and 4.

symposium was also using that persona to construct a social space that set the symposiasts apart from their civic community. This, I argue, is why these figures seem continually to stress their alienation from the political life of their cities: the poetry associated with them has been shaped by a performance context that exploits a sense of detachment and difference in order to enhance the solidarity of those participating in the event.

Now, perhaps, we can understand better why the universal acceptance of Theognis' poetry is always relegated to the future and never realizable in the present. This poetry imagines for itself a Panhellenic reception on a par with that of the Homeric tradition—and there is good evidence to suggest that it did, in fact, achieve such a status. If it did, however, the vehicle by which it was transmitted throughout the Greek world was not the large, public festival but the symposium, a vehicle that derived a large share of its social power from its ability to mark divisions within the community. Even if the Theognidean tradition could become Panhellenic, the *modality* of Homeric Panhellenism was permanently unavailable to it. And so it can only imagine universal acceptance on a Homeric scale, which it must conceive of as something attainable only in an indefinite and ever-deferred future. In the present, the tradition remains persistently skeptical of a cohesive response among the community as a whole. It focuses instead on the isolated figure of Theognis, who sets his own seal on his poetry as a way of asserting an individualism that is largely independent of collective dynamics.

I have been describing a contrast between two crucial performance contexts that characterize Homeric poetry, on the one hand, and sympotic poetry on the other. These contexts, I have argued, have significant consequences for the way the poetry in each case represents the political life of the community and, in the case of sympotic poetry, the position of the poet-figure with respect to that community. One of the most intriguing aspects of the picture I have sketched is that its outlines can already be discerned in the second of the two Homeric poems, the *Odyssey*. The *Odyssey* takes an extraordinarily self-conscious interest in the performance of poetry, offering portraits of two different singers: Phemios, the poet who performs for the suitors occupying Odysseus' house on Ithaca, and Demodokos, the poet among the Phaeacians, the idealized community of island-dwellers who ultimately bring Odysseus back home. Although the *Odyssey* does not assign different generic repertoires to these two figures—all singers in the poem compose in hexameters, the medium of heroic poetry—it does nevertheless distinguish between the contexts in which they perform.

Phemios sings for the suitors as they drink their wine after their meal.<sup>32</sup> He sings, in essence, at a symposium—albeit one that exceeds by a significant margin the normal dimensions of the classical symposium.<sup>33</sup> To the extent that this symposium is made up of young men whose principal loyalties are to themselves, and who have only loose connections with the civic

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. Telemakhos' words at *Od.* 1.339-40: οἱ δὲ σιωπῆ / οἶνον πνόντων ("let them [the suitors] drink their wine in silence"). Athena/Mentes had arrived while the meal was in progress. When Telemakhos rejoins the group after her departure, the evening is in the drinking phase.

<sup>33</sup> According to *Od.* 16.247-53, there are 108 suitors. This number exceeds the capacity of even the larger dining rooms surveyed by Bergquist (1990), if capacity is calculated by the number of couches that could be accommodated. Bergquist points out, however, that, since the custom of reclining was not adopted until the late seventh century BCE, one cannot calculate capacity by this method for the earliest period. In any case, we should be prepared to allow for a degree of exaggeration in the *Odyssey*.

community of Ithaca, it faithfully reflects the social dynamics of the archaic symposium as I have outlined them. The suitors are depicted as an enclosed, self-contained group that is set apart from, and in many ways opposed to, Ithacan society at large.

The Phaeacian audience for the performances of Demodokos could not be more different. The feast at which Demodokos performs his first song may take place in the palace of the king, but it is explicitly and emphatically an inclusive occasion that brings together representatives of the entire community. The public nature of this gathering is reinforced when it moves from the palace to the *agora*, the “public square” or “marketplace,” where Demodokos performs again on a program that also includes athletic contests and dance. Because of their public setting and the juxtaposition with athletic competition, some scholars have seen in Demodokos’ performances an image of precisely those public festivals that provided the occasion for Homeric poetry.<sup>34</sup> In the contrast between Demodokos and Phemios, then, we can perceive the contrast between the public festival and the symposium as two very different contexts for the performance of poetry.

This contrast is not confined, however, solely to the settings in which the two poets perform. It also shapes the identities the *Odyssey* assigns to each. Demodokos, the singer of the Phaeacians’ public gatherings, bears a name that identifies him explicitly as a “poet of the people.” The name “Demodokos” means, literally, “he who is acceptable to the people.” (The “demo-” of “Demodokos” is the same as in “democracy.”) His very name, then, tells us that Demodokos, as a performer at public festivities, enjoys the kind of universal acceptance that a sympotic poet like Theognis can only dream of. And if Demodokos achieves this kind of acceptance, it is because his songs, too, are “acceptable to the people”—that is, they represent the *collective* tradition of the Phaeacians, for which Demodokos is simply the mouthpiece.

Things are very different with the suitors’ bard on Ithaca, Phemios. His name, too, is significant: it means “the man of utterance,” or perhaps “the rumor-man.”<sup>35</sup> This name does not speak explicitly about Phemios’ connection to his community—but that fact in itself might point indirectly to a measure of detachment that would distinguish this figure from his Phaeacian counterpart. If the name is not conclusive, however, Phemios’ own characterization of his relationship to his audience leaves no room for doubt. When Odysseus has killed the suitors, Phemios pleads for his own life to be spared by stressing his independence and autonomy (22.344-48):

γουνούμαί σ', Ὀδυσσεύ· σὺ δέ μ' αἶδεο καί μ' ἐλέησον.  
 αὐτῷ τοι μετόπισθ' ἄχος ἔσσεται, εἴ κεν ἀοιδὸν  
 πέφνης, ὅς τε θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισιν ἀείδω.  
 αὐτοδίδακτος δ' εἰμί, θεὸς δέ μοι ἐν φρεσὶν οἴμας  
 παντοίας ἐνέφυσεν. . . .

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, Ford 1992:116-17. Power (2010:209-11) links Demodokos to citharodic song, a variety of lyric song (often with strong epic overtones) that was prominently featured at many large festivals, including the Panathenaia in Athens.

<sup>35</sup> See Bakker 2002:142.



I am pleading with you, Odysseus; have respect and pity for me.  
 You yourself will feel grief hereafter if you slay me,  
 a poet who sings for both gods and men.  
 I am self-taught, and a god has instilled songs  
 of all kinds in my mind. . . .

In these lines Phemios claims that he ought not to be held responsible for the suitors' misdeeds. These remarks, and especially Phemios' assertion that he is "self-taught," have prompted long discussions by scholars, many of whom are troubled by the apparent contradiction in claiming simultaneously to be both "self-taught" and divinely inspired.<sup>36</sup> What these scholars miss, however, is the significance of the one source of poetic material that Phemios does *not* specify—namely, the collective knowledge of the community. Phemios' point is that, wherever his songs come from—whether from his own storehouse of themes or from knowledge vouchsafed by the gods—they do not draw on the resources of the community for which he performs. Phemios, in other words, is no Demodokos, no spokesman for the collective traditions of his audience; he should not therefore be in any way identified with that audience.<sup>37</sup>

There is a certain affinity between the autonomy claimed by Phemios and the assertive "seal" set on the Theognidean tradition in the "Seal of Theognis." It is perhaps just as surprising to find a traditional poet announcing that he is "self-taught" as it is to hear him declaring that his verses will remain forever unchanged in the course of their transmission. In both cases we are dealing with the self-assertion of an individualized persona. I would like to suggest that this individualization is directly related to the restricted scope of the audiences to which these personae address themselves. The poetry of the symposium expresses, even performs, a certain difference from the community at large, and so it must at least profess to present an independent point of view, even when it manifestly represents a widespread tradition. Phemios, performing in a sympotic context, cannot be a "poet of the people" like Demodokos, so he must be a "self-taught" singer instead. In constructing a contrast between these two singers, the *Odyssey* presents

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. Pucci 1987:230-31; Bakker 1997:137-38; Finkelberg 1998:54-57; Assaël 2001.

<sup>37</sup> These remarks on the contrast between Demodokos and Phemios draw on my discussion at Elmer 2013:230-31.

us with, so to speak, a Theognis and a Homer, and it encourages us to consider the differences between them in terms of the audiences they address.<sup>38</sup>

It would be possible, I think, to extend this contrast between Phemios and Demodokos, Theognis and Homer to include archaic sympotic lyric and epic writ large. I am thinking here of the contrast between lyric's preference for personalized, apparently autobiographical statements—the so-called “lyric I”—and the impersonal, objective third-person of epic narration. Let me conclude, however, by reflecting in a more general way on the politics of archaic Greek poetry. In spite of their many differences, both epic poetry—the poetry of the festival—and lyric poetry—the poetry of the symposium—are profoundly political. Their politics, as I hope to have demonstrated, are closely tied to the circumstances and dynamics of oral performance. I want to stress, however, that political motifs in these traditions are not merely metaphors or allegories for facts of a different order. On the contrary, the performance of poetry was a fundamentally political event in archaic Greece: regardless of whether it occurred at the symposium or the festival, it articulated social and political relationships, heightening participants' awareness of their connections to others in the audience and in society at large. It is essential to keep this political context in mind as we read the poetry of archaic Greece. It might even be said that all art, of all periods, becomes profoundly political as soon as it is activated and realized in some lived interaction with others.

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<sup>38</sup> Murray, seeing the *Odyssey* as “a celebration of the banquet in both content and structure” (2008:167), argues that the poem was in fact composed for performance at symposia. The composer was, in his view, reacting to the development of the symposium as a new context for performance. I agree with Murray that the *Odyssey* highlights sympotic settings and modes of performance, but I prefer to see in this set of thematic preferences a reflection of the poem's focus on social dislocation and fractured communities. The contrast between festival and sympotic performance offers a way of distinguishing between more and less integrated social environments. Thus Ithaca, where the suitors represent an “anticommunity” (cf. Elmer 2013:226), is characterized by sympotic performance, while Demodokos has a discernibly public role among the Phaeacians, an optimally integrated society. Of course, there are symposium-style performances among the Phaeacians as well—above all those of Odysseus himself—but these may be tied to the fact that Odysseus is the consummate exile. Social dislocation, in other words, is still an issue in the Phaeacian episode, and sympotic performance therefore remains a prominent motif. Similarly, in spite of the *Iliad*'s general interest in social cohesion at the broadest level (the subject of Elmer 2013), when the poem stresses the social dislocation of its protagonist, Achilles, it exploits a version of sympotic performance to underscore the point, presenting Achilles as singing to the lyre for the minimal audience of Patroklos (*Il.* 9.186-91). I discuss this scene at Elmer 2013:77, but without noting its sympotic aspects (which were suggested by Justin Arft during the question and answer portion after my Lord and Parry Lecture): Achilles and Patroklos have evidently finished their meal and are now in the drinking phase of the evening (cf. 9.202-03).

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