ORAL TRADITION

Volume 26, Number 1 March, 2011

Volume 26 March 2011 Number 1

Editor
John Miles Foley

IT Manager
Mark Jarvis

Associate Editor for ISSOT
Darcy Holtgrave

Associate Editor for OT
John Zemke

Managing Editor
Justin Arft

Editorial Assistants
Morgan Grey
Peter Ramey
Sarah Zurhellen

Please direct inquiries to:
Center for Studies in Oral Tradition
University of Missouri
243 Walter Williams Hall
Columbia, MO 65211 USA
+573.882.9720 (ph)
+573.884.0291 (fax)
journal@oraltradition.org

E-ISSN: 1542-4308

Each contribution copyright © 2011 by its author. All rights reserved.

The editors and the publisher assume no responsibility for statements of fact or opinion by the authors.

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) and may be sent via e-mail (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.

Oral Tradition appears twice per year, in March and October. The current issue and all back issues from 1986 onward are available open-access and free-of-charge at http://journal.oraltradition.org.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Mark C. Amodio
Vassar College
Old and Middle English

Patricia Arant
Brown University
Russian

Samuel Armistead
University of California/Davis
Hispanic, Comparative

Richard Bauman
Indiana University
Folklore, Theory

Dan Ben-Amos
University of Pennsylvania
Folklore

Mark Bender
Ohio State University
Chinese

Mary Ellen Brown
Indiana University
Folklore, Balladry

Chogjin
Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
Mongolian, Chinese

Bridget Connelly
University of Cal./Berkeley
Arabic

Robert P. Creed
Univ. of Mass./Amherst
Old English, Comparative

Robert Culley
McGill University
Biblical Studies

Thomas DuBois
University of Wisconsin
Scandinavian

Joseph J. Duggan
Univ. of Cal./Berkeley
French, Spanish, Comparative

Alan Dundes (†)
Univ. of Cal./Berkeley
Folklore

Mark W. Edwards
Stanford University
Ancient Greek

David Elmer
Harvard University
South Slavic, Ancient Greek

Ruth Finnegan
Open University
African, South Pacific

Joxerra Garzía
University of the Basque Country
Basque

Andrew Gerstle
University of London
Japanese Theater, Performance Literature

Terry Gunnell
University of Iceland
Old Norse, Drama

Thomas Hale
Penn. State University
African

Lee Haring
Brooklyn College, CUNY
African

Joseph Harris
Harvard University
Old Norse

Lauri Harvilahti
Finnish Literature Society
Russian, Finnish, Altai

Lauri Honko (†)
Turku University
Comparative Epic

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

Martin Jaffee
Hebrew Bible
Univ. of Washington

Minna Skafte Jensen
Odense University
Ancient Greek, Latin

Werner Kelber
Rice University
Biblical Studies

Françoise Létoublon
Université Stendahl
Ancient Greek

Victor Mair
University of Pennsylvania
Chinese

Peter Middleton
University of Southampton
Contemporary Poetry
Performance

Nada Milošević-Djordjević
University of Belgrade
South Slavic

Stephen Mitchell
Harvard University
Scandinavian

Gregory Nagy
Harvard University
Ancient Greek, Sanskrit,
Comparative

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

Susan Niditch
Amherst College
Hebrew Bible

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

Shelly Fenno Quinn
Ohio State University
Japanese

Burton Raffel
Univ. of Southwestern
Louisiana
Translation

Karl Reichl
Universität Bonn
Turkic, Old and Middle English

John Roberts
Ohio State University
African-American

Joel Sherzer
University of Texas/Austin
Native American, Anthropology

Joseph Sobol
East Tennessee State University
Storytelling

Dennis Tedlock
SUNY/Buffalo
Native American

J. Barre Toelken
Utah State University
Folklore, Native American

Ronald J. Turner
Univ. of Missouri/Columbia
Storytelling

Andrew Wiget
University of New Mexico
Native American

Paulu Zedda
Università di Cagliari
Sardinian

This page is intentionally left blank.

Contents

Editor's Column 1

Moradewun Adejunmobi
Revenge of the Spoken Word?:
Writing, Performance, and New Media in Urban West Africa.....3

Eric Shepherd
Singing Dead Tales to Life:
Rhetorical Strategies in Shandong Fast Tales 27

Ildikó Bellér-Hann and Raushan Sharshenova
Crossing Boundaries, Breaking Rules:Continuity
and Social Transformation in Trickster Tales from Central Asia.....71

Christopher Livanos
A Case Study in Byzantine Dragon-Slaying: Digenes and the Serpent 125

Robert Mann
The Forgotten Text of Nikolai Golovin: New Light on the Igor Tale 145

Aaron Phillip Tate
Collecting South Slavic Oral Epic in 1864:
Luka Marjanović's Earliest Account 159

Minako Sakata
Possibilities of Reality, Variety of Versions:
The Historical Consciousness of Ainu Folktales.....175

Paul Koerbin
Pir Sultan Abdal: Encounters with Persona in Alevi Lyric Song.....191

Margo Kitts
Ritual Scenes in the Iliad:
Rote, Hallowed, or Encrypted as Ancient Art? 221

About the Authors.....247

This page is intentionally left blank.

Editor's Column

With issue 26, i, *Oral Tradition* delves into a wide variety of traditions and media in multiple cultural contexts, seeking as always to chart new territory and to expand the horizons of our joint, interdisciplinary field. We see this emphasis on diversity as perhaps the most important role our journal can serve: to report on the international panoply of both longstanding and emerging forms of traditional verbal art.

Moradewun Adejunmobi begins the discussion with her examination of writing, performance, and new media in urban West Africa, explaining that verbal artists often portray themselves as writers despite their primary engagement with performance and digital technologies. Next in succession is Eric Shepherd's richly illustrated overview of Shandong "fast tales," a Chinese performance tradition over four centuries old; be sure to spend some time with the video and photographic content of the attached eCompanion to this article. From Africa and China, we move to central Asia, with Ildikó Bellér-Hann and Raushan Sharshenova describing how tales recounting the adventures of the folk hero Kuyruchuk depend on the different political worlds–tsarist Russia, the Soviet Union, and post-Soviet society–in which the continuously recontextualized tales have been told and received.

The Byzantine epic *Digenes Akrites* existed on the cusp of oral tradition and manuscript culture, and Christopher Livanos examines the titular hero's encounter with the dragon and the Amazon Maximou from a Freudian perspective, as well as in a broad Indo-European frame of reference. Robert Mann draws together new evidence from various redactions of related texts to argue that the Russian *Tale of Igor* was an oral epic within an active tradition that continued into the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, highlighting the performer's dependence on (and fluency in) traditional poetic phraseology. Also within the Slavic realm, Aaron Tate provides a translation of the famous nineteenth-century collector Luka Marjanović's first report on his massive fieldwork expeditions in Croatia and Bosnia, along with commentary that places Marjanović's ideas in historical perspective.

Minako Sakata then offers a rare account of the structure and dynamics of folktales told by the Ainu, an indigenous people living in present-day Japan and Russia; she concentrates on shared motifs and the interactivity of individual tales within the tradition. Paul Koerbin's contribution treats the Turkish Alevi lyric songs associated with Pir Sultan Abdal, focusing on this figure's persona and the large body of lyrics, commentary, and texts that have accumulated since the early twentieth century. The final article in this issue, by Margo Kitts, addresses oath-sacrifice and commensal sacrifice scenes in the ancient Greek epics of Homer, maintaining that these scenes draw their structure from ritual paradigms as well as from Homeric poetics.

As the Center for Studies in Oral Tradition and the journal emerge from their twenty-fifth anniversary year, it seems timely to emphasize the recent launch of the International Society for Studies in Oral Tradition (http://issot.org). The aim of the ISSOT, which provides a sponsored virtual platform for exchange among scholars, performers, and students around the world, is to leverage electronic media in order to promote and facilitate communication that otherwise could not happen. We have identified four ways in which the society can benefit the field.

Member-to-member. In the spirit of person-to-person communication, members of the society, which is open-access and free-of-charge, are able to search our data-base to locate

colleagues interested in various areas, traditions, and topics, and to exchange ideas and media as they wish. (The initial connection works through an approval mechanism, so that members who are contacted have the opportunity to approve or not to approve the connection by clicking on a reply e-mail through the ISSOT site. After both members agree to the exchange, communication then proceeds directly and independently.)

Webinars. Second, we plan a series of webinars, or seminars broadcast live on the Internet, which will be captured as videos and posted on the ISSOT site for asynchronous viewing. Our first webinar, "Oral Epics in China" (http://issot.org/events) delivered by Dr. Chao Gejin, Director of the Institute of Ethnic Literature at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, was attended live in 13 countries; within a week of its posting as a video, scholars from 39 countries had accessed the presentation.

Interviews. Third, in an effort to familiarize colleagues with research, fieldwork, and performance in various areas within our general field, we plan a series of ISSOT interviews with scholars and performers from different parts of the world. Consisting of brief articles and video excerpts, these features will allow members to explain their activities in their own words, as well as to include links to pertinent texts and multimedia illustrations.

eResearch groups. In future months, a fourth ISSOT initiative will bring together members from widely separated locales to collaborate on topics than span multiple oral traditions. These eResearch groups, of perhaps six to ten people, will use the ISSOT facility to share their ideas, proposals, scholarship, and media over a four- to six-month period. When the group feels that its deliberations have reached maturity, it will have the option of creating a jointly authored position paper on their conclusions or opening their eDiscussion to the membership or the Internet community at large.

We are excited about the ISSOT initiatives and their potential for developing our field, and we encourage you to register for the society at (http://issot.org/signup) and to participate in its activities. Communication about these four programs should be addressed to Darcy Holtgrave (info@issot.org), Associate Editor for the ISSOT at the Center for Studies in Oral Tradition. Meanwhile, we continue to welcome your submissions to *Oral Tradition* and look forward to learning from your contributions.

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

Oral Tradition, 26/1 (2011): 3-26

Revenge of the Spoken Word?: Writing, Performance, and New Media in Urban West Africa

Moradewun Adejunmobi

Why would any verbal artists bother to strongly identify themselves as writers when their own works circulate exclusively in a performative mode? Why would they bother to identify with writing in settings where literacy levels are low, traditional orality remains widespread, and electronically mediated forms of orality are fairly accessible? In short, what kind of significance could writing have for composers of creative texts as electronically mediated performance becomes more widespread? These are the questions that I wish to address in this article.

As is well known, Walter Ong speculated on a possible re-oralization of communication, or what he termed a "secondary orality" among literates sustained by electronic technologies. Since then, the point has been argued even more forcefully by George Landow (1997) and others with reference to computer-mediated communication. Observers like Jan Fernback (2003), for example, have highlighted particular features of digitally mediated communication such as instantaneity and interactivity that relate to orality.[1] Scholars of African cinema like Frank Ukadike (1993), as well as Keyan Tomaselli and Maureen Eke (1993), have long foregrounded the ways in which African film directors appropriated strategies associated with forms of orality. For somewhat different purposes, Sheila Nayar in her studies of Indian cinema (2004) likewise emphasizes the debt that textual formatting and organization in electronic media such as film owe to traditional forms of orality.

Here I will not be further pursuing this line of inquiry, which consists of uncovering how orality intervenes in electronically and often digitally mediated textuality. Rather, my intentions are to investigate what kind of significance writing might have for verbal artists whose creative texts reach the wider public only through digitally mediated or live performance. In parts of the world where the dissemination of printed texts has been limited historically for a variety of reasons, the increasing access to digital media has made performance of texts both more cost-effective and "modern." As a consequence, we are seeing many more literate verbal artists in these contexts develop reputations as performers rather than as writers, hence my title: the revenge of the spoken word. However, this does not necessarily mean that many such verbal artists disregard the contribution of writing to textual production or cease to identify themselves as writers. To the contrary, a number of these figures foreground writing in their self-definition as

[1] The Pathways Project at the Center for Studies in Oral Tradition offers further discussion of the possible connections between digitally mediated communication and orality. http://pathwaysproject.org

verbal artists. My goal in this essay is to consider several of the reasons that some verbal artists in this situation prefer to highlight their activity as writers rather than their role as performers despite the fact that they create textual genres that circulate almost entirely through performance with almost no opportunities for print publication.

The specific instances of live and digitally mediated verbal arts performance to be considered here are drawn from the West African country of Mali. Over time, Mali's oral traditions, especially those of the Mande cultural area,[2] have attracted considerable scholarly attention.[3] Indeed, a certain type of traditional verbal artist associated with Malian culture, known in the Mande languages as *jeli* or *jali* and often described as the *griot* in European-language texts, has become the iconic figure of African orality, both within scholarly circles and outside of them. My intention, however, is not to revisit the well researched oral traditions of Mali but instead to explore perceptions about newer verbal performance practices that are either digitally mediated or influenced by increased access to digital media. Several of these instances amount to a new type of orality, and often, in fact, to writing for performance.

Scholars like Eric Charry (2000), Mamadou Diawara (1997, 1998), Lucy Durán (1995), Paulla Ebron (2002), Thomas Hale (1998), Robert Newton (1999), and Dorothea Schulz (2001b) among others, have examined the impact of electronic media on traditional Mande orality and on the Malian public sphere as a whole. My focus on what such media might mean for creative writing and writers, at a time when electronically mediated performance has become even more accessible, sets the present study apart from theirs.[4] Furthermore, among the different types of electronic media available in Mali, I am especially interested in the impact of digital media because they more frequently enable interested verbal artists to circumvent problems commonly associated with print publication, thus prompting a revising of the relationship between writing, textuality, and performance.

Like many countries in the Sahel region of West Africa, Mali has a low level of contemporary literacy,[5] despite a celebrated history of medieval literacy. Precisely because of these low literacy levels, Mali currently attracts an increasing number of events organized around the practice of reading and intended to encourage both reading and writing. These include the

---

[2] The Mande peoples of West Africa are associated with the old Mali empire, whose reach once extended over much of what is now contemporary Mali. Today Mande peoples are to be found not only in Mali but in several other West African countries such as Guinea (Conakry), the Gambia, Senegal, and Côte d'Ivoire. Many communities in contemporary Mali, and especially those that identify as Bamana, Soninke, Khassonke, and Wasulu, form part of the larger Mande group. Mamadou Diawara (1997:40) has also suggested that non-Mande communities like the Pulaar, "sharing a similar conception of power, of society" should be considered part of the Mande cultural area.

[3] See, for example, among many others: Ralph Austen (1999), Stephen Belcher (1999), Sory Camara (1976), David Conrad and Barbara Frank (1995), Ruth Finnegan (1970), Thomas Hale (1998), John William Johnson et al. (1997), and Isidore Okpewho (1992). This list is far from exhaustive.

[4] I am also not focusing on well known transcriptions of performed texts or epics, such as the Soundiata epic, in this essay. Some of the best known transcriptions such as D. T. Niane's *Soundjata ou l'épopée mandingue* (1960) were obviously produced in an earlier time, before cell phones and personal computers became available, even in poorer African countries.

[5] The UNESCO Institute for Statistics reports literacy rates in 2006 for Mali as follows: 18.2% for females and 34.9% for males aged 15 years and older, and 30.8% for females and 47.4% for males aged between 15 and 24 years old.

Etonnant Voyageur international book festival held biennially and other events such as *Lire en fête* and *Le printemps des poètes*.[6] In addition, many NGOs are active in literacy work in Mali. However, even as these activities begin to yield slowly improving literacy rates, new forms of orality continue to emerge, often initiated by literate Malians with access to digital communication media. I have deliberately chosen to focus on literate verbal artists working with new oralities for this exploration of the changing functions of writing in an age of new media. Unlike published authors on the one hand, and non-literate verbal arts performers on the other, they have a more contingent relationship with both older and new media, as well as with writing and performance. In what follows, I examine what writing means to these literate verbal artists, given the new prospects and continuing constraints for textual dissemination against a background of new media, by considering three types of verbal artists associated with relatively new forms of orality in Mali's capital city, Bamako.

A First Instance of New Orality and Writing

Fig 1: Awa Dembélé Macalou reading a story to children at the Marché de Missra in Bamako. Photo by the author.

Awa Dembélé Macalou[7] is a storyteller. She received her undergraduate education in Mali and then went to the former Soviet Union for a degree in linguistics. She now works at the Centre Amadou Hampaté Bâ in Bamako as the children's librarian.[8] She also recounts folktales at schools, on television, for special festivals, and at a local marketplace in Bamako, the Marché de Missira, which is also connected to Centre Amadou Hampaté Bâ.[9] Two or three times a week on afternoons when children are not in school, Macalou organizes a storytelling session for the children of market women that she describes as "la lecture sur la natte" or

[6] *L'Etonnant Voyageur* is a traveling international book festival from France that has been coming to Mali every two years since 2002, thanks to support from the Malian author Moussa Konaté, who lives in France. The other events are organized by the Bibliothèque Nationale (National Library) in Mali in conjunction with local NGOs.

[7] Where the artist's stage name differs from his or her usual name, I have used the stage name for all the verbal artists cited here. In some cases, such as Dembélé's, the verbal artist employs her usual name as a stage name.

[8] The Centre Amadou Hampaté Bâ was founded by the former Malian minister for culture and tourism, Aminata Traoré, as a base for community organizing in a Bamako neighborhood. It functions as a center for meetings and workshops. It also includes a library for children, a craft center, and a hotel Le Djenné entirely furnished with locally made materials. It is a central part of Traoré's vision for imagining and creating a self-sustaining and locally inspired Africa.

[9] Information here excerpted from interviews with Macalou in Bamako.

"reading on the mat." The children gather without much prompting when she arrives because they apparently know what to expect. Once they have calmed down in a meeting space in the market, she begins to read out an African folktale in French from a book, with copious comments in the most widely spoken local language, Bamankan,[10] all while dramatizing the story. Typically the book is held up for the children to see as she turns from one page to the next while some children on the fringes walk in and out. She then asks a series of comprehension questions to make sure they have understood the story, and selects a volunteer to narrate the story in Bamankan. These reading/storytelling sessions are meant to encourage children to visit the children's library at the Centre Amadou Hampaté Bâ, where they can get assistance with their reading skills.

More frequently, Macalou recounts local folktales in Bamankan without using a book. These stories about orphans, wicked stepmothers, princes, and talking animals bear much in common with the kinds of West African folktales translated into French by such notable writers as Birago Diop (1961) and Bernard Dadié (1955). As she narrates these traditional folktales, Macalou modifies and extends the story to fit contemporary circumstances. According to her, local stories can no longer be told in the traditional way because children today would not find many of the elements in the story credible. Since childhood, she had apparently been concerned about how to keep alive the practice of storytelling once the older generation of storytellers like her grandmother passed away. She once recorded a couple of stories on cassette for her nephews living in France after they had been introduced to traditional storytelling during a visit to relatives in Bamako.[11] For Macalou, cassette recoding proved a difficult long-term strategy for preserving traditional folktales, and she eventually turned to writing to preserve these tales. As of 2009 Macalou had "transcribed" and translated four stories into French: *Nayé, la fille qui ne meurt jamais* ("Nayé, the girl who never dies"), *Fanani, l'enfant prodigue* ("Fanani, the prodigal child"), *Le singe devenu tisserand* ("The monkey weaver"), and *La Hyène en quête d'épouse* ("The hyena in search of a bride").[12] Thus far, the stories remain in typed manuscript form because she has not been able to find a publisher for them. Her plans are to transcribe, translate, and eventually publish a total of twenty-four such Bamankan stories in French.

Macalou singing a song from the story of Nayé, the girl who would not die.

Awa Dembélé Macalou is a performer who aspires to become a published writer. In the meantime, she practices her verbal skills by narrating children's stories in a performative mode. For Macalou, performance serves as a provisional mode of publication, or making public, while awaiting what she sees as the definitive publication, that is print publication.

[10] Bamanankan is the language spoken by the Bamana people, and functions as a language of wider communication in the southern part of Mali.

[11] This appears to be a popular strategy for making Malian folktales available to Malians abroad. Cécile Leguy (2007:139) reports encountering cassette recordings of Malian folktales in another local language, Bwa, among Malians in France.

[12] Listen to Macalou singing a song from the story of Nayé, the girl who would not die. This is one of the stories that Macalou has transcribed and is seeking to publish. http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/26i/adejunmobi#myGallery-picture(2)

A Second Instance of New Orality and Writing

In addition to the "neo-traditional" music of such internationally acclaimed musicians as Salif Keita, Ali Farka Touré, and Oumou Sangaré, Mali also boasts a lively hip hop scene with recognized stars, up-and-coming rappers, an awards ceremony, and a new magazine dedicated to promoting Malian hip hop.[13] For the most part, Malian hip hop performers are known only locally in Mali, though a few have been able to organize tours taking them to Europe (especially France) or other francophone West African countries. N'BEE, King, and Tal-B are rappers and part of this growing Malian hip hop community based in Bamako.[14] N'BEE has been part of a two-man crew called Diata Sya (or descendants of Sundiata) for several years. In addition to rap, he also performs ragga and reggae. N'BEE completed high school and currently works at a local printing press as well as performs as a rapper. King and Tal-B work independently as rappers. At the same time, Tal-B is enrolled at the University of the Humanities, although he apparently plans to drop out to pursue his musical career. N'BEE has performed on television shows and has also recorded music videos for television. N'BEE, King, and Tal-B may all be considered practitioners of digital orality. N'BEE's rap lyrics circulate mainly through CDs, while King and Tal-B more frequently rely on cell phones to disseminate their rap, as will be elaborated upon later.

For all three rappers, the two critical elements required for producing rap are writing on the one hand and software on the other, a combination that provides a background beat and enables public access to the performed lyrics. Speaking about the role writing plays in rap composition, N'BEE declared: "You can't become a rapper if you don't know how to write." He further stated that Malian rappers rarely engage in improvisation. They usually perform from written lyrics recorded in a studio or performed live. King explained that his composition process involved waking up at night, trying out different lines and words, and then writing them down immediately. N'BEE and Tal-B described a similar process, starting with written verbal composition, seeking musical instrumentation for their lyrics only after the words had been written down, and moving on to recorded performance as a final step. N'BEE marveled at how many notebooks he had filled with rap lyrics over fifteen years of being a rapper. "You know," he remarked, "friends have told me that if I tried publishing all the notebooks I've filled, it would make a big book." But he apparently had no plans to publish, and was interested only in performance. The fact that N'BEE writes his Bamanakan-language rap "phonetically," and not according to the officially accepted orthography, makes possible publication of his written lyrics even less likely. Both King and Tal-B similarly confirmed that their written lyrics would probably not be fully legible to other literate individuals.

---

[13] The Mali Hip Hop Awards event has been held in 2007 and 2009. A magazine titled *Rue 14, 1er Magazine Hip Hop au Mali* was launched in January 2009.

[14] The information here and following has been excerpted from interviews with N'BEE, King, and Tal-B in Bamako in 2009.

A Third Instance of New Orality and Writing

BoubacHaman is the president of the Association des slammeurs maliens or ASLAMA.[15] BoubacHaman, who holds a law degree, says slam poetry was introduced formally to Mali in 2006 during the *Etonnant Voyageur* book festival. Though the association has only a handful of members, they are deeply committed to spreading the word about slam by holding workshops in Malian high schools. Like other Malians who identify with and perform slam poetry, BoubacHaman began his performance career in live and recorded rap. What, I asked him, is the difference between rap and slam? Why did he decide to dedicate himself to the performance of slam poetry rather than rap? To perform rap, says BoubacHaman, you need special equipment to produce musical accompaniment for the rapper's lyrics. He also added that rap often involved wordplay as an end in itself rather than trying to communicate a clear message. Compared to rap, which has a somewhat shady reputation among older Malians despite its growing popularity with educated and urban youth, slam elicited a more positive response from local audiences. The rappers King and Tal-B echoed BoubacHaman's comments, and stated that composing slam was more demanding than composing rap.

Like Azizsiten'K, another member of ASLAMA and a university undergraduate in 2009,[16] BoubacHaman considers writing to be a critical part of the process for producing slam poetry, although he would often memorize his written texts before a performance. In his opinion, the most important distinguishing characteristics of slam are its reliance on writing, its function as a vehicle for transmitting clearly understood messages, and the relative freedom of expression afforded to slam poets. While ASLAMA had embarked on the process of recording an album of Malian slam in 2009, most of their performances consisted of live performances in bars and at special festivals or events organized by various agencies in Mali such as the Centre Culturel Français. The Malian slam poets I met were definitely seeking additional opportunities to hold slam events, but were not seriously investigating the possibility of publication. The lack of interest in print publication on the one hand, and the decision not to rely as much on a digital or electronically mediated performance on the other hand, differentiates Mali's slam poets from storytellers like Macalou and rappers like N'BEE. It further complicates the picture in trying to understand what writing means for these self-identified "writers" who operate mainly as performers.

Digitally Mediated Performance and Writing

The three types of composer-performers presented thus far share some qualities in common relating to their creative work. All three types of composer-performers tended to define their activity as verbal artists mainly in relation to the written composition of texts. First, they did not present themselves first and foremost as performers but as composers of texts. Second, their

[15] The information here and following has been excerpted from interviews with BoubacHaman and Azizsiten'k in Bamako in 2009.

[16] Azizsiten'k has now graduated from the University of Humanities in Bamako with a degree in English.

creative texts circulated only through performance, whether such performance was live or digitally mediated. Digitally mediated performance was especially popular with younger male verbal artists. Third, all three types of composer-performer strongly objected to any comparison of their performance with that of the *griots/jeli*, the traditional bards of Mande society. Fourth, they all emphasized the centrality of writing to composition and textual production. Before proceeding with a discussion of these findings, it is important to acknowledge that these particular verbal artists are not necessarily representative of all literate verbal artists in Mali or elsewhere in Africa for that matter. I do make the claim, though, that their choices reflect the kinds of options that might be pursued by literate verbal artists who happen to privilege the recognition of authorship over involvement with performance in a low literacy environment today.

The rap artists undoubtedly represent the best examples of a digitally mediated orality among the verbal artists considered here. In their line of work, while digital technology matters for the process of composition, it is also essential for effective dissemination of rap lyrics and for acquiring visibility as a rap artist. At the same time, one of the ultimate signs of success for a rapper consists in being invited to perform live at major events backed by a powerful local or international sponsor. Indeed, the less famous a rapper is, the more he or she depends on digital media for generating initial interest in his or her compositions.

It is worth noting then, that the rappers mentioned thus far would not be considered the most successful rappers in Malian hip hop circles. A list of the best known Malian rappers of the moment would probably include figures like Amkoullel, Tata Pound, Yeli Fuzzo and Lassy King Massassy among others. Despite the challenge of piracy, each one of these locally famous rappers has produced albums and CDs that are available on the local market and at accredited retail outlets like Mali K7 in Bamako.[17] More importantly, they have many opportunities to perform live in Mali itself, and there is a kind of synergy between their live performances and the circulation of their recorded music. By contrast, although N'BEE is known as one of the pioneers of Malian rap and is respected within the local hip hop community, he does not always attract the kind of attention that some younger figures do within Mali itself. Nonetheless, he continues to receive occasional invitations to perform at World Music events in Europe.[18] Unlike King and Tal-B who were yet to record any albums, N'BEE does have two albums out on CD and has collaborated on albums by celebrated Malian rappers.

King and Tal-B say they are occasionally invited to perform on television, which helps to enhance their reputation. But it is unlikely that they will be invited to perform live at major events unless they achieve some degree of fame. At the same time they cannot achieve the desired level of name recognition without first circulating their music, usually through digitally mediated modes of dissemination. King and Tal-B say they more commonly record their rap lyrics using available software, lyrics that they download onto cell phones. They then rely on the

---

[17] Mali K7 (cassette or *ka sept* in French) is a Malian recording and retail center dedicated to combating the pirating of albums by local musicians in Mali. Cassettes and CDs by Malian and other African performers are sold at the store.

[18] The most recent such invitation would be the World Music Expo "Womex" held in Copenhagen, Denmark in October of 2010.

first set of listeners to send the lyrics to other cell phone users, hopefully generating exposure and a reputation for them. N'BEE recounts that before cell phones became ubiquitous, the recording of music videos for broadcast on television stations was the preferred path for stirring up public interest in one's work. For these struggling rap artists, digital orality is the pathway that will hopefully lead to fame and success, manifested in opportunities for live performance at major events.

I attribute the fact that these particular rap artists also present themselves as writers to their current position within the local artistic environment. Given the minimal opportunities that Tal-B and King have for live performance, and the limited scale on which their music circulates, one understands why they don't play up their "performance credentials." N'BEE's receding reputation on the home front may also account for his inclination to emphasize the significance of writing for the aging rapper. While hoping to one day generate a reputation based mainly on performance, these rappers, who were not well known to the public, legitimated their claim to be verbal artists by invoking their activity as writers of rap lyrics. Yet they engage in a different kind of writing for performance than one might associate with a playwright, for example. For one thing, the ultimate goal of their writing is self-performance—that is, a verbal arts performance in which the artist performs himself or herself. The equivalent would be for a playwright to include herself as a character in her own play and to act out that role on stage.

One should not rule out the possibility that these verbal artists might later opt to foreground their activity as performers rather than as writers, were they to record a successful album and to have opportunities for large-scale live performances in Mali and beyond. In the meantime, they present themselves as writers, and therefore as rappers. This may be a fairly typical move on the part of verbal artists who disseminate self-authored texts through digitally mediated orality but have not yet achieved a desired level of recognition among peers that would result in invitations to perform at major events. In these contexts, then, the possibility of gaining commercial reward for a verbal arts performance apparently makes for a more contingent attachment to writing on the part of the verbal arts performer.

Revenge of the Spoken Word

Clearly, Macalou the storyteller does not practice digital orality, since most of her performances are not transmitted electronically or recorded.[19] Indeed, her storytelling activities represent an interesting take on the widely reprinted dictum credited to one of Mali's best known writers, Hampaté Bâ, who famously declared "chaque vieillard qui meurt en Afrique est une bibliothèque qui brûle" ("each African elder who dies is like a library that burns down") (Laya 1972:190). The statement expresses Bâ's high regard for elders as custodians of knowledge transmitted orally, but has also been interpreted as a sign of his commitment to writing and transcription (Adejunmobi 2000). Like Bâ, Macalou seeks to preserve the wisdom of the elders for the benefit of a younger generation. Interestingly, unlike Bâ who achieved his reputation as a

[19] A few of her performances have been recorded for radio and television.

writer rather than a performer, she achieves this goal initially through performance that she then associates with writing.

And yet I would describe Macalou too as a beneficiary of a changing media scene in Mali, one in which orality can be viewed as a modern practice, thanks largely to the reliance on electronic media for circulating new types of performance. Indeed, it was Macalou's commitment to updating both the content and means of transmission of traditional children's stories that led her initially to cassette recording and later transcription. Her commentary on her own work indicates that she sees herself as one of the modern verbal artists operating in Mali rather than as a traditional verbal artist.

But given her clear investment in the practice of creative writing, one may wonder why Macalou or any of the other verbal artists discussed here ever turned to the spoken word and performance as an outlet for their writing. The answer lies in the fact that the process of publication presents considerable difficulties for the would-be author in contemporary Mali. Although a number of publishing houses exist locally, the Malians who are most frequently acknowledged locally as creative writers all got their start by being published outside Mali, usually in France. This included writers like Yambo Oulouguem, Hampâté Ba, Ousmane Diarra, Moussa Konaté, and Mandé Alpha Diarra among others. Others like one of Mali's best known living creative writers, Seydou Badian (2008), and other authors like Ismaïla Samba Traoré (2005, 2009) have recently opted for joint publication of their works by both Africa-based and French publishers (author interviews with Ismaïla Samba Traoré and Seydou Badian). It is true that a small number of Malians outside this small circle of recognized writers has managed to get their creative texts published locally, and that the local writer/publisher is an increasingly widespread phenomenon.[20] But with the possible exception of Ismaïla Samba Traoré and Moussa Konaté among the "younger" generation of writers, many of these writer/publishers are known as writers only to a small and restricted circle, even within the country. Indeed, there seems to be little evidence that many locally published authors are ever identified as creative writers locally or that their works are admitted into the canon of Malian literary works either within the school system or in local discussions of Malian literature.

As is to be expected, each of the locally established publishing houses has its own publishing priorities. For example, Le Figuier specializes in children's stories, often written by the founder, Moussa Konaté, who is a creative writer in his own right (personal communication with Mariam Oumar Touré, Director of Publishing at Le Figuier). The Jamana publishing house publishes mainly textbooks as well as children's stories in French and local languages like Bamanankan (personal communication with Mahmoud Sidibé, Director of Marketing at Jamana). It's not clear, though, that Macalou's "transcriptions" and translations of Bamanankan children's stories would fit into the areas of specialization adopted by any of the local publishers. Children's stories tend to be short, while at least one of Macalou's typeset narratives runs well

[20] Moussa Konaté, Ismaïla Samba Traoré, and Amadou Seydou Traoré represent the better known writer/publishers in Mali. Konaté owns Le Figuier, Ismaïla Samba Traoré owns La Sahélienne, while Seydou Traoré owns La Ruche à Livres (author interviews with Amadou Seydou Traoré and Ismaïla Samba Traoré).

over one hundred pages.[21] A second story is almost 50 typeset pages long.[22] Nor does Macalou's choice of genre (children's stories) correspond to the type of oral text favored by local publishers like Jamana. The preference at Jamana is for transcriptions and translations of oral epics. At the same time, the children's stories they do publish conform to standard conventions for published children's stories in their relative brevity and particular style. Finally, none of the local publishing houses appeared to have any interest in contemporary poetry other than those poetry selections written by African poets from the 1950s and 60s, and approved for inclusion in state-sanctioned textbooks.

Unlike the other verbal artists mentioned here, Macalou is strongly committed to becoming a published writer. Unable thus far to overcome local barriers to publication, she has turned to a performance type that she configures as an introduction to literacy for children. In this instance, the spoken word owes its revenge not to a deep interest in the society's traditions of orality but to the manifold obstacles to print publication. We can connect Macalou's continuing quest for print publication to the fact that she does not appear to have as much mastery and awareness of the newer digital media as the younger rappers and slam poets. By contrast, many of the younger rappers and slam poets, including some of those mentioned in this article such as N'BEE, BoubacHaman, and Azizsiten'k have music videos of their work posted on YouTube.[23] One of N'BEE's albums is available for purchase on iTunes and on Amazon.com, as is the case for several other local hip hop artists in Mali. Not surprisingly, these younger rappers and slam poets also tend to be avid users of social media like facebook and myspace.

For this younger generation of (usually male) educated verbal artists, print publication presents few advantages, given the relative ease of access to and autonomy offered by some forms of locally available digital media. And while many more Malians have access to music on cassettes than on CDs or in other digitized forms, literate verbal artists find digital media increasingly attractive because it allows them to circumvent obstacles to publication and to work independently. Digital media also enable them to bypass the diverse conventions that might hinder regular access to broadcast on radio, television, or the types of media that tend to be under the control of more powerful local interests. When it comes to the production of creative texts in these settings, the freedom to engage in certain forms of innovation is increasingly intertwined with the adoption of new and digital media.

---

[21] As Robin Lakoff (1982) has pointed out, there is a difference between actual transcriptions of spoken language and artistic representations of speech in writing. Although I haven't read Macalou's texts, I suspect that her typeset narratives are much closer to real transcriptions than they are to the conventions for representing traditional orality in African literature. This might explain the relative length of her children's stories and why she has had some difficulty persuading local publishers to publish these narratives.

[22] A local printer and friend of Macalou helped to typeset the manuscripts so that she would have an idea of what an eventual publication would look like. The manuscript *Nayé, la fille qui ne meurt jamais* turned out to be 138 pages typeset, while *Fanani, l'enfant prodigue* consumed 47 pages.

[23] See, for example, a YouTube video showing Diata Sya (N'BEE's crew) performing with Tata Pound, a local hip hop star in Mali: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WMRhad2XXRc. Though this does not appear to be a professional recording, it underlines the fact that younger verbal artists are aware of these avenues for self-publication.

It would seem, then, that the growing accessibility of small technologies and digital media to literates, even as literacy levels inch up, is the critical element that separates the younger generation of literate verbal artists from the older generation of literate verbal artists. In some respects, a kind of generational shift appears to be at work, not so much in terms of the varying ages of these composer-performers, as in degrees of mastery over diverse options for "technologizing the word."[24] For example, it is difficult to imagine that verbal artists as highly educated as Macalou, Azizsiten'k, and BoubacHaman would have become performers without also becoming published authors a few decades earlier in Mali, and in many other locations in Africa, where textual dissemination solely through performance was often more appealing for literates who were unable to secure advanced education or complete their education for whatever reason. As things currently stand, therefore, well-educated Malians are more likely than minimally educated Malians to become personally proficient, or to become proficient with the assistance of peers, at deploying new communication media for textual performance. A similar trend towards "re-oralization" (Nnodim 2005:250) of some written genres, which probably owes its impetus to the dissemination opportunities provided by new media, has also been reported by Sophie Moulard-Kouka (2005) with respect to Senegalese rap, and by Nnodim with respect to Yoruba poetry in Nigeria. Ironically, then, the secondary orality postulated by Ong may turn out to be the primary beneficiary of rising literacy levels in many African contexts when it comes to the distribution and circulation of a diverse range of creative texts.

Of the three types of verbal artists considered here, Macalou most fully embodies the constraints inherent in a commitment to print publication when one operates in a context that is not particularly conducive to print publication. Given these challenges, performance allows for the circulation of more innovative textual genres by literate composers, genres that happen to fall outside the usual range admitted by local publishers. An earlier generation of educated Africans probably turned to print dissemination supported by overseas publishers because that form of "publication" offered more artistic and ideological independence than did indigenous or colonial systems of patronage for composers of texts. New forms of orality appear to function in a somewhat similar way in contemporary Africa, offering an autonomy in textual composition and distribution that is not often available for emerging verbal artists in the arena of print publication. Such opportunities for artistic and infrastructural autonomy will be of particular interest to young men in a country like Mali with limited avenues for social mobility and self-expression.[25]

Rappers, for example, can circulate their rap lyrics using digital technologies with minimal reliance on artistic, financial, or technological intermediaries and gatekeepers. Indeed, it may be the refusal to align themselves with more powerful forces locally that compels them to fall back on digital media that are accessible to, and can be operated by, small groups of relatively poor individuals. Be that as it may, these verbal artists appear to be driven more by the quest for expressive and infrastructural autonomy than by concerns over the continuing illiteracy of much of the local population. They are above all artists, focused on opportunities for creativity, rather than activists seeking the most efficient ways for communicating with the population at large. And the novelty of their work lies more in the embrace of new media than it

[24] I am borrowing Ong's celebrated formulation from his 1988 book title here.

[25] See for example Dorothea Schulz (2002:805-06) for the challenges facing young men in Mali.

does in a willingness to challenge either the aesthetic or ideological orientations associated with their preferred art forms. Their turn towards performance represents a reaction against the perceived restrictions associated with local and foreign publishing interests, as well as with the conventions surrounding traditional oralities. Such new oralities also have the added advantage of enabling local practitioners to position themselves as consumers and advertisers of modernity in relation to global performance trends, while also maintaining an appearance of relative independence and artistic integrity.

Textual Production and New Oralities

The Malian slam poets represent a somewhat different development, having transitioned from digitally mediated dissemination of rap to live performance of slam poetry. Does this transition reflect some level of detachment from the perceived modernity of digitally mediated performance? I don't believe so. For one thing, the genealogy of slam poetry that members of ASLAMA recount traces the appearance of slam poetry in Mali to a globally circulating book festival, rather than to traditional forms of verbal performance in Malian culture. In the second place, what live performance offers these slam poets is a means for introducing the public to a particular artistic genre without the commercial potential of rap. In fact, slam poets sometimes juxtapose slam to other verbal arts genres that have a greater commercial appeal via their live and recorded performances with the aim of creating interest in slam. Thus, for example, Azizsiten'k, who recently released his first album, sandwiched performances of slam between recordings of rap and R&B music.[26] In other words, these slam poets are more interested in finding a convenient and affordable means for disseminating a non-commercial art form than they are in emulating traditional verbal artists. Third, and as is evident with Azizsiten'k (and BoubacHaman), many slam poets are also hip hop artists. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Malian slam poets strongly disassociate themselves from local traditions of verbal arts performance.

It should probably come as no surprise that some verbal artists should privilege oral dissemination of their written texts in a country like Mali where literacy levels are low and traditional orality is alive and flourishing. For the non-Malian observer, complete rejection of identification with traditional orality may be the greater surprise. And yet many of the slam poets and rappers I met rejected this kind of identification, as did Macalou, the storyteller.[27] BoubacHaman, the slam poet, insisted that his compositions and performance should not be compared with those of a *griot* because he did not come from the lineage of a *griot*. N'BEE, the rapper, initially stated that the activities of a *griot* and a rapper were diametrically opposed. Later, he clarified that a *griot* could learn to rap, but that a rapper should never be viewed as a *griot*. Macalou did not insist on the differences between her performance and those of a *griot* quite as vigorously as the rappers and slam poets, but she too pointed out that that she did not

[26] The album, titled *Tounga*, was released in March 2011.

[27] In other words, these verbal artists are to be differentiated from an earlier generation of African writers who consciously invoked traditional orality as a model for their creative writing.

belong to the lineage of the *griots*, and that in any case the *griots* were not known for children's storytelling.

By and large, then, Malian verbal artists appear to have a more restricted (and undoubtedly more customary) understanding of who can be a *griot*. As Malians, they were able to invoke a cultural justification that required that only those of the lineage of *griots* lay claim to the calling of *griot*.[28] The family names of these *griot* lineages are well known in Mande society and in Mali as a whole. For example, N'BEE's two-person crew chose a name that connected it to Sundiata, the famed founder of the Mali empire, but not one that would have been locally recognized as connecting the team to the lineage of *griots*.[29] Although none of the verbal artists I spoke with mentioned this perspective, the fact that the *griots* or *jeli* occupy a somewhat ambiguous position in Mande society and sometimes have a negative reputation may also explain their insistence on not being identified as *griots*.[30] And in the eyes of these non-*griot* performers, writing was one of the most important elements that separated their practice from the entirely oral practice of the *griots*.

By contrast, as remarked by Eric Charry (2000:242), the guitar was the instrument that brought together performers of "modern" and "traditional" Mande music. In other respects, however, those musicians, like these literate verbal artists, faced somewhat similar challenges. For both artistic vocations, the challenge was to communicate artistic novelty in relation to indigenous practices as well as in relation to practices borrowed from outside the usual sources of cultural influence. The guitar was not a traditional instrument, and those who first used it in Mande communities were seen as introducing a new element into the local performance of music. At the same time, some of these innovators quickly transitioned from playing Cuban songs to using the guitar to simulate the playing of traditional string instruments, thereby creating a genre of music that could no longer be viewed as Cuban music even if it used some of the same instruments. For literate verbal artists in the early twenty-first century, the move towards digital media separated them from the locally and internationally established authors who depended on print media. But the turn towards performance narrowed the gap between them and traditional verbal artists who were also engaged in performance and who increasingly used broadcast media. In order to highlight the difference between themselves and the traditional *jeli*, some of these literate verbal artists chose to highlight the contribution of writing to the process of artistic composition. Since they often appeared more concerned with speaking about their involvement with writing than in speaking about their use of digital media, they gave the impression of being quite preoccupied with defining and defending the border that separated their work from the work of traditional verbal artists.

---

[28] Eric Charry (2000:3) substantiates the point when he writes: "The distinction between jeli and nonjeli musical arts is fundamental in Mande society. As part of the *nyamakala* class . . . it is the right, duty even, of jelis to devote their lives to music. Nonjelis making such a decision usually encounter resistance from their families, and with rare exceptions their avenues are limited to the nonjeli spheres of music."

[29] Ironically, as N'BEE's crew has begun to move within the "world music" circuit, members of the group have tended to adopt a more traditional appearance in their dress and to include the use of a traditional instrument like the *kora* while continuing to specialize in hip hop.

[30] See Hale (1989:15, 193-216) for a more detailed discussion of the position of the *griot* in many Savanna/ Sahelian societies and especially among the Mande.

Nonetheless, despite their repudiation of any social affiliation with the traditional *griots*, these literate verbal artists do share a few things in common with female pop stars in Mali who often model their performance on the practice of the female *jeli* or the *jelimusow* as the female performers are called. Lucy Durán (2007:571) estimates that currently between 60 and 80% of all singers on Malian television are women. Not all of these women are of *jeli* lineage, though the majority consciously embraces the styles and conventions of *jelimusow* performance.[31] The literate verbal artists being discussed here could be compared to the many non-*jeli* women who are borrowing either the strategies or style of successful *jeli* women in Mali. Historically, the men within *jeli* lineages recited the history and genealogy of famous patrons while the women provided improvised praise of and admonishment for the same patrons. Contemporary *jelimusow* have significantly expanded on their traditional role of offering praise and moralizing to individual patrons to address the society at large.[32] These female pop stars have been among the most astute users of broadcast media in Mali, a strategy that has enabled them to accumulate fans and relative wealth even when they do not have the skills or the training for securing support through live performance for powerful patrons. Like those *jelimusow* who use broadcast media, the rappers and slam poets are also seeking to generate a following, if need be, without the support of traditional patrons. Like many *jelimusow*, and these young men are seeking to capitalize on avenues to social mobility and prestige that allow them to circumvent traditional dependence on male elders, a situation that offers them few immediate prospects for self-realization and advancement.[33]

But such is the current success of the *jelimusow* on Malian broadcast media that some of the younger male verbal artists occasionally resort to joint performances with well-known *jelimusow.* Thus, for example, Azizsiten'k has recorded only one music video for his 2011 album entitled *Tounga*. The music video, which accompanies the song "Tounga" on the album, features Azizsiten'k and the famous female *jeli*, Yaye Kanouté, more commonly known as Yayi Kanouté. The aesthetics of this music video borrows heavily from a style associated with the performance of the *jelimusow*. The opening shot is of a man playing the traditional Malian string instrument, the *kora*, with Yaye Kanouté's voice in the background. Then we move on to a shot of Yaye Kanouté, dressed in the gorgeous robes typical of the *jelimusow* and sitting next to Azizsiten'k, who is dressed in the typical fashion for a young Malian male rather than in a recognizably Western outfit. In this song about emigration to Europe, Yaye Kanouté engages in the kind of moralizing singing associated with the *jelimusow*, while Azizsiten'k adopts the more politically oriented critique associated with male rappers and slam poets as he raps in both Bamanankan and

---

[31] See Dorothea Schulz (2001a:345, 348) and (2002:801) for further discussion of this phenomenon.

[32] Schulz (2001a:366) notes, for example, that Malian female pop singers "sell their pop songs as 'moral instruction' to the public." She attributes their fame in part to the growing popularity of "public moralizing" in local Malian music performance (*ibid.*:349).

[33] Schulz (2002:805) describes young men in Mali as being confined to a status of "adulthood-in-waiting" due to limited opportunities for economic advancement, which also result in dependence on parents and elders. I would argue that Schulz's very apt description applies not only to the social standing of these young men but also to their standing as verbal artists. By associating writing with new media, these young men and literate verbal artists are able to achieve some degree of professional and artistic autonomy, enabling them to escape that extended period of "adulthood-in-waiting."

French. The distinction between the moralizing tone of the *jelimusow* and either the social and political critique or the longing for pleasure expressed by slam poets and rappers is fairly representative of the genres preferred by these different types of performers. I would suggest that in making this music video, which has been posted on YouTube,[34] Azizsiten'k is attempting to broaden the audience for his politically engaged poetry by tapping into the local popularity of the *jelimusow*, while reiterating his distance from the typical practice of the *jeli* by performing verbal arts genres that neither male nor female *jeli* perform, and by associating his performance with writing.

I am certainly aware that, unlike BoubacHaman and N'BEE, many African and non-African rappers do invoke African traditions of orality to explain their verbal performance.[35] Statements by such rappers need to be taken seriously as an indication of how they would like their work to be positioned locally and globally. To the same degree, however, those African rappers and performance poets who reject this kind of identification also need to be taken seriously for what their statements suggest about a different kind of local positioning. By insisting that their work should not be viewed as iterations of traditional oralities, these literate verbal artists are signaling that their privileging of an oral mode of dissemination does not stem from a desire to accommodate local sensibilities accustomed to traditional orality, or from a desire to make concessions to widespread illiteracy in their community. On the contrary, they repeatedly emphasized the newness and novelty of the verbal practices they were engaged in, manifested in various ways and especially through composition by writing.

While an unwillingness to identify with traditional orality has deep cultural roots among some literate Mande verbal artists in particular, their stance does have wider implications for assessing the significance of writing in an age when small media technological devices have become increasingly available to individual operators in poor countries. At a time when highly educated verbal artists often find themselves as dependent on these technologies for textual dissemination as minimally educated practitioners of "traditional orality,"[36] a stated investment in writing is one way for verbal artists who happen to be ambivalent about identification as performers to separate themselves from the crowd by presenting themselves as authors, and therefore also as artists engaged in a mode of textual composition that is different from that of the traditional *griots*. In this instance, references to writing have a particular value that is distinct

---

[34] The music video for "Tounga" can be viewed online at the following address: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ufh2dFQzYwg

[35] One thinks, for example, of the popular rap artist in Ghana, Okyeame Kwame, who has adopted the Akan term for the traditional spokespersons for royalty, *Okyeame*, as his stage name. Obviously, this is an attempt to link his hip hop performance with the performance of traditional verbal artists.

[36] Consider, for example, the many Malian female popular singers who now disseminate their performances through music videos that are broadcast on television and also posted on the Internet. Many of these popular singers are literate, although not highly educated, and rely on skilled personnel to record these videos, unlike the rappers described here who produce their own work with the assistance of peers. Some of the most popular female singers explicitly identify themselves as descended from a lineage of the *griots*. See Schulz 2001a for more on the female popular singers and their music videos.

from the significance attached to print publication.[37] Thus, the slam poets and rappers such as BoubacHaman and Tal-B who choose to distance themselves from well known local traditions of orality represent a special cadre of verbal artists who have specifically decided to foreground their activity as composers of texts while downplaying their activity as performers, although they are completely dependent on verbal performance for dissemination of their texts. In contrast, those literate African storytellers, slam poets, and rappers who prefer to present themselves as performers rather than as composers of texts privilege a closer alignment with traditional orality.

In addition to emphasizing their own activity as composers of texts, these verbal artists also offered a distinctive view of the function of the creative text. Both the slam poets and rappers mentioned thus far voiced a criticism of the *griots* that was specifically textual, calling attention to what they viewed as the narrow thematic range of *griot* texts, complaining that "it's only praise-singing." BoubacHaman extended this criticism to other traditional genres, including hunter songs that spoke only about hunting. All three types of composer-performers appeared especially irritated by the complete implication of the *griots* in a local process that Karin Barber (2007:134) describes as the "making of persons," or the construction of local reputations for acknowledged and would-be dignitaries.[38] By contrast, King (2009) stated that "rap is the voice of the people," a verbal art that can be used to express a wide variety of opinions about a range of topics and from a number of different subject positions. In effect, the Malian rappers and slam poets almost seemed to concur with the opinion of Eric Havelock (1986:45, 86) that oral poetry becomes mere entertainment once writing has been introduced in a society, and poetry no longer serves the function of an information storage system for the society.

"Post-Literate" Oralities?

Drawing on Ong's theories, Tricia Rose (1994:86) specifically identifies rap with a post-literate orality, where "orally influenced traditions . . . are embedded in a post-literate, technologically sophisticated cultural context." Eric Pihel (1996:249) too uses the term "post-literate" to describe rap, but with a somewhat expanded understanding of the term, emphasizing not just the literacy of the composers and the community in which they operate, but also the role of pre-writing in composition and performance. He notes, for example, that "most rap music is pre-written and meant to be performed" (*ibid*.:250). Given the fact that they operate in a setting where a plurality of citizens and consumers of texts cannot in fact read or write, the verbal artists discussed here can be described as practicing a post-literate orality only where post-literate refers to pre-writing. Indeed, the fact that these verbal artists are not just literate but very highly

[37] The argument here thus echoes the point made by Adejunmobi (2008:164) that "in the multilingual societies of the developing world, the ideological significance of print media and the production of written texts for many modernizing activists will begin to diminish during the twenty-first century, often in conjunction with a revaluation of orality . . . ."

[38] In their discomfort over how *griots* traditionally interacted with their "patrons," these rappers and slam poets appeared to echo the ambivalence of the U.S.-based Malian film scholar, Manthia Diawara (1998:110-16), regarding his encounter with a female *griot* in a Bamako restaurant on a return visit to Mali in 1995.

educated for their community[39] surely accounts for much of their determination to foreground writing and to distance themselves from practitioners of "traditional orality."

If Macalou the storyteller treated printed writing as a useful follow-up to performance, the rappers and slam poets considered writing a prerequisite for performance. In their view, a satisfactory performance would not be possible in the absence of written texts. When I first met Azizsiten'K and BoubacHaman, for example, they were teaching high school students how to write slam poetry as part of an extra-curricular program at school. The funding for this particular workshop came through a French initiative called "Bibliothèque sans frontière" ("Library Without Borders"), and whose name clearly suggests an interest in writing and in books. The emphasis in the workshop was on writing rather than on performing, though the spoken word was the only acknowledged outlet for these written texts.

It is also important to note that, like the rappers, these slam poets were not using writing to ensure some kind of permanence and fixity for their work. Nor were they engaged in the kind of activity that Barber (2007:185, 198) describes as self-writing, or personal writing. From the moment of composition, these texts were destined for public circulation through performance. Accordingly, they rarely engaged in improvised performances, preferring to read from a written text (which is what they encouraged students to do), or to memorize a previously written text. In effect, writing mattered for these verbal artists because it provided the very basis for the making of texts. Indeed, these Malian rappers and slam poets could self-identify as composers of texts in the absence of print publications bearing their names mainly to the extent that their particular arrangement of words existed, independent of any performance, in a written format. In their view, without writing there could be no texts. This opinion obviously runs counter to that of many scholars who hold that writing does not by itself make textuality. It also runs counter to the convictions that motivated earlier generations of African writers to present traditional oral texts as equivalent to written literatures.

Fig 2: Students at Lycée Manssa Maka Diabaté learning how to write slam poetry in March 2009. Their teachers are BoubacHaman and Azizsiten'k. Photo by the author.

[39] All these verbal artists have at least a high school education, and several have a college-level education or the possibility of pursuing their education beyond high school. After completing high school, N'BEE trained as an electrician before starting part-time work in a printing press. Azizsiten'k has completed his undergraduate education. BoubacHaman and Macalou are particularly well educated with graduate-level degrees.

Conclusion

Digital technology is undoubtedly enhancing the stature of both mediated and unmediated forms of performance as acceptable modes of textual distribution for literate verbal artists in low literacy contexts. Although such self-described composers of texts operate mainly as performers of texts that may never be published, the revenge of the spoken word does not apparently foreclose identification with writing. The specific significance of writing for the verbal arts performer exposed to new media does depend, though, on a range of variables. Macalou the storyteller opted for transcription following performance and hoped for eventual publication as a way of modernizing the transmission of traditional stories. For their part, the slam poets were not interested in producing written texts for circulation in print. Instead, they used references to writing to distinguish themselves from unschooled or minimally schooled verbal artists whose works also circulate through live performance. By contrast, rappers who had not yet achieved a desired level of prominence as commercially oriented performers tended to use references to writing for legitimating their claims to be verbal artists worth taking seriously.

What is especially noteworthy is the extent to which writing continues to function as a marker of composition for literate verbal artists in a location where there are relatively few opportunities for print publication. There are a number of reasons for this tendency to foreground one's writing practice. In the first place, and with respect to the kinds of traditional verbal artists who are acknowledged as composers of texts, the verbal artists discussed here find suspect the artistic integrity of a composition process characterized by undue responsiveness to current and potential patrons. Hence, their emphatic and repeated repudiations of improvisation, which is considered the practice of traditional verbal artists in their performances.[40] These literate verbal artists want to be known as composers, but composers who operate in a different mode than that of those traditional verbal artists who also engage in composition. Second, the presenters of the most prestigious oral texts in that environment, namely, traditional canonical texts, tend to be viewed as performers of these texts rather than as composers. Indeed, texts in these predominantly oral settings acquired their canonical status, *inter alia*, by appearing resistant to improvisation and thus to further composition. This distinction matters in settings where "traditional orality" still generates considerable audiences and remains the paradigmatic model of verbal arts performance. It matters for verbal artists who want to be also known as composers, and not solely as performers. In the last place, when texts are produced and disseminated using new media in these contexts, the identity of the composer/author is rarely highlighted; instead, these texts tend to be associated with particular performers rather than with particular composer/authors. In this regard, the impact of new media on ideas about composition is quite similar to the effects of "traditional orality" on the dissemination of canonical texts.

It is for these reasons that the figure of the "autonomous" composer/author continues to be associated with writing despite the scarcity of outlets for print publication. The relative rarity of successful authorship further ensures an especially high regard for authors as composers of texts, with none of the ambiguity surrounding the status of *griots* as composers of texts. Indeed,

[40] According to Moulard-Kouka (2005:239), rappers in Senegal exhibited a similar disinclination towards improvisation.

although new media often make performance a more viable option for textual dissemination where advanced literacy is not the norm, literate performer-composers appear to be strengthening a tendency to associate composition with writing, and to emphasize distinctions between respectable composers of texts (who are ideally literate) and sundry performers of texts (who do not have to be literate).

Despite the fact that their own texts circulate mainly through performance, some contemporary verbal artists in low literacy settings are thus highly motivated to invoke writing as a non-negotiable criterion of authorship and textuality. As has been illustrated here, some choose this route in order to enhance the modernity of their activity and to disassociate themselves from traditional practices of orality that remain popular in communities where advanced literacy is not yet the norm. Others embrace writing because they have not yet achieved desired acclaim as performers and can, in the meantime, use writing to legitimate their vocation as artists by presenting themselves as composers of texts. To conclude, those verbal artists in low literacy societies who continue to profess attachment to writing, notwithstanding the expanding prominence of live and digitally mediated performance, tend to invoke writing not mainly as a mode of textual dissemination but as a marker of authorship and as a means for accrediting their own modernity and non-normative expressions of creativity. Writing thus retains a certain kind of significance for literate verbal artists in these low literacy environments, even as performance becomes an even more prominent means of textual dissemination thanks to digital media.

University of California, Davis

References

Adejunmobi 2000 — Moradewun Adejunmobi. “Disruptions of Orality in the Writings of Hampaté Bâ.” *Research in African Literatures*, 31, iii:27-36.

Adejunmobi 2008 — _____. “Technorality, Literature, and Vernacular Literacy in Twenty-First-Century Africa.” *Comparative Literature*, 60, ii:164-85.

Austen 1999 — Ralph Austen, ed. *In Search of Sunjata: The Mande Oral Epic as History, Literature, and Performance*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Azizsiten’k 2009 — Azizsiten’k. Interview with the Author, March 7, 2009. Bamako.

Badian 2008 — Seydou Badian. *La saison des pièges*. Paris: Présence Africaine and Abidjan: Nouvelles éditions africaines/CEDA.

Badian 2009 — _____. Interview with the Author, March 10, 2009. Bamako.

Barber 2007 — Karin Barber. *The Anthropology of Texts, Persons, and Publics: Oral and Written Culture in Africa and Beyond.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Belcher 1999 — Stephen Belcher. *Epic Traditions of Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

BoubacHaman 2009 — BoubacHaman. Interview with the Author, March 6, 2009. Bamako.

Camara 1976 — Sory Camara. *Gens de la parole: Essai sur la condition et le rôle des griots dans la société malinké*. Paris: Mouton.

Charry 2000 — Eric Charry. *Mande Music: Traditional and Modern Music of the Maninka and Mandinka of Western Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Conrad and Frank 1995 — David Conrad and Barbara E. Frank. *Status and Identity in West Africa: Nyamakalaw of Mande*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Dadié 1955 — Bernard Dadié. *Le pagne noir*. Paris: Présence Africaine.

Diarra 2009 — Alpha Mandé Diarra. Interview with the Author, March 12, 2009. Bamako.

Diawara 1997 — Mamadou Diawara. "Mande Oral Popular Culture Revisited by the Electronic Media." In *Readings in African Popular Culture*, ed. by Karin Barber. London: The International Africa Institute; Bloomington: Indiana University Press; and Oxford: James Currey. pp. 40-48.

Diawara 1998 — Manthia Diawara. *In Search of Africa*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Diop 1961 — Birago Diop. *Les contes d'Amadou Koumba*. Paris: Présence Africaine.

Durán 1995 — Lucy Durán. "*Jelimusow*: The Superwomen of Malian Music." In *Power, Marginality, and African Oral Literature*, ed. by Graham Furniss and Liz Gunner. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 197-207.

Durán 2007 — _____. "Ngaraya: Women and Musical Mastery in Mali." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 70:569-602.

Ebron 2002 — Paulla Ebron. *Performing Africa*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Fernback 2003 — Jan Fernback. "Legends on the Net: An Examination of Computer-Mediated Communication as a Locus of Oral Culture." *New Media and Society*, 5:29-45.

Finnegan 1970 — Ruth Finnegan. *Oral Literature in Africa*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Hale 1998 — Thomas A. Hale. *Griots and Griottes: Masters of Words and Music*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Havelock 1986 — Eric Havelock. *The Muse Begins to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy From Antiquity to the Present*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Johnson et al. 1997 — John William Johnson, Thomas Hale, and Stephen Belcher, eds. *Oral Epics from Africa: Vibrant Voices from a Vast Continent*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

King 2009 — King. Interview with the Author, March 13, 2009. Bamako.

Lakoff 1982 — Robin Lakoff. "Some of My Favorite Writers are Literate: The Mingling of Oral and Literate Strategies in Written Communication." In *Spoken and Written Language: Exploring Orality and Literacy*, ed. by Deborah Tannen. Norwood: Ablex. pp. 239-60.

Landow 1997 — George Landow. *Hypertext 2.0: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Laya 1972 — Diouldé Laya. Ed., *La Tradition orale: Problématique et méthodologie des sources de l'histoire africaine*. Niamey: Centre Regional de Documentation pour la Tradition Orale.

Leguy 2007 — Cécile Leguy. "Revitalizing the Oral Tradition: Stories Broadcast by Radio Parana (San Mali)." *Research in African Literatures*, 38, iii:136-47.

Macalou 2009 — Awa Dembélé Macalou. Interview with the Author, March 5, 12, 2009. Bamako.

Moulard-Kouka 2005 — Sophie Moulard-Kouka. "Le rap sénégalais: Un mode d'expression inédit entre oral et écrit?" In *Interfaces Between the Oral and the Written*, ed. by Alain Ricard and Flora Veit-Wild. Amsterdam: Rodopi. pp. 233-46.

Nayar 2004 — Sheila Nayar. "Invisible Representation: The Oral Contours of a National Popular Cinema." *Film Quarterly*, 57, iii:13-23.

N'BEE 2009 — N'BEE. Interview with the Author, March 13, 2009. Bamako.

Newton 1999 — Robert Newton. "Out of Print: The Epic Cassette as Intervention, Reinvention, and Commodity." In *In Search of Sunjata: The Mande Oral Epic as History, Literature, and Performance*, ed. by Ralph Austen. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. pp. 313-27.

Niane 1960 — D. T. Niane. *Soundjata ou l'épopée mandingue*. Paris: Présence Africaine.

Nnodim 2005 — Rita Nnodim. "Yorùbá Neotraditional Media Poetry, A Poetics of Interface." In *Interfaces Between the Oral and the Written*, ed. by Alain Ricard and Flora Veit-Wild. Amsterdam: Rodopi. pp. 247-64.

Okpewho 1992 — Isidore Okpewho. *African Oral Literature: Background, Character, and Continuity*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Ong 1988 — Walter Ong. *Orality and Literacy, The Technologizing of the Word*. London: Routledge.

Pihel 1996 — Eric Pihel. "A Furified Freestyle: Homer and Hip Hop." *Oral Tradition*, 11:249-69. http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/11ii/pihel

Rose 1994 — Tricia Rose. *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Schulz 1997 — Dorothea Schulz. "Praise without Enchantment: *Griots*, Broadcast Media, and the Politics of Tradition in Mali." *Africa Today*, 44, iv:443-64.

Schulz 2001a — _____. "Music Videos and the Effeminate Vices of Urban Culture in Mali." *Africa*, 71, iii:345-71.

Schulz 2001b — _____. *Perpetuating the Politics of Praise: Jeli Singers, Radios, and Political Mediation in Mali*. Cologne: Ruediger Koeppe.

Schulz 2002 — _____. "'The World Made by Talk': Female Fans, Popular Music, and New Forms of Public Sociality in Urban Mali." *Cahier d'études africaines*, 4(168): 797-830.

Tal-B 2009 — Tal-B. Interview with the Author, March 13, 2009. Bamako.

Tomaselli and Eke 1995 — Keyan Tomaselli and Maureen Eke. "Perspectives on Orality in African Cinema." *Oral Tradition*, 10:111-28. http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/10i/tomaselli

Touré 2009 — Mariam Oumar Touré. Personal Communication with Author, March 4, 2009. Bamako.

A. Traoré 2009 — Amadou Seydou Traoré. Personal Communication with the Author, February 24, 2009. Bamako.

I. Traoré 2005 — Ismaila Samba Traoré. *Esquisses soudaniennes*. Bamako: La Sahélienne and Paris: L'Harmattan.

I. Traoré 2009 — _____. Interview with the Author, March 9, 2009. Bamako.

Traoré and Diallo 2008 — _____ and Daye Baba Diallo. *Chroniques de Ségou*. Bamako: La Sahélienne and Paris: L'Harmattan.

Ukadike 1993 — Frank Ukadike. *Black African Cinema*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

UNESCO 2009 — UNESCO. Institute for Statistics. n.d. http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=124&IF_Language=eng&BR_Country=4660&BR_Region=40540. Accessed on December 22, 2009.

Yasin 1997 — Jon A. Yasin. "In Yo Face! Rappin' Beats Comin' at You: A Study of How Language is Mapped Onto Musical Beats in Rap Music." Unpubl. Ed. D. Dissertation. Columbia University.

Select Discography

Adejunmobi 2009 — Moradewun Adejunmobi. *Recording of Awa Dembélé Macalou Narrating "Naya, la fille qui ne meurt jamais*." Excerpt from a field recording made at the Centre Amadou Hampate Ba in Bamako on March 5, 2009.

Azizsiten'k 2011 — Azizsiten'k. *Tounga*. Bamako, Mali: Association Agoratoire.

Select Videography

Azizsiten'k 2010 — Azizsiten'k. *Tounga*. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ufh2dFQzYwg. Uploaded by Azizsiten'k. Accessed on May 11, 2011.

Sya 2009 — Diata Sya, feat. Tata Pound. *Thefariton*. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WMRhad2XXRc. Uploaded by Chanana362. Accessed on May 11, 2011.

This page is intentionally left blank.

Oral Tradition, 26/1 (2011): 27-70

Singing Dead Tales to Life: Rhetorical Strategies in Shandong Fast Tales

Eric Shepherd

Introduction

Shandong *kuaishu,* literally "fast tales," is a northern Chinese narrative performance[1] tradition with more than one hundred years of documented history. This tradition involves a single performer who integrates rhymed and rhythmic narration, character dialogue, various dramatic techniques, rhythmic musical accompaniment, humor, and exaggeration to bring to life stories and characters in a form of popular entertainment. Performers describe the genre as a folk art that combines the artistic telling of stories with rhyme and rhythm. Fast tales are performed throughout northern and central China for a wide range of audiences and occasions. Performers appear on and off proscenium stages, on television, radio, and the Internet as well as during rural bazaars, as part of holiday variety shows, and for celebratory banquets (Shepherd 2005). Story scripts, or *jiaoben*, are also regularly appreciated as a form of popular literature in various written and electronic formats.

Enjoyed by young and old speakers of northern Mandarin dialects, Shandong fast tales are indigenous to and often representative of Shandong Province, a coastal region of northeastern China known also as the home of Confucius and the cradle of traditional Chinese thought. Shandong, literally "east (of) mountains,"[2] refers to a geographic, political, and cultural region located on the eastern edge of the north China plain and extending outward to form a peninsula that appears on the map to point directly at the center of the Korean Peninsula. It is bordered to the north by Hebei Province, to the west by Henan Province, and to the south by Jiangsu Province. Jinan, situated in the heart of Shandong's agricultural west, is the provincial political capital, while Qingdao, located on the southeast coast, is the provincial economic center. Covering an area of more than 156,000 square kilometers (slightly smaller than the state of

[1] Throughout this paper I use an idea of performance similar to the one used by proponents of performance theory such as Richard Bauman (1977). A performance is a staged display of artistic skill to be shared with an audience that is informed by special communicative registers and a shared aesthetic code and that derives enjoyment from the performance. According to Bauman, performance involves a transformation of the basic referential uses of language, which sets up an interpretive frame that situates all behavior and speech by and for the participants.

[2] The name originates from the area's location east of the Xiao, Hua, or Taihang mountains, although there is historical disagreement about which mountains were the original referent.

Florida), the Shandong peninsula is made up of mostly flat plains bounded on the north by the Bohai Gulf and to the east and south by the Yellow Sea.

In pre-imperial China (roughly sixth century to third century BCE), Shandong was divided into two states: Qi in the north and east and Lu in the south and west. The area occupied by the State of Lu was the home of Confucius and his disciple Mencius, two of China's most influential philosophers, as well as Sunzi, the military strategist who wrote *The Art of War*. The State of Qi was home to renowned strategist Jiang Ziya and the philosopher Xunzi, whose followers became influential legalists. Contemporary regional differences within Shandong can be traced to the culture of these two kingdoms of the Warring States period, and the ideas of these iconic figures have deeply influenced Chinese culture.

Shandong modern history was turbulent and marked by repeated foreign occupation and war. Germany occupied the region from 1887 to 1914, extracting natural resources, building modern infrastructure such as railroads and wharves, and officially making Shandong a colonial territory from 1898 to 1914. Following the Germans, Britain colonized the Shandong port city of Weihai, located on the eastern tip of the peninsula, and in November of 1914, the Japanese replaced the Germans as the colonial occupants of the area. The post-World War I handover led to Japanese-style military rule in much of Shandong that lasted until 1922, when the China North Sea Government finally gained administrative control over Shandong. In 1938 Japan once again forcibly occupied the region, turning the province into a key strategic location in their military operations in northern China during World War II. At the end of World War II, the Nationalists—aided by the US military—and the Communists struggled to gain control of the area. Qingdao was finally "liberated" from Nationalist (and American imperialist) occupation in 1949.

Since economic reforms began in the area in 1981, Shandong has been a major source of the natural resources that have driven China's rapid development. Today, Shandong is the second largest provincial economy in China and is ranked at or near the top in terms of the production of cotton, wheat, gold, diamonds, and petroleum. Shandong is also known for its seafood, textile production, and large brand-name conglomerates such as Haier (electronics and home appliances), Tsing-tao beer, Aucama (electronics), Hisense (electronics), and Double Star (shoes). With more than 92,000,000 people, Shandong has the second largest population among all of China's provinces, a figure that is larger than the population of several European nations, including Germany, France, and Italy. Over ninety-nine percent of the people living in Shandong are members of the Han ethnic group.

This article explores the tradition of Shandong fast tales as a performance art with particular emphasis on the rhetorical strategies used by performers to bring their tales to life in various performance contexts. It starts with a survey of the genre of Shandong fast tales intended to serve as background and contextual information for the discussion of rhetorical strategies used in performance that follows in the second half of the paper. The beginning section is intended to fill a void in English language materials about this relatively unexplored northern Chinese

storytelling tradition.[3] The focus of the article then shifts to a discussion of rhetorical and narrative devices used by fast tale performers to bring their tales to life. The research presented in this section is based on interviews with performers and researchers conducted between 2000 and 2010, participant observation in live performance contexts over the same period, and extensive participatory experience as a fast tale performer in Shandong between 2004 and the summer of 2010.

Rural Origins

Fast tales are one form of Chinese narrative and performed art, known as *quyi,*[4] regularly performed in northern and central China on stage in theaters, in city squares, on military posts, in teahouses, in banquet rooms in restaurants, and in storytelling houses as well as for holiday and cultural events. Emic accounts of fast tale origins indicate the tradition began as a form of storytelling among peasant farmers in rural areas of western Shandong near the city of Linqing toward the end of the Ming Dynasty (Liu 2001).[5] This early rural precursor to modern fast tales was known colloquially as *chang da gezi* (singing the big guy) and *shuo wu lao er* (telling second brother Wu). These labels were used because traditional stories revolved around the cultural hero Wu Song who was the younger of two male siblings and a man of physically imposing stature.

Shuo wu lao er was a form of spontaneous storytelling shared among bored peasant farmers that involved telling stories to a beat kept with metal ploughshares. The beat, pitch, and

---

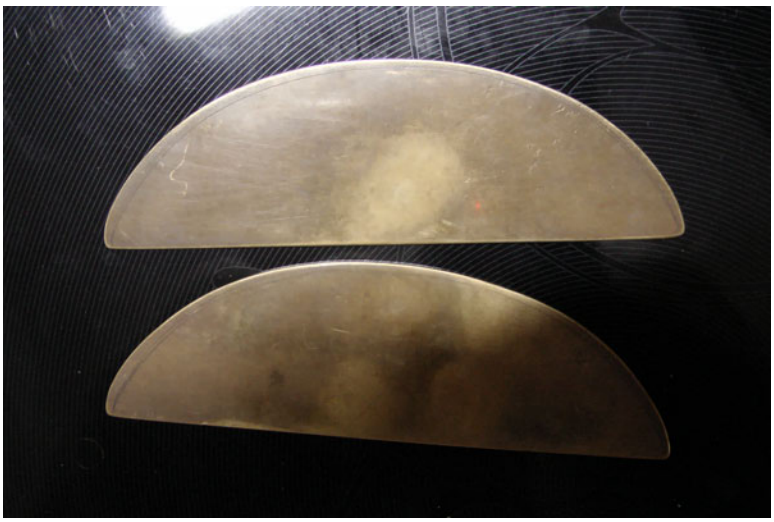
[3] Extensive research has been published on Shandong fast tales in Chinese, most notably by Liu Hongbin et al. (1959), Gao Yuanjun (1960, 1980, and 1987), Zhang Jun (1981), Gao Yuanjun et al. (1982), Wang Jingshou (1985), Liu Sichang and Wang Jingshou (1989), and Liu Hongbin (2001). Many researchers have published on Chinese storytelling traditions in English, including Susan Blader (1977), Catherine Stevens (1975), Mark Bender (1996, 1998, 1999a, 1999b, 2003a, and 2003b), Vibeke Børdahl (1991, 1993, 1995a, 1995b, 1996, 1997, 1999a, 1999b, 2000, and 2003), and Børdahl and Jette Ross (2002). However, few have dealt with the fast tale tradition.

[4] Independently, *qu* means "melody," while *yi* is used to refer to either "arts" or "skills." Since 1949, this combination has been used by Chinese researchers to refer to a range of folk performance arts that include ballad singing, plain storytelling, prosimetric storytelling, comedic dialogues, rhythmic storytelling, lyrical rhymes, comedic skits, and genres that combine elements of some or all of these traditions. *Quyi* genres vary widely in origins, form, style, language, content, aesthetic appeal, patronage, performance context, and process (Bender 2003a:3). Each tradition provides a different lens through which to understand the values and beliefs of a specific locale since each reflects a unique local culture, way of life, mode of thought, worldview, and language. Because of their local nature, *quyi* forms are intimately intertwined with local identities. *Quyi* genres also take on different shapes in different places (Von Sydow 1999:138). The manner in which they are performed and appreciated varies greatly from locale to locale. *Quyi* has been translated into English variously as "minor dramatic art" (Hrdlicka 1957:83), "the art of melodies" (Børdahl 1996:2 and Bender 2003a:3), "storytelling (in a broad sense)" (Børdahl 1999a:2), "folk art forms including ballad singing, storytelling, comic dialogues, and the like" (*OCD* 1999), and "performed narrative arts" (Bender 2003a:3).

[5] Emic here refers to the tales performers share about the origins of their art rather than accounts by scholars or researchers, although academic and emic discourses about fast tales certainly overlap and interact. Three periods of time are commonly cited by different groups of performers and researchers as the beginning of fast tales. They include the reign of the Ming Wan Li emperor (1573-1620), the year 1826, and the reign of the Qing Xianfeng emperor (1851-61). Most scholars believe these to be three early appearances in the written record of an older, well-developed rural tradition (Liu 2001).

rhythm-keeping device were later picked up and refined by itinerant performers who reportedly sang for subsistence in and around markets, rural bazaars, temple fairs, and wharves along the Grand Canal. As the genre spread and developed, rhythm-keeping devices were added and abandoned, with clay roofing tiles and bamboo castanets both serving as primary instruments for periods of time. Performance techniques were further refined, repertoires were expanded, and representative master performers began to appear by the early years of the twentieth century.[6]

As the *shuo wu lao er* tradition evolved, performers borrowed from several sister traditions that were already popular in the Shandong region, in particular, *dagu* (big drum ballads), from which the pitch, rhyme scheme, and story repertoire were taken. Although held and played in a slightly different manner than in drum ballad performances, the primary rhythm-keeping device, two half-moon-shaped brass plates called the *ban*[7] were borrowed from the drum ballad tradition and came into widespread use by fast tale performers by the 1920s.



Yuanyangban, the primary brass rhythm-keeping device used in Shandong fast tales. Photo: Eric Shepherd.

Early performance venues were connected with activities at rural temple fairs, rural bazaars, and marketplaces. Other early performances were associated with festivals, fairs, and holiday events. By the end of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) and early years of the Republic (1920s), performers had migrated into urban areas where they performed in the streets, at makeshift performance sites in squares and marketplaces, in out-of-town associations called *huiguan*, and in theaters, taverns, teahouses, and storytelling halls called *shuchang* (Liu 2001).

In 1949 the *shuo wu lao er* tradition was given the name Shandong *kuai shu* (fast tales) by Gao Yuanjun, the most widely known fast tale performer at the time. While performing with cultural workers in Shanghai, Gao selected this "official" name for the genre when they recorded his performance of *Lu Da Disposes of the Tyrant*, a tale that did not revolve around the hero Wu Song. He attempted to create a name that reflected more about the genre than just the single protagonist Wu Song. He chose *Shandong kuai shu* to reflect the genre's local *Shandong* nature (the dialect spoken), its storytelling format (*shu*), and its rhythmic nature (*kuai*) (Liu 2001). According to Gao et al. (1982:4), *kuai* (fast) refers to smooth, unbroken language that flows to a

[6] Gao 1980; Gao et al. 1982; Liu 2001; Zhang 1981; and Wang 1985 and 1994.

[7] The standard rhythm-keeping device is known as the *yuanyangban* (Mandarin plates) in performer jargon because the two unconnected 4 x 1.25-inch half-moon-shaped pieces of brass are both needed to produce the appropriate sound and beat. As Mandarin ducks are viewed in Chinese culture, they are an inseparable pair. In 2010 a *ban* could be obtained for 140 *yuan* or just over twenty dollars.

rhythm rather than the rate of speech, while *shu* (book) means "story."[8] As Gao described them at the time, fast tales are stories that involve characters and events.

Fast tales continued to be a popular form of local entertainment in Shandong until after World War II. After China entered the War to Resist America and Aid Korea in October of 1950, Gao Yuanjun (1916-93) became a performer for the People's Liberation Army General Political Department *Quyi* Corps, where he utilized the institutional and political power afforded by the Political Department to develop a large corps of fast tale performers in the military. Gao's high-profile military status also afforded him the opportunity to travel with an initial troupe of military performers to entertain the troops on the front lines in Korea.

By the 1930s the Communist Party had begun viewing traditional art forms such as *quyi* as ideally efficient means to get the their socialist message to the illiterate masses across China, so model performers were trained to tell politically correct new tales in a wide range of traditional genres (Hung 1993). Gao, who was well-liked by audiences and had gained a large following, became the model performer for Shandong fast tales. While in Korea, he gained widespread notoriety and popularity (beyond merely Shandong) by performing tales from the traditional fast tale repertoire as well as *new* politically correct tales about war and military life.

From the early 1950s through his death in 1993, Gao continued to exert his influence in promoting fast tales nationally as well as in developing a cadre of young performers. Gao conducted a series of fast tale study classes in the military and through local and national government culture bureaus. He is said to have trained more than two hundred performers. These military performers were assigned to posts all over China, a pattern that spread fast tales to places as far as Xinjiang in the west, Heilongjiang in the north, and Hangzhou in the south, creating small fast tale pockets as they took on their own students and trained apprentices. It was through this process that fast tales were transformed from a local form of entertainment into a national phenomenon and that Gao's name became synonymous with the art form.

Audiences

Audience composition at contemporary fast tale performances varies depending on location and type of event. When fast tale performances are subcomponents of variety shows conducted for holiday and cultural events, audiences are large and diverse. For example, at one rural bazaar in May 2005, 30,000 people crammed into an outdoor compound in Penglai, Shandong to see a fourteen-act variety show that included Wu Yanguo's performance of the two modern tales *Schlocky* and *Playing Poker*. For another May holiday performance just days later, 35,000 people filled an open field in Jimo, Shandong to see a variety show that included two fast tale performers. For these large-scale performances, audiences are made up of people from all

[8] In the *Broad Records of Heavenly Peace* (*taiping guangji*) written during the Sui Dynasty (581-618) the character *hua*—now meaning "speech"—was used to refer to stories or tales. As time passed the character *shu*—now "book"—came to refer to long, orally narrated tales, and *shuo shu ren*, literally "tell tale person," was used to refer to professional tellers of tales. See among others Liu 1987:87, Li and Yu 1993:58, and Børdhal 1999b and Børdhal and Ross 2002.

walks of life and all social strata. The holiday variety show is one of the most common contemporary settings in which fast tales can be found.

There are also performances that involve only fast tales. These often take place at smaller venues such as theaters, teahouses, out-of-town association compounds, and storytelling houses. In the city of Qingdao, the center of most fast tale activity is the *Jiangning hui guan* (out-of-town association compound).[9] The outdoor compound is located in a famous tourist district known as Woodcutter's Alley (*pichaiyuan*). *Jiangning huiguan* is simultaneously a restaurant, theater, tourist attraction, and site for storytelling aficionados. Daily fast tale performances take place on one of the two small stages found in the compound. Performances are scheduled for weekday afternoons between two and four o'clock, weekday evenings between six and eight o'clock, and weekends during the same two time blocks.

Master fast tale performer Wu Yanguo performs *Cimao* (*Schlocky*) before an audience of 30,000 people in Penglai, Shandong, May 2005. Video: Eric Shepherd. http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/26i/shepherd#myGallery-picture(2)

Audiences for weekday afternoon performances are typically the smallest, with between twenty and fifty people being the norm. Attendees are typically older local men who come to socialize and take in traditional performances. There is no charge for the performance itself, but to secure a seat audience members must order something from the menu, so many of these daytime audience members pay the five-*yuan* cost of a cup of tea, the water for which can be refilled repeatedly. They sip tea, smoke, fan themselves, and sometimes doze off during the performances.

On weekday evenings, the audience is usually comprised of tourists of all ages and from all areas of China. These performances are typically variety shows that include fast tales, since it is assumed that tourists may not completely understand local performance genres. The size of these evening performance

Master fast tale performer Wu Yanguo performs *Da puke* (*Playing Poker*) during a holiday variety show in Dongying, Shandong, May 2005. Video: Lori Shepherd. http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/26i/shepherd#myGallery-picture(3)

[9] *Jiangning huiguan* is the primary performance venue in Qingdao. In Jinan, an area in western Shandong where a large number of fast tale performers are concentrated, the Wu Song Theater is a locale with daily fast tale performances. The performances at Wu Song Theater are always part of a variety show that includes a range of Shandong *quyi* genres such as Shandong big drum ballads, Shandong zither tales, crosstalk, and fast clapper tales.

Afternoon crowd at *Jiangning huiguan*, July 2010. Photo: Eric Shepherd.

The audience on a weekday evening at *Jiangning huiguan*, July 2010. Photo: Eric Shepherd.

The audience at a weekend evening performance at *Jiangning huiguan*, July 17, 2010. Photo: Eric Shepherd.

Evening performance, *Jiangning huiguan*, July 2, 2009. Photo: Du Minghua.

audiences ranges between fifty and two hundred people who enjoy dinner in the traditional performance setting. Dinner is the focus of activity on these occasions, so fast tale performances sometimes fade into the background of the larger event, especially when young or inexperienced performers are on the bill. Thus it is not uncommon to hear the sounds of toasting and loud laughing mixed in with the sounds of the performance.

Friday and Saturday evening performances and weekend afternoon performances in the summer months attract the largest crowds, with as many as three hundred people attending special events and occasions that involve well-known performers. At these large events, private banquet rooms that line the second floor of the courtyard-style compound are filled with customers. The rooms are always booked well in advance and are all equipped with windows that open up to the stage area and closed circuit television on which to view the performances. Audience members begin filling the tables in the open courtyard area in front of the main stage about thirty minutes prior to the first act. Latecomers line the second floor balconies or stand on their toes in the area beyond the tables and in the doorways. Some of the most famous Qingdao fast tale performers refuse invitations to perform at *Jiangning huiguan* unless it is for one of these weekend evening performances.

Tale Length

In terms of length, fast tales range from the longest *dashu* (great tales), which are collections of smaller related episodic tales, to the shortest *shumao* (story hats), which can be as short as a few lines. Each performer's repertoire is unique. Some specialize in a single story. Some specialize in shorter tales, while others specialize in longer ones. Three stories, called *lao san duan* (three old tales), are basic to most performers' repertoires: *Wu Song Fights the Tiger*, *East Mountain Temple*, and *Lu Da Disposes of the Tyrant*. The two former stories are episodes from *The Tale of Wu Song*.

The fifteen-*huimu* (-episode) *Tale of Wu Song* is the most famous example of a great tale and serves as the core of the traditional fast tale repertoire. Each *huimu* is comprised of one to four episodic *duanzi* (segments), a term now used colloquially to refer to any single story. Fast tales made up of two or more episodes are called "middle length great tales," while single episode fast tales are called *dan duan* (single segments) because they are independent stories that are not part of a larger cycle. *Dan duan* typically are three to four hundred lines in length and last around fifteen minutes when performed. Famous examples of *dan duan* include *Lu Da Disposes of the Tyrant*, *Li Kui Steals Fish*, and *Creating a Big Ruckus at the Ma Family Store*.

Fast tales can be further divided into small, medium, and large segments.[10] Large segments range from one hundred to four hundred lines and last up to thirty minutes in performance. The stories *Wu Song Fights the Tiger* and *East Mountain Temple* are examples of big segments.[11] Medium segments are around one hundred lines in length and range from four to seven minutes in performance. *The Beat Patrolman* is one famous example. It is small segments, however, that comprise the bulk of the fast tale repertoire outside of *The Tale of Wu Song*. Examples of small segments included here are *Auntie Wee*, *Fear, Knucklehead Wants a Tot*, and *An Old Man Pulling a Lamb*. Performances of small segments typically last less than seven minutes.

Since the mid-1990s, fast tale performances have become increasingly shorter in order to adapt to modern contexts and audiences. Most performances are now limited to small segments or particularly famous excerpts of larger tales that last five to seven minutes because they are often part of a larger program of entertainment.

Repertoire

Roughly speaking, fast tales can be divided into two broad categories. Traditional tales were composed prior to the Japanese invasion in the 1930s, while modern tales were composed after the founding of the People's Republic in 1949. Some storylines, such as those in *The Tale of*

---

[10] Vibeke Børdahl (1996:25) notes similar divisions and terminology in the Yangzhou storytelling tradition. Mark Bender (2003a) has found them in the Suzhou *tanci* tradition.

[11] Longer stories can be further divided at natural break points. Performers occasionally extract short segments that they are particularly adept at in order to perform in situations in which they have time constraints. This is called *zhaichang* (extracted singing).

Wu Song and *Lu Da Disposes of the Tyrant*, have been drawn from the larger cultural and literary traditions. These fast tales are culturally shared stories whose authorship is generally assumed to be collective (Finnegan 1977). Others have been adapted from folk songs and stories, such as Wu Yanguo's tale *The Legend of Split Rock Mouth*, which was converted to the fast tale format from a written version of a local Qingdao folk story about the origins of the place named Split Rock Mouth.

Themes of traditional small segments revolve around cultural scripts, such as the traditional calendar, the major events of a typical person's life, or commonly occurring social events. Traditional small segments are characterized by humorous twists on cultural values such as social or family hierarchy, filial piety, or carefully managing interpersonal relationships during daily life. Traditional big segments are episodic in nature and deal with the exploits of individual cultural heroes such as Wu Song and Lu Da. Themes include social injustice, battles between good and evil, and defeating corrupt officials. These tales always involve a hero, described as a *hao han* (real man), who is starkly contrasted with one or more evil protagonists—generally corrupt government officials or members of the rich gentry class.[12]

Hao han, who generally have been forced to the fringe of society by some gross injustice, always encounter one or more weaker members of society who are bullied or oppressed by an evil antagonist. What makes the heroes *hao han*, in addition to their considerable fighting skills (either in martial arts or with various traditional weapons) and ability to consume prodigious amounts of food and wine, is that they always fight to defend the downtrodden from the abuse of societal bullies. When *hao han* encounter an unjust situation, they are moved by their strong will and sense of justice to fight for the weak and topple evil. This Robin Hood-esque characteristic is described in the tales themselves as *lu da bu ping* (fighting inequality along the road) and *hao han* are said to *ai da bao bu ping* (like fighting to right inequality).

One type of traditional tale, called *shumao* (story hats), are not narratives so much as collections of cultural information organized around familiar scripts touched up with a few humorous twists and wordplay. Story hats are short but lively numbers intended to amuse and catch the interest of audiences. Many are simply tongue-twisters that performers learn in their initial stages of training and are used to open a performance. They have the dual purposes of allowing the audience to settle in and enabling the performer to warm up before the *zhengshu* (main tale). Thus, many story hats last less than two minutes when performed and merely involve third person description in the narrator role and register. The fast tale *Fear* is an example of a traditional story hat. There are no characters or action, only a series of cultural givens.

Fear[13]

1 Eyes fear blindness, ears fear deafness,
Noses only fear clogging up.
Chicks only fear weasels, mice fear cats,

[12] Traditional tales were deemed to have feudal ideas during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) and thus were banned from public performances. They quickly returned to popularity after the Reform and Opening Up policies began in the early 1980s.

[13] This textualization is based on the oral tale I learned from master fast tale performer Wu Yanguo during our rehearsal sessions while I was his apprentice in 2004-05.

Rabbits fear hawks.
Loafers fear work,
Farmers just fear no harvest.
Lazy students fear exams,
Teachers just fear unfocused students.
Ice cream men fear cold weather,
Blistered feet fear jumping rope.
Toads just fear dry weather,
Flies and mosquitoes fear being clean.
Leaky homes just fear big rains,
Ships at sea fear big storms.
Driving cars, (we) fear flat tires,
Riding bikes, (we) just fear hitting muddy ditches.
Pens just fear running out of ink,
Books just fear unclear print.
Liberalism fears discipline,
Bureaucratism fears rectification.
Grafters fear audits,
Selfish people fear public service.
Reactionaries just fear the P.L.A,
Warmongers fear peace.
Children just fear having no mom and pop,
Parents just fear unfilial children.
Watching movies, (we) fear power outages,
Telling stories, I just fear you won't listen.

Modern tales revolve around a broader range of themes including daily life, politics, society, military life, local customs, human relationships, and encounters with foreigners. The fast tales produced in the 1950s were called *xin* (new) tales as they dealt with aspects of life in modern socialist China rather than traditional heroic themes that had become politically incorrect. The socialist heroes of new tales come from one of the three classes of society valued at the time—workers, peasants, or soldiers—and do not necessarily fight for injustice, although they sometimes do fight against rightists, corrupt officials, and imperialist invaders. Instead, they are models of socialist society who give up their seats on the bus to the elderly, go out of their way to help others in need, and sacrifice themselves for the good of the nation. Those modern stories written prior to Reform and Opening Up (1978) tend to reflect a life rooted in agricultural production, while those written since the early 1990s often reflect aspects of urban life.

Contemporary fast tales can be about nearly any subject. Stories are performed about the people, places, and events in the world of the performers. Story composers draw on every aspect of daily life in Shandong as well as the broader Chinese cultural tradition. They select stock characters and recurrent everyday happenings that a wide range of people can readily identify with and relate to, such as getting an injection, having teeth pulled, visiting relatives, or shaving.

Many modern tales were written by cultural workers tasked with specific political goals in mind as well, and thus have political themes such as attacking the *falungong* movement, promoting reunification with Taiwan, and glorifying the Olympics. Official influence on fast tale writing has also generated a large number of tales that are designed to promote didactic meanings. This type of tale typically ends with a lesson or moral for the listener to ponder. Examples include *A Dialogue between Two Pigs* and *There Was a Young Guy Like This*. In the former, two pigs complain that the food they are being served is not as high in quality as in previous times. The two ultimately vow to eat as much and as well as possible so that they can be canned and exported to a foreign country. The tale is both a metaphor for the waste and extravagance associated with banquets and a critique of the 1980s craze to go abroad.

In the latter tale, a young man sees a pretty girl walking down the street. He goes out of his way to pick her up, telling her that he would do anything for her including devoting his life to her, donating all of his blood to her if she were to have leukemia, and throwing himself in front of an oncoming car to save her. The entire time the young man is trying to seduce the girl, she remains silent. Finally, when the young man thinks he has won her over, she opens her mouth and mumbles unintelligibly as if she were mute. When the young man discovers she is a mute, he immediately changes his tune, hurriedly leaving the scene. As he walks away, the girl sighs in relief and chuckles, "Hm, when dealing with this kind of person, you have to use measures like these." The narrator then ends the tale by explicitly pointing out the moral of the tale, "I've finished telling this little story. For the young women present, it's worth studying. If you run into this kind of situation, don't avoid trying this trick."

In addition to politically correct fast tales, there are fast tales that have been created since 1978 that offer social commentary, include explicit or implicit critiques of the state, deal with *huangse* (yellow, meaning "vulgar" or "pornographic") themes, or detail alternatives to the official socialist version of reality. Examples include *Going through the Back Door*, *Schlocky*, *The Prowler*, and *The Banquet* (Shepherd 2005). Politically incorrect fast tales have proliferated in cyberspace, where authorship is sometimes difficult to associate with a particular individual.

Wu Song Fights the Tiger is the single most widely recognized and performed fast tale episode (Børdahl 2007). It was made the standard measuring stick for performers by Gao Yuanjun. Variations of the story are regularly performed by local dramatic troupes, storytellers, and *quyi* performers around China, while the most famous versions of the tale appear in chapter twenty-three of the novel *The Water Margin* and the introductory section of the novel *Plum in the Golden Vase.* Set in the Song Dynasty, *Fights the Tiger* recounts the legendary tale of Wu Song encountering a man-eating tiger on the slopes of Sun View Ridge, a real location in western Shandong. In the tale Wu Song is on a long journey home to visit his elder brother, Wu Dalang, when he comes across a small inn at the base the ridge. He enters the inn to quench his thirst with fine spirits and fill his stomach with fresh beef.

An excerpt from master fast tale performer Wu Yanguo's performance of *Wu Song Fights the Tiger* is included here as an example from the traditional repertoire. Italics are used to indicate the narrator register of speech, which is characterized in Chinese by a pitch slightly higher than normal speech, end rhyme, and a distinct rhythm that follows a beat pattern of *dang di ge dang*. The beat is kept with the brass *ban*. Character speech is marked in bold here to highlight shifts from the narrator register into character roles, which are accompanied by changes

in speech register to any of a range of normal speech registers associated with the particular social class, education level, age, and hometown of the characters in the tale (Bender 2003a). Shifts in body position, line of sight, posture, voice, and facial expressions accompany these changes in linguistic register.

Wu Song Fights the Tiger[14]

Idle talk and aimless chatter, I'll tell you no more,
I'm here to tell the story of the hero Second Brother Wu.
That Wu Song went off to Shao Lin Temple to learn martial arts,
For eight years and more he studied kung fu.
Arriving back home he caused a ruckus at East Mountain Temple,
Doing a number on the Li family five tyrants.
Back home he snuffed out the Li's five tigers, those tyrants,
Feeling that raising the matter with the magistrate would be too troublesome, he fled to the countryside.
He stayed at the Chai family manor for one full year,
Where he came to know the Shandong hero named Song Jiang.
He declared Song Jiang his blood uncle,
Filling the place of his father and mother.
One day, the hero Wu Song was thinking of home,
In his heart he could think only of going home to visit family.
He took leave of Song Jiang and Chai Jin, the two heroes,
And hoisted his bundle on his shoulders.
In his hand, carrying a staff,
His steps following the main road, off he hurried.
Day after day only looking forward to the next,
One day he arrived at the border of Yanggu County.
Yanggu County oversees Zhangqiu Town,
To the west of Zhangqiu Town there is a Sun View Ridge.
Wu Song arriving at Zhangqiu Town,
Looked to the north of the road sizing things up.
He looked to the north of the road and carefully scanned,
Shwoosh! The wind blew and the scent of liquor wafted all around.
On this side was written, "Smell the liquor, you're one-third drunk."
On that side was written, "Open the keg, the aroma carries for ten li."
Right in the center hung a large sign,
On it was written, "Three bowls and you can't cross the ridge."
"Huh?" *Wu Song thought,* **"What does 'Three bowls and you can't cross the ridge' mean?**"
"Oh!" This little wine seller talks brashly,
"I, Wu Song, was born a drinker,

[14] The textualization presented here comes from Wu Yanguo's January 2005 performance that took place during a training session in his home in Qingdao.

I'll go inside and give their good wine a taste."
The hero Wu Song walked inside,
Looking inside, he sized things up.
A lone table was placed in the center,
Two chairs set to each side.
The hero Wu Song looking to both sides, carefully scanned,
Hey! A whole row of nothing but wine kegs!
A whole row of nothing but wine kegs!
Wu Song placed his bundle on the tabletop,
Then leaned his staff against the wall:
"Innkeeper, bring some wine."
"Innkeeper, bring some wine."
"Innkeeper, bring some wine!"
Wu Song three times in a row called without anyone coming to reply,
Wu Song three times in a row called without anyone speaking a sound.
At that time of day business was slow,
The innkeeper was busy in the rear.
There was also a young server who wasn't around,
Oooh! His stomach hurting, he had the runs, had went to the outhouse!
Wu Song three times in a row called without anyone coming to reply,
He pounded the table and began to cry:
"INNKEEPER! BRIIIIIIIIING SOME WINE!"
Whoa! Bellowing like this is no problem at all,
Oh dear mother! It shook so hard the building began to sway!
Huala! Huala! Dirt sifted down from rafters,
The place shook so hard that the sound of those wine-filled kegs—
"Weng la!" "Weng le!"—reverberated in his ears.
The innkeeper coming out, carefully scanned:
"What was that? Frightening, what's all the ruckus? Is it raining?
No, it's not raining. Was it thunder? No, that wasn't thunder.
What was tha…Oh! My mother, how did this brute grow so big?"
He looked at Wu Song, a body so tall it reached seven feet two,
His shoulders spread wide, exuding power,
His noggin bigger than a rice scoop,
Those eyes when he glared resembled cowbells,
His arms seemed like the rafters of a house,
His leathery fists when clenched like the head of a steel hammer,
The palm of his hand when extended as big as a winnow,
His fingers as long as wooden clubs. As long as wooden clubs!
"Hero, my sire, what will you drink? What will you eat?
Command and I'll fulfill it at once."
"What wines do you have? What foods do you have? One by one, from the top say them in detail."

"Yes, Hero, my sire, you want to drink wine!
If you want to drink wine, we have Scholar Red and Grape Dew,
Then there's one called Roasted Yellow,
Then there's one called Hit the Floor When You Go Out the Door,
Then there's one called Bottle Penetrating Aroma;
If you want to eat food, there's beef,
The taste of our beef is really top-notch;
If you want to eat something dry, there's baked dough,
If you want to eat something wet, there's noodles and soup."
"Cut me five kilos of beef! Bring lots of your good wine."
"Yes, sire!"

Following this excerpt, two starkly contrasted characters—the physically imposing and strong-willed Wu Song and a diminutive, easily frightened innkeeper—engage in a humorous exchange in which Wu Song repeatedly demands more wine despite the innkeeper's warnings of the wine's potency. After drinking his fill (eighteen bowls in the fast tale version), Wu Song starts on his way to cross the mountain when a second exchange with the innkeeper ensues. The innkeeper repeatedly warns of the ferocious man-eating tiger on the loose on the mountain and urges Wu Song to spend the night in the inn. Wu Song thinks he is being swindled, so he brashly claims that he is not afraid of any tiger before heading up the mountain where he ultimately encounters, battles, and kills the Chinese king of beasts. The actual battle with the tiger comprises less than one-fourth of the fast tale version of the story.

Although it involves only three characters (Wu Song, the innkeeper, and the personified tiger), the fast tale version of this episode embodies the ideal traditional fast tale packed with action, suspense, drinking, and fighting. A strong-willed, filial hero (Wu Song's elder brother has replaced their deceased father as the head of the family) exhibits tremendous bravery and courage in the face of the evil, violent antagonist (the tiger). In the end, the hero overcomes the evil and saves the helpless common folk from disaster.

Singing Dead Tales to Life

Singing dead tales to life (*si shu chang huo*) is a phrase used by Shandong fast tale[15] performers to describe the process involved in assembling their full-blown narrative performances (Gao 1980). According to performers, this description reflects the fundamentally dual nature of fast tales as works intended to be appreciated as a form of literature by reading audiences at the same time that they are a form of oral performance poetry to be sung for and appreciated by live audiences (Foley 2002). Textual versions of fast tales are written for publication in journals and magazines and are read as folk literature. More recently, they have begun appearing on Internet bulletin boards and in chat rooms as a form of humorous electronic

[15] Variants of the idea, including *si shu shuo huo* (narrating dead tales to life) and *jia xi zhen zuo* (fictitious plays made real), circle among performers and people who discuss the tradition.

text.[16] This duality of intended audience and purpose is also reflected in emic jargon about how fast tale performances are created. Performers refer to their written story scripts as *ban chengpin* (half-finished products) that can only *li zai tai shang* (stand up on stage) in performance.

Although the primary mode of transmission for fast tales is mimetic learning—apprentices imitate the performances of their masters and masters pass the tales on "mouth to mouth"—contemporary performers begin with a story script that is most often in written form and is created by someone other than the performer.[17] Modern fast tale writers, many of whom never perform what they write, are called *chuangzuo jia* (creators), and performers, most of whom never write what they perform, are called *biaoyan yishu jia* (performance artists).

In a long-term process of refinement and calibration, performers breathe life into flat story scripts by injecting the tales with feelings and transform them into multimodal performance experiences through what is called *zhuang huo* (packing life) or *zhuang duanzi* (assembling a story).[18] Packing life into a story refers to beginning with a verbal script and gradually enlivening it through a range of rhetorical techniques to create a full-blown performance that comes to life in front of an audience (Bender 2003a). The process of packing life into a story involves engaging in repeated cycles of rehearsal, performance, directed feedback, and reperformance at a higher level. Writing about Siri epic, Lauri Honko (1996) postulated that multiforms breathe life into oral epics. Fast tale performers, on the other hand, argue that although the tales serve as the core of a fast tale performance, it is the performer who injects life into the *si shu* (dead tales—dead because they have no feelings) through a range of techniques.

During a period between the summers of 2004 and 2005, several of the master fast tale performer Wu Yanguo's inexperienced students performed what experienced performers and aficionados described as *gan shuo* (dry tellings) and *sha chang* (muddleheaded singings) because they merely presented their stories and were following a generic set of rules. Their performances were described as unsuccessful because they had failed to inject feelings into the tales or engage the audience, both of which are viewed as keys to creating the desired mirthful atmosphere associated with fast tale performances. In performer parlance, a "good" performance is *qi fen huo, san fen zuo* (seven parts alive, three parts the work). Thus, for them, performance is the key. They believe that without a good script successful performance is not possible, but without the performer even a great script will not lead to a successful performance (Gao 1980:605-18).

---

[16] The most active and specialized website where fast tales appear is the Shandong fast tale net at: http://www.shandongkuaishu.com/bbs/index.php

[17] The performance and writing of fast tales are two distinct acts. The verbs *biaoyan*—to perform—and *chuangzuo*—to create—are used to describe the two processes. Performers perform. Creators write. These are two distinct professions, with separate *biaoyan* and *chuangzuo* award categories included in most competitions. A very small number of individuals can and do engage in both. Also, performers regularly make alterations to stories in a process known as "making a story one's own."

[18] *Zhuang* can mean "to load (as in a truck)," "to install (as in lights)," "to pretend," "to act as," "a costume or uniform," "to pack," "to assemble," or "to decorate," depending on context.

Expressive Mode of Presentation

In fast tales, there is a distinction between telling and showing similar to the distinction between diegesis and mimesis in Western narrative scholarship (Bauman 1986:65). Many *quyi* genres, including fast tales, involve both modes of presentation in a single performance. While in character role, the fast tale performer is in the mimetic mode, enacting his version of well-known stock characters and events. In the narrator and performer roles, he is in a diegetic mode, telling the audience about those events. Individual performers and various schools of fast tale performers place differing amounts of emphasis on the two modes of presentation, with some (Gao School) valuing the mimetic aspect of performances more and others (Yang School) affording greater importance to the diegetic aspect.[19] Regardless of emphasis, fast tale performers engage in both modes of presentation, alternating between telling and showing, and shifting between narrating and acting, within any single performance.

This style of dramatic performance is described as *biaoxian* (expressive).[20] The term is used in contrast with the term *zaixian* (representational). In *biaoxian* performances, the artist assumes multiple roles—narrator, performer, and various character roles within the fictional world of the story—in front of the audience, while in *zaixian* performances, as in most theater and movies, characters do not come out of role. *Zaixian* performances involve acting where the emphasis is on the realistic reflection of life in stage space and the realistic portrayal of characters in that space. Thus there is a divide between the performer and his or her audience. In China, *zaixian* arts include most theatrical performances, many local dramatic operas, and movies.

In the *biaoxian* format characteristic of fast tales, performance is understood both as a process of bringing something to life to put it on display for an audience *and* as a process of sharing the performance experience with an audience. There is the expectation for realistic portrayal of characters within the story frame as in *zaixian* performances, but also for conventionalized movements, gestures, facial expressions, and verbal formulas that are symbolic rather than realistic. It is further understood that the performer will create a unique, shared experience by bridging the divide with the audience. Performers accomplish this goal by stepping out of the story to engage the audience as the performer. Fast tale performers create a frame of performance within which the frame of the story exists, and they freely move among these frames without causing confusion for informed audiences because they share an aesthetic code (Bateson 1972, Goffman 1974, Bauman 1977, Babcock 1977, and Turner 1988).

---

[19] The Gao School, named for Gao Yuanjun, is the most widely known school of performers. The Yang School takes its name from its most famous performer, Yang Lide, and is known for its strong local flavor. In addition to these two major schools, there is a small school of performers who use a four-leaf bamboo castanet as their rhythm-keeping device. Known as *zhu ban kuai shu* (bamboo clapper fast tales), the Yu School is named for Yu Chuanbin. Because there are so few performers trained in this style of fast tales, many performers do not recognize them as a formal school.

[20] *Biaoxian* literally means “to show,” “to manifest,” or “to externalize.”

After opening a performance by engaging the audience in what is called *dianhua* (padded speech)[21] as the performer in the here and now of the performance context, a fast tale performer keys the story frame with the *ban* and the narrative register (Hymes 1974 and Foley 2002). Once the story frame has been established, the narrator builds a fictional world by invoking a shared aesthetic code. As storyteller he invites the audience to come along on a narrative journey, to "make believe."[22] Conventionalized language, stylized movements, and stock facial expressions then quickly transport "fluent listeners" into the story realm (Foley 2002). During the journey, the performer then shifts back and forth between diegetic and mimetic modes, depending on the conditions of the performance.

At any point along the narrative journey, the narrator can *tiaochu* (jump out) of the story frame back into the performer role to enhance the performance. With fluid transitions easily recognizable to informed audiences, performers deftly jump out to offer commentary on the action or characters in the story, provide important background information, foreshadow important events, enhance dramatic effects, build or prime jokes, introduce new characters, clarify easily misunderstood language, appeal to the group's collective sense of humor, draw the audience into the performance, focus audience attention, cover up mistakes, link the tale with the audience or context of performance, or engage the audience in what is described as an *ganqing jiaoliu* (exchange of feelings). Performers then *tiaojin* (jump back into) the story frame to continue the narrative journey. Although there is no limit to the number of times one can jump in or out of the story frame, fast tale performances typically begin and end in the performer role rather than the narrator role.

Fast tale performers spend significant amounts of time rehearsing this ability to *sui jin sui chu* (enter and exit [the story frame] anytime). Gao Yuanjun (1980:632) used the phrase *jia xi zhen zuo, si shu shuo huo* (fictitious plays performed real, dead tales narrated alive) to describe the mix of the mimetic and diegetic modes of performance associated with fast tales as well as to capture the dual nature—as both literature and performance art—of fast tales. The following proverb sums up the expressive goals of an ideal fast tale performance of the tale *Wu Song Fights the Tiger*:

zui shang shuo hu,	the mouth describes a tiger,
yan li you hu,	in the eyes there is a tiger,
ban shang zai hu,	the *ban* carries a tiger,
kou qiang xiang hu,	the voice and pitch resemble a tiger,
shenti zhuang hu.	the body acts like a tiger.

[21] Padded speech includes the greeting and explanation of what will be performed, as well as interaction with the audience that takes place between stories in a performance involving multiple independent stories. Although designed to appear spontaneous, padded speech is a carefully crafted and rehearsed component of a performer's routine that is honed with experience.

[22] Mark Bender (2003a:72-75) has noted that many Chinese storytellers conceptualize the nature of their narratives as movement down a *shulu* (story road).

Gao Hongsheng, son of the renowned performer Gao Yuanjun, in character role at *Jiangning huiguan*, July 2010. Photo: Eric Shepherd.

Liu Liwu in narrator role, *Jiangning huiguan*, July 2010. Photo: Eric Shepherd.

Master fast tale performer Wu Yanguo in narrator role, Qingdao Shanfo Hotel, July 2010. Photo: Eric Shepherd.

Li Hongmin in character role, *Jiangning huiguan*, July 2010. Photo: Eric Shepherd.

Formulaic Language

In fast tales, although no two performances are the same, performers do not compose the bulk of their tales in performance. End rhyme, set beat patterns, and fixed line length make composition in the performance of fast tales extremely difficult. Rather, performers work from a memorized script and improvise based upon that script as well as in response to the conditions of performance. Even the improvisation based on the set script is planned and rehearsed until it is internalized, so that it follows fast tale conventions but appears to be off the cuff. Thus fast tales fall into Foley's "voiced texts" category (2002:40-45) of oral poetry, although they sometimes straddle the boundary with the "oral performance" category.

Fast tale performances are packed with different types of formulaic language.[23] For example, because the big segments of *The Tale of Wu Song* were traditionally the main event that followed shorter warm-up acts, most begin with stock phrases that were transitions from the story hats or padded speech that opened performances. They include both *hua xiao shuo, lun gang qiang* (say few words, discuss staunch will) and *xian yan sui yu bu duo jiang, biao yi biao hao han wu er lang* (Idle talk and aimless chatter, I'll tell no more. I'm telling of the hero Second Brother Wu). Such formulaic openers distinguish big from small and traditional from modern segments.

Some traditional big segments were extracted from the middle of the *Tale of Wu Song*. As a result, they begin and end with stock phrases that originally linked internal segments of the larger tale.[24] Examples of opening formulas from big segments in the *Tale of Wu Song* include the following:

"Picking up the tale from last time, telling the next episode"
"The last time in the tale (I) told . . . (episode name, ending action, hero involved)"
"Again, telling of the hero Second Brother Wu"
"Again, performing the hero Second Brother Wu"
"Picking up the tale from the last time and telling on"
"In last time's story, I performed . . . (episode name or ending action)"
"Linking up with the last time and telling the next episode"
"Continuing, (I'll) again tell of Second Brother Wu"
"The last time what the story told was . . . (main action)"
"The last time the story told up to . . . (ending action)"
"Once again returning to . . . (ending action or location)"
"Quickly picking up from last time and telling the next episode"

Examples of ending formulas from big segments in the *Tale of Wu Song* include the following:

"Come next time and (I'll) again pick up (the story)"
"In the next time (I) tell the tale, (I'll) again pick up (the story)"
"This time Wu Song . . . (main action or episode name). The next time, Wu Song . . . (upcoming main action or episode name)"
"If you listen on, you'll know . . . ."
"The next time . . . (action or episode name)"
"In the next segment, (I'll) again pick up (the story)"

---

[23] According to Albert Lord (1960:30), a formula is "a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea." Lord suggests that formulas help audiences to follow along and aid in singers' rapid composition in performance.

[24] Exceptions include the opening and closing *huimu* of the *Tale of Wu Song*. *East Mountain Temple*, the opening *huimu*, begins by linking *The Tale of Wu Song* to the larger Water Margin story cycle. *Double Dragon Mountain* begins with an announcement that it is the final *huimu* in *The Tale of Wu Song*: "*The Tale of Wu Song* isn't really long, telling this segment we've arrived at the end. The tale at the end is even livelier, what we're performing is the great battle between Wu Song and the Flowery Monk."

"Rest a bit and catch (our) breath, (we'll) again pick up (the story)"
"Again pick up when . . . (action or location name)"
"We'll again tell (the rest) of the story in the next time"
"If you want to see Wu Song . . . (action), (I'll) pick up next time"

Fast tale formulas are not limited to openings and closings. The inventory of basic building blocks that writers and performers use to create and perform fast tales includes repetitive words, phrases, characters, scenes, and themes (Foley 2002). At the smallest building block level, there are special fast tale formulas that informed audiences immediately recognize, so they allow the performer to efficiently communicate ideas and emotions. For example, when fast tale characters see something that evokes a particular emotion, performers utilize the set formula "When character name heard/saw this, he/she was as emotion as can be." Thus, in *Fights the Tiger*, we find, "When the tiger saw this, he was as happy as can be" and "When Wu Song saw this, he was as nervous as can be," while from *Knucklehead Wants a Tot* there is "When Knucklehead heard this, he was as happy as can be." In a similar convenient formula for indicating that a character quickly reacts to the unfolding events, performers use "When character name heard/saw this, he/she didn't delay."

Some formulas mark fast tale speech as a special register because they are archaisms. An example is found in the structure of the previous happy-as-can-be example. The Chinese follows the pattern "adjective + *de huang*." This formula is used as an intensifier meaning "extremely" and has the sense of "as ____ as possible." The structure is frequently used with a wide range of adjectives in fast tales, but is no longer used in colloquial speech in either Mandarin or most Shandong dialects. Typically, the adverb *hen* (very) is used in place of the *de huang* structure, and the adjective follows *hen* rather than coming before the intensifier as in the adjective + *de huang* pattern.

An example of a formula that has shifted over time is the phrase *dao gong qiang* (swords, bows, and weapons). Traditionally, it was used whenever performers were describing groups of people who had armed themselves, regardless of the type of weapons they were using. Most contemporary performers have dropped "bows" from the formula, changing it to "swords and weapons." When asked about this modification, one young performer laughed as he said, "No one uses bows anymore." Older performers argue that bows must be retained in order for the story to be realistic.

Repetition, Variation, and Memory

Fast tale performers and audiences alike depend on formulas and formulaic repetition to follow the continuously flowing language of performance as well as to keep up with changing scenes and rapid action. Thus examples of all types of repetition can be found in longer fast tale performances, including instances in which narrative description repeats in slightly altered word form. For example, in the opening segment of *Fights the Tiger*, the following lines are repeated in this rephrased manner:

Doing a number on the Li family five tyrants.
Back home he snuffed out the Li's five tigers, those tyrants . . . .

Wu Song three times in a row called without anyone coming to reply,
Wu Song three times in a row called without anyone speaking a sound.

Later in the same tale, during the rapid action of a fight scene, the movements of the two participants, Wu Song and the tiger, are repeated continuously. The structure of the repetition follows the pattern of stating the action in the final line of a couplet before repeating (in a slightly rephrased form) the same action in the first line of the next couplet. When the tiger first charges Wu Song, he dodges to one side with the tiger landing next to him. The action of dodging and landing is repeated in back-to-back lines.

That Wu Song shouted, "How fierce!"
As he quickly dodged to one side.
Wu Song dodged to the side,
As the tiger landed in the middle of the ground.
That tiger pounced without landing on Second Brother Wu,
And could only think to itself . . . .

This form of rephrased repetition frequently occurs after a character's thoughts and feelings or minor action breaks the overall flow of the action. The final line of narrated action is then repeated in order to return to the main action of the story. The following is an example of this practice:

That tiger three times was unable to catch Second Brother Wu,
Then the tiger got scared.
"Trouble. Today, I've got a problem!"
Wu Song's mouth said he wasn't scared,
But in his heart he was a little worried:
He raised up his staff about to strike,
He just forgot he was tall and his arms were long;
He raised the staff and swung to strike,
CRACK! The staff hit a tree branch;
CRACK! It snapped in two,
The piece left in his hand only a foot long.
Angered, Wu Song stomped his foot:
I told you not to get scared and you had to get scared!
What are you afraid of?
That tiger three times in a row was unable to catch Second Brother Wu,
It just heard the sound CRACK! ringing in its ears.

This type of repetition helps both performer and audience follow the quickly unfolding action, which is particularly important in a genre like fast tales in which the beat and rhythm do not stop, action and language are constantly flowing from beginning to end, and the rate of delivery is rapid. However, the variation in this type of repetition is sometimes intentionally built into fast tales to aid performer memory rather than being a result of composition in performance.

Fast tale performers must learn the verbal scripts of their tales to the degree that they do not have to consciously think about individual words or lines. They must internalize them in order to perform demanding physical movements, keep the beat with their *ban*, time their facial expressions and role-shifting, and deliver the words in an integrated performance. When internalized to this extent, performers are not thinking about the words as they perform but rather are monitoring the overall performance on a metacognitive level. The individual words of the traditional formulas that make up their verbal scripts cue entire formulas—sometimes hundreds of lines in length—in memory as well as a specific larger portion of the story. Particular variants function like mile markers on the story road. Because a single word at the beginning of a formula triggers the entire formula, the storyteller can easily get lost in his own story if identical words are used to initiate formulas that occur at different points in the story. Thus, in rehearsal, fast tale performers intentionally change the phrases slightly to distinguish the various points in the story that involve similar action.

For example, in the *Tale of Wu Song,* where Wu Song is the protagonist in fifteen lengthy episodes, we find "That Wu Song," "This Wu Song," "The hero," "Wu Song," "Second Brother Wu," "The hero Wu Song," and "hero Second Brother Wu" as subtle variations that begin otherwise identical lines. Each variant refers to the same hero doing the same action but marks a specific point in the larger tale in the performer's memory. "That Wu Song" cues the larger segment of the story that contains description of the hero's past. "This Wu Song" marks the portion of the story when he comes across a small inn. "The hero Wu Song" initiates Wu Song's entry into the inn and the subsequent action.

These subtle alterations to formulaic phrases mark larger formulaic units that are critical resources for the fast tale performer. Foley (2002:111) has described such units as "words," or "ready-made bytes of traditional language" that are "systematically similar to other instances, but adjusted to harmonize with [their] immediate surroundings." Foley's examples of larger "words" include the arming of a hero, assembly, caparisoning a horse, and traveling to a destination. The most frequently occurring larger "word" found throughout *The Tale of Wu Song* is a set description of the hero. In every instance in which any character first sees the hero Wu Song, the following description ensues:

> He looked at Wu Song, a body so tall it reached seven feet two,
> His shoulders spread wide exuding power,
> His noggin bigger than a rice scoop,
> Those eyes when he glared resembled cowbells,
> His arms seemed like the rafters of a house,
> His leathery fists when clenched like the head of a steel hammer,
> The palm of his hand when extended as big as a winnow,
> His fingers as long as wooden clubs.

To illustrate how performers build variation into their performances to aid memory, I offer the following two "words." Both are lines attributed to the innkeeper. Both "words" begin with the formula "Hero, listen to what I have to say to you." In between the two words, fast tale performers shift back to the voice, direction, line of sight, and body language of Wu Song to ask a question, so they they are distinct units within the story.

Word 1

"Hero, my sire, listen as I tell you:
A ferocious tiger has appeared on Sun View Ridge,
This tiger's the king of beasts.
He eats travelers as they pass by,
And throws their leftover bones along the roadside.
Since this tiger appeared,
The common folk of this area have met disaster:
He ate until even in threes and fives we don't dare go out,
He ate until in eights or tens we carry swords, bows, and weapons,
He ate until those outside the fort all ran inside,
He ate until those living in small villages raced for big ones,
The Yanggu County magistrate dispatched people to kill the tiger!
But many people were all killed by the tiger.
Now, in all four directions, notices have been posted,
Morning, noon, and afternoon,
During these three time slots it's permitted to cross the ridge.
Morning, noon, and afternoon,
Within these three time slots you must cross the ridge,
Ten people make a team,
All must carry swords, bows, and weapons.
If you cross the ridge all alone,
When you get there, you are certain to be eaten by the tiger!
Now, it's already after three in the afternoon,
If you ask me, you should just stay in my inn."

Word 2

"Hero, my sire, listen as I tell you:
In our town, there are more than twenty young lads,
By day they sleep until the sun goes down;
As soon as it's dark, they patrol around the outskirts of town,
Every one of them carrying swords, bows, and weapons;
If they hear a sound outside,
The deafening sound of gongs and drums fills the air.
The tiger doesn't dare come into our town,
He doesn't dare kill anyone here."

During rehearsal performances in Qingdao in April 2005, several of master fast tale performer Wu Yanguo's apprentices were having trouble distinguishing these two "words." They had memorized the complete verbal script but as soon as they began saying, "Hero, my sire, listen as I tell you" in the second "word," the first "word" was cued in memory and they mistakenly repeated the first "word" because the first lines of the two "words" were identical in their written scripts. This type of mistake would be a critical error in live performance for an audience and would be equivalent to getting lost in one's own story. Master Wu instructed them to distinguish the two sections of the story in memory by dropping one syllable from *hao han yeye* (Hero, my sire). Thus, the former began with *hao han ye*, so that the cue in memory was different from the latter occurrence of *hao han yeye* but the meaning remained unchanged. Later, he further distinguished the two words by altering the first line in "word one" by adding "in detail" after "listen as I tell you." None of the young performers got lost on this part of the story road after making these subtle adjustments.

While helping his apprentices enliven other tales, Master Wu frequently injected similar types of variation by using other parts of speech such as verbs and adjectives that begin lines, especially when dealing with longer segments in which similar actions occurred frequently. Slight variations to formulas thus evolve as a conscious memory tool and means for the performers to distinguish between similar "words" that occur at different points in the story. Variation develops in beat patterns with the *ban*, which also cues movements, facial expressions, voices, and verbal formulas for the same reason. Slight changes to the beat pattern are utilized by the performers to mark larger "words" in memory even when the verbal script remains the same.

The large amount of repetition and frequent occurrence of formulas and larger "words" in fast tales should not foster the impression that fast tales are mechanical and boring. Repetition often only becomes repetition when performances are flattened into the textual format (Bender 2003a). That is, many lines that appear to be mere repetition once they are confined to a textual format are actually quite different when they come to life in performance (Honko 2000). For example, when Wu Song enters the inn in *Fights the Tiger*, he calls out four times for the innkeeper to bring him some wine. In most textual versions, all four lines are identical: *jiujia na jiu lai* (Innkeeper, bring some wine). In performance, however, all four are delivered with distinct intonation, volume, rate of speech, facial expressions, and movements that indicate four distinct mood shifts through which the hero Wu Song passes.

At first, Wu Song politely says, "Innkeeper, bring some wine." He is tired from his long journey and is in a good mood, knowing that in a matter of moments he will be able to quench his thirst with fine wine. When there is no response, Wu Song repeats the phrase, "Innkeeper, bring some wine?" This time, Wu Song does so in a questioning tone and at a slightly higher volume. He has a questioning look on his face because he does not understand why no one has responded to his initial request. When there is no response to his second request, Wu Song begins to become perturbed. With an annoyed look on his face, he then repeats the line again, "**Innkeeper, bring some wine**!" This third time, Wu Song shouts his request loudly enough to be heard anywhere in the inn.

The narrator then interjects to explain that the innkeeper is busy in the rear and the server boy has gone out back to the outhouse. This interjection serves to build the suspense as Wu Song's mood shifts from annoyance to outright anger. When there is no response to his third

request, he pounds his fist on the table as he bellows at the top of his lungs, "**INNKEEPER! BRIIIIIIIIING SOME WINE!**" As Wu Song bellows, the inn's rafters shake and the innkeeper thinks a thunderstorm has moved into the area. When delivering this line, fast tale performers borrow a Beijing opera technique in drawing the word "bring" out in an almost songlike bellow.

Although these four instances of the line "Innkeeper, bring some wine" are textually identical, they are rendered distinct as they are brought to life in performance through various expressive means, including voice alteration, speech register, volume, facial expressions, line of sight, onomatopoeia, and body movements. While teaching his students this section of the story, Wu Yanguo spent several two-hour classes on just these four sentences, coaching his students to develop the subtle distinctions and to evoke the appropriate mood for each emotional shift. He taught his students that if the lines were the same in performance, they had failed to bring them to life.

A similar example occurs later in the same story when Wu Song asks twice for more wine and the innkeeper asks twice if Wu Song can still drink more. During this exchange in performance, Wu Song's speech and behavior increasingly show the effects of the alcohol he has consumed and the innkeeper becomes increasingly amazed at the amount his guest can consume. Again, performer intonation, volume, rate and quality of speech (slurred vs. normal speech), facial expressions, and movements distinguish what in textualized form appear to be two identical lines.

Master fast tale performer Wu Yanguo demonstrates a segment from the famous tale *Wu Song Fights the Tiger* during a class for five apprentices in his home in Qingdao, January 2005. Video by Eric Shepherd. http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/26i/shepherd#myGallery-picture(12)

Telling *in* Singing

The primary mode of delivery in fast tale performances is known in performer parlance as *shuo jian you chang* (telling *in* singing) because the main register of speech blends normal singing and speaking registers.[25] Although fast tale performers shift among a wide range of speech registers during any single performance, they are known for and associated with this telling in singing register.[26] Such storysinging, described simply as *chang* (singing) by performers, is a form of

[25] This family of *quyi* genres is sometimes described as *yunsongti* (chant-rhyme form) (Wang 1985 and 1994). *Quyi* genres that are spoken in plain speaking registers fall into a *shuo* (telling) group. Genres that are sung—in the sense of singing a song—make up a *chang* (singing) group, and traditions characterized by alternation between periods of spoken and sung narration (known in the West as prosimetrum) make up the *shuochang* (telling *and* singing) subgroup (Harris and Reichl 1997:1-16). This distinction is regularly pointed out by fast tale performers in discussions about the tradition as well as in asides in some tales.

[26] Mark Bender (1999a) has written extensively about the role of shifting in Suzhou *tanci* performances.

rhymed and rhythmic chanting that rests somewhere between pure singing and plain speaking. While in the narrator role, performers deliver all lines in this register to a steady beat and rhythm that work together to integrate various elements of performance and draw in audiences. Narration follows this steady rhythm and beat so that performances are characterized by language that flows smoothly, without pauses or breaks in the seven- or ten-syllable lines.

When combined in the storysinging register, the features of rhythm, beat, end rhyme, and rapid shifting among roles with different voices, the smooth, melodic style of narration gives Chinese audiences the impression that the performer is speaking quickly and causes some Westerners to think of rap. In emic terms, singing fast tales is compared to dancing while shouldering a pole from which two buckets full of water are suspended on opposite sides. When done well, no water spills from the buckets. The musical sound created in the synthesis of the beat of the *ban*, the storysinging register, and end rhyme are defining characteristics of fast tales.

Performing a One-Person Play

Fast tales are a form of performative storytelling in which artists build narrative worlds for their audiences through a combination of dramatic techniques, conventionalized movements and facial expressions, the sound and rhythm of their *ban*, carefully crafted verbal scripts, and a range of expressive techniques (Bruner 2002). A fast tale performance may involve narration, the expression of feelings, recitation about life events, explanations of things found in the performers' everyday experience, character dialogue, or descriptions of characters or scenery, all of which may be intended to entertain or educate audiences. Some fast tales are yarns from the traditional repertoire recast in humorous ways. Others are sketches of the people, places, and events in the everyday world that surrounds the writers and performers.

Stock scenes and characters that are immediately recognizable to people from Shandong are selected to set up a narrative frame before subtle alterations based on cultural expectations are made that initiate action and render the tales humorous. Specific stories, scenes, and characters are carefully selected by performers based on the expected age, class, and background of the audience of each event. Jerome Bruner (2002:15) has argued that narrative is a dialectic between what is expected and what comes to pass. Fast tales rely on this dialectic to draw listeners in, initiate new action, transition to new scenes, generate suspense, and create humor. Verbal script, body language, and facial expressions are employed to construct a believable character or scene that can then be transformed into a story by tweaking culturally shaped audience expectations.

The tales are brought to life in performance by a single performer who rapidly shifts among several roles.[27] The fast tale performer is simultaneously an actor, raconteur, and entertainer. He is at once an omniscient narrator, any and all characters that appear in the story—regardless of age, social class, gender, nationality, or species—and a performer who offers commentary on the story and interacts with the audience. Because fast tale performers assume all

[27] On occasion two or more performers will collaborate in performance, but the single-performer format is the norm.

of the roles of the various *dramatis personae* that appear in their stories, they describe what they are doing as *yi ren yi tai xi* (a one-person play).

Wu Yanguo performs *Ma Erha* at Haimengyuan Hotel, July 2002. Photo: Eric Shepherd.

Dong Jiancheng performs *Shazi yao wawa* (*Knucklehead Wants a Tot*) at Haimengyuan Hotel, July 2002. Photo: Eric Shepherd.

Strong Local Flavor

One of the most salient characteristics of fast tale performances is a strong local flavor. Listening to fast tales without the rural Shandong accent would be similar to listening to American country music that did not have the requisite twang or like hearing Larry the Cable Guy do his comedy act with a Brooklyn accent. It would be a different type of experience that would not meet audience expectations. Critical in creating this Shandong flavor is the language spoken in performance. The primary speech of fast tales is an artistic language that is immediately recognized by all Chinese audiences as "Shandong dialect."

Because of its vast geographical area and substantial population, the region of Shandong is characterized by a very complex linguistic situation in which hundreds of local versions of "the Shandong dialect"[28] coexist with standard Mandarin. These local versions of Shandong speech can be grouped into three major subdialects, based on geographical region, each of which is intimately linked with local identities. The language of fast tales most closely resembles the version found in western Shandong due to the fact that early performers were from the Linqing region. Fast tale language, though, has evolved into a unique, artistic register called Shandong *dahua* (big speech), easily identified as representative of this area because performers draw stereotypical characteristics from the entire family of local Shandong languages. Thus, the "Shandong dialect" spoken by fast tale performers does not match any single local dialect, and no one walks around Shandong communicating in the fast tale register for everyday purposes.

[28] The linguist Li Xingjie (1997) has found seven distinct subdialects roughly corresponding to each of the seven city districts in the city of Qingdao.

Accent, tone, pitch, stress, rate of speech, grammatical structure, rhyme, and word choice are all factors that distinguish the fast tale version of Shandong speech from other versions. Another marked characteristic of the traditional fast tale repertoire is the presence of archaic language and expressions from an earlier stage in the evolution of the Chinese language that are no longer used in either modern Mandarin or Shandong dialect. The resulting mix of modern local dialect and archaic language makes comprehension difficult for some young audience members even if they are natives of Shandong.

As performers from other regions of China were trained in the fast tale tradition beginning in the 1950s and performances moved to areas outside of Shandong, the language of fast tales began to undergo a process of standardization. Aspects of Shandong speech that were difficult to understand for native speakers of other dialects were dropped in favor of an easily comprehendible version of Shandong speech. When fast tales moved onto the proscenium stage and into new media formats such as radio and television, this standardization process was intensified. Later, in the 1980s, one component of a movement to "save fast tales" led by the Shandong Fast Tale Research Association—a leading performer organization—was a conscious drive to further standardize fast tale language. Language reform was part of a range of measures designed to retain shrinking audiences and attract younger fans being drawn to Western movies and television. This long-term standardization process has had the result of creating a range in the depth of Shandong speech used in performances that varies depending on performer, location of performance, and audience composition. Many experienced performers consciously adjust the thickness of their Shandong accent based on the age and background of their audiences.

In addition to a Shandong accent and the storysinging mode of delivery mentioned earlier, the primary fast tale register is marked by rhymed speech. Performers maintain a single end rhyme from the beginning to the end of a tale with either the last word in every line or every other line rhyming, depending on story length and performer/writer preference. Writers draw on a repertoire of thirteen basic rhyme groups while creating tales. Rhymed speech combines with a question-answer or topic-comment structure and unique stress patterns that follow the beat kept with the *ban* to contribute to a rhythmic cadence.[29] Performers describe the blend of rhyme and rhythm with the phrase *he zhe ya yun* (literally, "fit groove retain rhyme"). Performances characterized by this rhythmic cadence are said to *you ban* (have *ban*). Even on the rare occasion when someone performs without the accompaniment of the *ban*, he is judged on whether his performance has a *xin ban* (heart *ban*), meaning he maintains the beat and rhythm internally despite not having the *ban*. Performances that are missing any of the aural elements associated with fast tales—register, accent, beat, rhythm, rhyme—are said to *meiyou kuaishu weir* (not have fast tale flavor).

Fast tale language is particularly rich and varied in terms of content because performers draw extensively on the entire repertoire of classicisms, proverbs, rhymes, jokes, metaphors, allusions, poetry, onomatopoeia, and humor available in all Shandong languages. Performers

[29] Seven-syllable lines are broken down into subunits in a two-two-three stress pattern. For example, the opening line of the tale *Wu Song Fights the Tiger* is "Idle talk and aimless chatter, I'll tell you no more." The first two syllables *xian yan* (idle, words) become a stress unit followed by a brief pause. The second two syllables *sui yu* (superfluous, language) then form a separate stress unit that is followed by another pause before the final stress unit *bu duo jiang* (verb negation marker, much, tell).

frequently engage in both speech play and word play, so fast tales typically contain humor and exaggeration.[30] Moreover, they are expected to be able to accurately imitate regional dialects, speech registers, and sounds appropriate to any character or action that appears in their stories. The following idiom reflects the complex range of roles that fast tale performers must create through the process of *shengying huazhuang* (voice makeovers):

sheng dan jing mo chou,	(*sheng, dan, jing, mo, chou*)[31]
shen xian long hu gou,	(spirits, fairies, dragons, tigers, dogs)
quan ping yi zhang kou.	(all rely on a single mouth)

Thus linguistic prowess, described by performers as *zuipizi gongfu* (lip skill), is associated with the role of fast tale performer. New performers begin their training by memorizing and rehearsing a repertoire of tongue-twisters to prepare for the linguistic challenges of telling fast tales. This type of practice helps performers achieve the ideal sound of fast tale language, which is described by experienced performers as *ganjing* (clean) and *lisuo* (tidy).

Gao Hongsheng performs at *Jiangning huiguan*, July 2010. Photo: Eric Shepherd.

Head of the Shandong Fast Tale Research Association, Sun Zhenye, performs at *Jiangning huiguan*, July 2010. Photo: Eric Shepherd.

Formal Components of a Fast Tale

One famous fast tale describes the fundamental components that make up any fast tale story. It goes as follows:

---

[30] John McDowell (1992:139-44) defines speech play as "the creative disposition of language resources or the manipulation of formal features and processes of language to achieve a striking restructuring of familiar discourse alignments." Fast tale performances are characterized by extensive use of elements of speech play such as puns, plays on words, allusion, and hyperbole. Word play refers to isolated, discrete moments of speech play such as puns, speech metaphor, antistasis, hyperbation, synecdoche, wellerisms, conundrums, spoonerisms, and malapropism. See also Sherzer 2002.

[31] *Sheng*, *dan*, *jing, mo*, and *chou* are the five role categories associated with traditional Chinese operas and dramas.

An Old Man Pulling a Lamb[32]

This time I'm going to tell a really short story. It'll live up to its name as a short story. Although I say it's a short story, it has a head. It has a tail. It has characters. It has content. This is a small story that I don't lightly give in and sing.

Listen:

I'm telling of an old man pulling a lamb,

A one-sentence short story, just this long.

It's over.

Most fast tales are more thoroughly developed but *Pulling a Lamb* serves as a convenient example to illustrate some fundamental components. The padded speech that is used to set up the story explicitly lists: head, tail, characters, and content. The head, or beginning, of the story is "I'm telling of an old man pulling a lamb." This opening follows a common fast tale introductory formula "I'm telling of + character name/type + comment about character." The tail refers to the story's ending. Here it is also the punch line: "A one-sentence short story, just this long." A fast tale must also involve at least one character, here the old man. Content, known in storyteller jargon as the *yao* (waist) or *du* (stomach), refers to the middle or action of the story. In this case it is also part of the head: "pulling a lamb." In addition to a head, stomach, and tail, a fast tale may have *yan* (eyes), *gebo* (arms), and *tui* (legs), which refer to the internal conflicts that drive story action. The eye is the central conflict of a story while arms and legs are smaller subconflicts that build suspense or facilitate internal transitions (Gao 1980:628-33).

Two additional structural components are typically needed to make a story work as a fast tale. First, there must be a punch line, called a *baofu* (bundle) because the audience cannot see what is inside until it is *dou* (shaken out) or revealed by the performer. Bundles can be *xi* (fastened or tied) in the language chosen to tell the story, appear in narrator or performer commentary, or be embedded in the speech, behavior, or actions of the narrator, characters, or performer. The manner in which story action is arranged can also generate a bundle, as can any combination of these elements. In line two of *Pulling a Lamb*, "A one sentence short story, just this long" functions as a bundle. It works only when combined with the final major component of fast tales, *kouzi* (buttons or hooks). Here the plain speech functions as a button, setting up audience expectations up for a short story involving more action than just an old man pulling a lamb. Fast tales always include at least one *da kou* (big button) and may involve an unlimited number of *xiao kou* (small buttons) (Liu 2001).

According to Liu (154-60), "button" has two levels of meaning. First, it is like a string of buttons that keeps audiences tied to their seats. Every story ends at the point when an old conflict is resolved (or known problem is solved) and a new conflict arises (or problem is presented to the audience). This creates an element of suspense that ensnares the audience's attention so that they want to keep listening. In Chinese storyteller parlance, this state is described as "without chance, it cannot be a story" (*wu qiao bu cheng shu*). This notion of chance and the role of

[32] I heard this story numerous times while studying as an apprentice storyteller in Shandong. The version presented here comes from *The Complete Anthology of Traditional Shandong Fast Tales* (Liu and Zhao 1997:610). (Speech delivered as the performer in a normal speaking register appears in regular font while that delivered in the narrator register is italicized.)

buttons in fast tales mirrors Bruner's description (2002:5) of Aristotle's *peripeteia*, a sudden reversal in circumstances that swiftly turns a routine sequence of events into a story. The second level of meaning, *kouzi*, refers to the storyteller's ability to snare the "strings of the listeners' hearts." By strategically arranging buttons, the storyteller creates a situation in which the audience cannot figure out exactly what will happen next. Thus the story develops in a way so that events outside of their expectations but within the realm of story logic continue to occur, so that the suspense of wanting to know what will happen next draws them further into the story. The process of setting up both buttons and bundles is called *pudian* (laying out a mat/pad). Finally, the humor in *Pulling a Lamb* is generated by the incongruity created between the expectations set up in the introduction for a good story and what is actually revealed in the bundle—that the story is really only one sentence long. This is an example of what Elliot Oring (2003) has described as the humor of incongruity.

The following traditional fast tale provides further examples of salient characteristics. Knucklehead is a stock character who frequently appears in traditional tales and who often struggles in his handling of everyday family matters.

Knucklehead Wants a Tot[33]

Let's first tell the story of a girl named Shuhua,
This year . . .
Let me first ask if any of the ladies here are named Shuhua?
Let's first tell the story of a girl named Shuhua,
This year just eighteen, either old nor young she's not.
To marry her off her ma and pa planned a colorful gala,
They found her a husband who was a big idiot.
The two of them had just been married three days on the dot,
When Knucklehead came to Shuhua demanding a tot.
"Hey, give me a tot. I must have a tot."
Asking this embarrassed Shuhua until she was in knots,
"**Whoa, we're just married three days on the dot,**
Where should I go to get you a tot?"
When Knucklehead heard her say she didn't have one,
"If I don't have a tot, I'll kill you on the spot!"
He grabbed the butcher knife in his hand,
To chop off Shuhua's noggin he did plot.
"Whoa, in that case, how about this,
You go outside and play in the lot,
And I'll get you that tot."
Out through the front gate Knucklehead did go,
And Shuhua went to their backyard lot,

[33] This is my textualization of a September 20, 2000 oral performance by Dong Jiancheng that took place during a dinner banquet at the Blue Ocean Bay Restaurant in Qingdao. In this textualization, a conscious effort was made to retain end rhyme, which influenced word choice. The narrator register is marked by italics, while the plain speech of the performer is in normal font and that of characters appears in bold type.

Where a big ol' duck she quickly got.
She took it into the house and put in on the bed,
Where she wrapped it in red and tied it in green,
And before long it was bundled tightly with a knot.
Coming in through the door, Knucklehead picked it up with a laugh, "**Ha, ha . . .**
My, you had him so really fast!
Why does the kid have such a flat mouth?
He's grown a mouth full of beady little teeth,
He grew a pair of bean-like eyes, black as a pot,
A long skinny neck and a feathery head.
His baby hair still hasn't fallen off,
And his toes still haven't spread."
Knucklehead laughed all day, about to kiss his lips with a smack,
He scared that duck, "Quack, Quack, Quack!"
When Knucklehead saw this, he was happy as could be,
"This little baby of ours is really quite smart,
Just out of the womb and he can already say 'Pa!'
This little kid just called me 'Pa'!"

The big button in *Wants a Tot* comes in lines 14 and 15. A very common scene in China is first set up with newlyweds talking about having children. What does not fit traditional cultural expectations is that Shuhua could have had Knucklehead's child after only having been married for three days. The story gets rolling with the story "eye" when Knucklehead tells Shuhua that he will kill her if she does not immediately give him a child. The remainder of the story revolves around how Shuhua will handle this critical problem. Another button (an example of a story arm/leg) in lines 18-26 adds a twist that keeps the action moving when she solves the initial crisis by bundling a duck up like a baby to fool Knucklehead. Will he notice that it is a duck? How could he not? This is putting out the mat on which the later bundle will rest.

Line 2 is an example of a performer jumping out of the narrator role into the here-and-now of the event in order to ask if any of the female participants have the same name as the female protagonist in the story. This technique links the story to the performance at hand and is seen as a way to exchange feelings with the audience by personalizing the performance. This is also an instance of a bundle embedded in the behavior, actions, and speech of the performer.

Lines 8 and 9 contain a bundle created by the structure of the narrative and cultural expectations. The narrator first sets up the bundle in the diegetic mode by telling the audience "The two of them had just been married three days on the dot, when Knucklehead came to Shuhua demanding a tot." Then, shifting to the mimetic mode, Knucklehead the performer shows the audience what he has just described by acting it out in line 10. Although all types of third person narrative can be found in fast tales, the most common form follows this pattern of telling and then showing without the use of "Knucklehead said" or "Shuhua replied" as transitions between the diegetic and mimetic modes.

Line 13 has an example of a small bundle in character speech as Shuhua asks "Where should I go to get you a tot?"—as if babies could be obtained from some local proprietor.

Beginning in line 28, a series of bundles is embedded in Knucklehead's reaction to and description of his new child. These are followed by a bundle that is pulled off with a combination of narration, onomatopoeia, and physical humor when Knucklehead tries to kiss the duck but instead scares it. The tale climaxes with the major bundle of the story in the final couplet, as Knucklehead says that his child is smart because he can say "Pa" rather than realizing that the sounds he heard were the quack of the duck.

Creating Vivid Images and Distinct Personalities

Most fast tales involve characters and action that follow a plotline, called a *shu liangzi*, developed with vivid description offered by an omniscient narrator. One commonly occurring type of fast tale is episodic in nature and tends to revolve around one (or a few) central character(s) and one central event or conflict, as was the case in *Wants a Tot* (Gao et al. 1982). Another recurring type of tale focuses on developing the personality or image of one central character rather than placing emphasis on fully developing a plotline. *Auntie Wee*, the traditional fast tale below, is an example.

Auntie Wee[34]

I'm telling of a woman who's really wee.
This comrade asked, **"What does 'wee' mean?"** Wee means short,
Short means low, low means not high.
I'm telling of a woman who's really wee,
Half a yard of silk wouldn't cover her knee.
She can't even wear half a yard of silk,
She uses a thread as a scarf.
Mother-in-law sent her to make dinner,
Wow, on her tippy-toes by the stove,
She still can't reach the pots.
When Ma saw this she really got mad,
"Wham!" One blow knocked her on the floor nowhere to be had.
Posted a letter to her Ma,
Whoa! Over came Big Brother, Second Brother, Brother Shubai.
The brothers entered the gate and glared:
"We're looking for Granny, our little sis's Ma-in-law.
Find our wee little sister in three days,
We'll write it off complaint free.

[34] The textualization presented here comes from Wu Yanguo's oral performance in Qingdao on September 20, 2000. The mix of rural Shandong dialect with the shift from narrator register to hick peasant, end rhyme, and fixed line length creates language that is particularly structurally awkward in the original Chinese. In the translation I have attempted to retain the end rhyme and the rural feel of the language where possible. For the interested reader, a Romanized version of the original Chinese may be found in the appendix. The narrator register is indicated with italics and performer plain speech register is in Roman font. Character speech is in bold to indicate another shift in register and voice.

Don't find our little sis in three days,
We're going right to the courthouse to solve this melee."
Pop was scared til' his knees was a-knockin',
Ma was so scared she was a-shakin'.
The whole family waited with fear,
Then rushed off to find their dear.
They used the sifter to sift, the winnow to winnow,
Everything passed through a thick sieve, then through the thin one,
And yet she was still nowhere to be.
You ask where's little Auntie Wee?
She's in that seed shell a-playin' poker!

The prominent role that imagery plays in fast tales should be evident even from reading a textualized version of *Auntie Wee* (Honko 2000). In performance, fast tale performers combine realistic and conventionalized symbolic movements with facial expressions, voices, onomatopoeia, and the verbal script to create a series of exaggerated images in the minds of the audience members (Rubin 1995:39). In *Auntie Wee*, each of the lines—"half a yard of silk wouldn't cover her knee," "uses a thread as a scarf," "on her tippy-toes by the stove, she still can't reach the pots," "used a sifter to sift, the winnow to winnow," and "in that seed shell a-playin' poker"—are imageable actions drawn from everyday life in rural Shandong that are viewed through the lens of hyperbole (*ibid.*:55).

When combined together and supplemented by movements, voices, sounds, and facial expressions, they create a vivid image of just *how* short Auntie Wee really is. The lines, "older brother was scared til' his knees were a-knockin'" and "ma was so scared she was a-shakin'," work in a similar way to show the audience just how scared the family was by the threat made by Auntie Wee's older brother. The goal for performers is to leave a series of exaggerated, and thus humorous, images in the minds of the audience members after this type of fast tale rather than leaving them with the memory of a sequence of actions. The major bundle of the tale works in part because the image of a woman small enough to play poker in a melon seed does not fit expectations.

Wu Yanguo performs *Dazhen* (*Getting an Injection*), at Haimengyuan Hotel, October 2004. Photo: Eric Shepherd.

Gao Jingzuo performs *Wu Song Gan Hui* (*Wu Song Goes to the Fair*) at *Jiangning huiguan*, July 2010. Photo: Eric Shepherd.

Bamboo clapper fast tale performer Li Dongfeng performs at *Jiangning huiguan*, July 2010. Photo: Eric Shepherd.

Qin Yongchao performs *Wu Song Fights the Tiger* at *Jiangning huiguan*, July 2010. Photo: Eric Shepherd.

Wu Yanguo performs *Dazhen* (*Getting an Injection*) at Haimengyuan Hotel, July 2002. Video: Eric Shepherd. http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/26i/shepherd#myGallery-picture(22)

Narrative Pattern

Longer fast tales, such as *Wu Song Fights the Tiger*, may contain several of these smaller types of fast tales and thus are more complex. Regardless of which type of structural arrangement is utilized, fast tale narratives tend to be constructed following a particular pattern. There may first be descriptions of story time, location, and setting, but the initial major section of a developed fast tale is the appearance of the primary character. Through metaphor, irony, exaggeration, or comparison, performers create a vivid image of their protagonist. Then performers leave deep impressions of this initial image in the minds of audience members by displaying to them—using all available expressive means—what that character looks and sounds like. The goal is to enable audiences to see, feel, and hear the individual as if that individual were living and present. For example, after Auntie Wee appears in the first line of the tale, lines 2-4 are exaggerated comparisons that construct a vivid image of a woman so small she uses a piece of thread for a scarf. This process of introducing the main character is called *kai lianr* (opening face) (Wang 2009). The process involves language, speech register, facial expressions, physical humor, movements, and any other means available to the performer in a given performance environment.

Once the protagonist has been introduced, a series of foils typically enhances the image of the character (the number depends on story length). In the case of *Auntie Wee*, she is sent to the kitchen to make dinner but cannot reach the pots on the stove even when standing on her toes. Then a central conflict, the big button of the story, initiates all subsequent action. In *Auntie Wee*, we are given the ordinary situation of a mother-in-law telling her daughter-in-law to make

dinner. When she does not have dinner ready quickly enough, the mother-in-law becomes angry and backhands her, again part of an ordinary cultural script. Then there is a sudden, unexpected twist and the story is underway. When the mother-in-law hits Auntie Wee, she knocks her on the floor where no one can find her because she is so small.

Following the big button, the story action flows in a series of attempts to resolve the problem. With each failure to solve the problem—additional small buttons—the tension increases. The result is that fast tale plots rarely develop in a straight line. Instead, the story develops in waves, rising with each attempt to resolve the conflict and dipping as the attempt fails (Gao et al. 1982, Wang 1985, and Liu 2001). In *Auntie Wee*, the family first sends a letter to Auntie Wee's family, but that results in the males in her family making a trip to the in-laws' home where they give the three-days-or-else ultimatum. The tension in the story builds to a climax during the subsequent search for Auntie Wee, which along the way produces hilarious images of the family using sifters and winnows to go through everything on the family floor while trying to find her. Just when it seems that she will not be found, the major bundle is delivered. Auntie Wee was not lost at all. She was in a melon seed playing poker all along.

Fast tale plot lines must have a logical flow to the sequence of actions to retain audience interest. The general pattern of fast tales is as follows: appearance of the protagonist, enhancing the image of the protagonist, a big button, a series of small buttons (attempts to resolve the conflict), waves of increasing tension building to a climax, and a major bundle.

Conclusion

In sum, this article has presented a brief ecology of the Shandong fast tale tradition that provided a background for the discussion of expressive and rhetorical devices used by performers as they sing their dead tales to life in performance on stage. Working from verbal scripts that are marked by formulaic language and extensive repetition, fast tale performers pack variation into these tales, often drawn from a shared tradition as they personalize them over time. These performers alternate between narrating and performing traditional and modern tales in a one-person play format. In performance, they jump into character roles using shifts in speech register, body language, body position, line of sight, and facial expressions to create believable characters. Jumping out of character into narrator and performer frames, they narrate their tales in a specialized artistic register characterized by a strong local flavor, end rhyme, and a powerful rhythmic cadence kept with a brass *ban*. In a blend of narrative and expressive modes, they draw on an extensive repertoire of rhetorical devices such as onomatopoeia, physical humor, hyperbolic language, speech registers, facial expressions, and physical humor to create vivid images and distinct personalities with whom their audiences can easily identify and relate. They then generate humor though the use of buttons and bundles. In performance the rhythm, beat, and a unique singtelling register combine to create the distinct musical feel and flow for which the the genre is well known in northern China.

University of South Florida

References

Babcock 1977 — Barbara Babcock. “The Story in the Story: Metanarration in Folk Narrative.” In Bauman 1977:61-79.

Bateson 1972 — Gregory Bateson. “A Theory of Play and Fantasy.” In his *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. New York: Ballantine. pp. 177-93.

Bauman 1977 — Richard Bauman. *Verbal Art as Performance*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.

Bauman 1986 — _____. *Story, Performance, and Event: Contextual Studies of Oral Narrative*. Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture, 10. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bender 1989 — Mark Bender. “Suzhou Tanci: Keys to Performance.” Unpubl. MA Thesis, Ohio State University.

Bender 1995 — _____. “Zaisheng Yuan and Meng Lijun: Performance, Context, and Form of Two Tanci.” Unpubl. Ph.D. Dissertation, Ohio State University.

Bender 1996 — _____. “Keys to Performance in Kunming Pingshu.” *Chinoperl Papers*, 19: 21-37.

Bender 1998 — _____. “Oral Performance and Orally Related Literature in China.” In *Teaching Oral Traditions*. Ed. by John Miles Foley. New York: Modern Language Association of America. pp. 250-57.

Bender 1999a — _____. “Shifting and Performance in Suzhou Chantefable.” In Børdahl 1999a: 181-96.

Bender 1999b — _____. “The Chantefable Tradition of Suzhou.” In *Traditional Storytelling Today: An International Sourcebook*. Ed. by Margaret Read MacDonald. Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers. pp. 85-88.

Bender 2003a — _____. *Plum and Bamboo*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Bender 2003b — _____. “Oral Narrative Studies in China.” *Oral Tradition*, 18:236-38. http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/18ii/bender

Blader 1977 — Susan Blader. “A Critical Study of San-hsia wu-yi and Its Relationship to the Lung-t’u kung-an Song-Book.” Unpubl. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania.

Børdahl 1991 — Vibeke Børdahl. "Square Mouth and Round Mouth in Yangzhou Storytelling."*Acta Orientalia*, 52:135-47.

Børdahl 1993 — _____. "Wu Song Fights the Tiger in Yangzhou Storytelling." *Acta Orientalia*, 54:126-49.

Børdahl 1995a — _____. "Narrative Voices in Yangzhou Storytelling." *Chinoperl*, 18:1-31.

Børdahl 1995b — _____. "Three Bowls and You Cannot Cross the Ridge: Orality and Literacy in Yangzhou Storytelling." In *Cultural Encounters: China, Japan, and the West: Essays Commemorating 25 Years of East Asian Studies at the University of Aarhus*. Ed. by Soren Clausen, Roy Starrs, and Anne Wedell-Wedellsborg. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press. pp. 125-57.

Børdahl 1996 — _____. *The Oral Tradition of Yangzhou Storytelling*. Surrey: Curzon Press.

Børdahl 1997 — _____. "Professional Storytelling in Modern China: A Case Study of the Yangzhou Pinghua Tradition." *Asian Folklore Studies*, 56:7-32.

Børdahl 1999a — _____. Ed., *The Eternal Storyteller: Oral Literature in Modern China*. Surrey: Curzon Press.

Børdahl 1999b — _____. "Chinese Storytellers on Storytelling." *Arv: Nordic Yearbook of Folklore*, 55:73-91.

Børdahl 2000 — _____. "In Memory of Wang Xiaotang (1918-2000)." *Asian Folklore Studies*, 59:147-50.

Børdahl 2003 — _____. "The Story Teller's Manner in Chinese Storytelling." *Asian Folklore Studies*, 62:65-112.

Børdahl 2007 — _____. "The Man-Hunting Tiger from 'Wu Song Fights the Tiger' in Chinese Traditions." *Asian Folklore Studies*, 66:141-63.

Børdahl and Ross 2002 — _____ and Jette Ross. *Chinese Storytellers: Life and Art in the Yangzhou Tradition*. Boston: Cheng and Tsui.

Bruner 2002 — Jerome Bruner. *Making Stories: Law, Literature, Life*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Cole 1996 — Michael Cole. *Cultural Psychology: A Once and Future Discipline*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Finnegan 1977 — Ruth Finnegan. *Oral Poetry: Its Nature, Significance, and Social Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Rpt. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992.

Finnegan 1992 — _____. *Oral Traditions and the Verbal Arts: A Guide to Research Practices*. New York: Routledge.

Foley 1985 — John Miles Foley. *Oral-formulaic Theory and Research: An Introduction and Annotated Bibliography*. New York: Garland.

Foley 1991 — _____. *Immanent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Foley 1995 — _____. *The Singer of Tales in Performance*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Foley 2002 — _____. *How to Read an Oral Poem*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. eCompanion at http://www.oraltradition.org/hrop/

Gao 1957 — Gao Yuanjun. *Shandong kuaishu Wu Song zhuan* [*Shandong Fast Tale: The Tale of Wu Song*]. Beijing: Zuojia chubanshe.

Gao 1960 — _____. *Kuaishu, kuaiban yanjiu* [*Fast Tale, Fast Clapper Tale Research*]. Beijing: Zuojia chubanshe.

Gao 1980 — _____. *Gao Yuanjun Shandong kuaishu xuan* [*Gao Yuanjun: Shandong Fast Tale Selections*]. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe.

Gao 1987 — _____. *Chuantong Shandong kuaishu: Wu Song zhuan (Gao Yuanjun yanchuben)* [*Traditional Shandong Fast Tale: The Tale of Wu Song (Text Based on Gao Yuanjun's Performance)*]. Beijing: Zhongguo quyi chubanshe.

Gao et al. 1982 — _____, Liu Xuezhi, and Liu Hongbin. *Shandong kuaishu yishu qian lun* [*A Superficial Discussion of the Art of Shandong Kuaishu*]. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe.

Ge 2001 — Ge Liangyan. *Out of the Margins: The Rise of Chinese Vernacular Fiction*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Goffman 1974 — Erving Goffman. *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Harris and Reichl 1997 — Joseph Harris and Karl Reichl, eds. *Prosimetrum: Crosscultural Perspectives on Narrative in Prose and Verse*. Suffolk: D. S. Brewer.

Honko 1996 — Lauri Honko. "Epics Along the Silk Roads: Mental Text, Performance, and Written Codification." *Oral Tradition*, 11:1-17. http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/11i/honko_intro

Honko 2000 — _____. "Text as Process and Practice." In *Textualization of Oral Epics*. Ed. by Lauri Honko. Berlin: de Gruyter. pp. 3-56.

Hrdlicka 1957 — Zdenek Hrdlicka. "Old Chinese Ballads to the Accompaniment of the Big Drum." *Archiv Orientalni*, 25:83-145.

Hrdlickova 1965 — Vena Hrdlickova. "The Professional Training of Chinese Storytellers and the Storytellers' Guilds." *Archiv Orientalni*, 33:225-46.

Hung 1993 — Hung Chang-tai. "Reeducating a Blind Storyteller: Han Qixiang and the Chinese Communist Storytelling Campaign." *Modern China*, 19:395-426.

Hymes 1974 — Dell Hymes. "Ways of Speaking." In *Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking*. Ed. by Richard Bauman and Joel Sherzer. New York: Cambridge University Press. pp. 433-51.

Hymes 1975 — _____. "Breakthrough into Performance." In *Folklore: Performance and Communication*. Ed. by Dan Ben-Amos and Kenneth Goldstein. The Hague: Mouton. pp. 11-74.

Idema and Haft 1997 — Wilt Idema and Lloyd Haft. *A Guide to Chinese Literature*. Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan.

Li and Yu 1993 — Li Defang and Yu Tianchi. *Gudai xiaoshuo yu minjian wenxue* [*Classical Novels and Folk Literature*]. Shenyang: Liaoning jiaoyu chubanshe.

Li 1997 — Li Xingjie. Ed., *Qingdao shi zhi: fangyan zhi* [*Qingdao Municipal Chronicle: Dialect Chronicle*]. Beijing: Xinhua chubanshe.

Liu 1987 — Liu Baomian. "Song dai wazi jiyi zhong de shuchang yishu [Narrative Arts in Song Dynasty Entertainment Centers]." *Quyi yishu luncong*, 7:86-95.

Liu 2001 — Liu Hongbin. *Shandong kuaishu biaoyan gailun* [*An Outline of Shandong Fast Tale Performance*]. Beijing: Jiefangjun wenyi chubanshe.

Liu et al. 1959 _____, Gao Yuanjun and Liu Xuezhi. *Biaoyan Shandong kuaishu de jingyan* [*Experience from Performing Shandong Fast Tales*]. Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe.

Liu and Liu 1995 _____ and Liu Xuezhi. Eds., *Shandong kuaishu youmo xiaoduan xuan* [*Selections of Shandong Fast Tale Short Humorous Stories*]. Beijing: Beijing yanshan chubanshe.

Liu and Wang 1989 Liu Sichang and Wang Jingshou. *Shandong kuaishu gailun* [*An Outline of Shandong Fast Tales*]. Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe.

Liu and Zhao 1997 Liu Hongbin and Zhao Lianjia. Eds., *Zhongguo chuantong Shandong kuaishu daquan* [*The Great Complete Collection of China's Traditional Shandong Fast Tales*]. Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe.

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

Mair 1997 Victor Mair. "The Prosimetric Form in the Chinese Literary Tradition." In Harris and Reichl 1997:365-85.

McDowell 1992 John Holmes McDowell. "Speech Play." In *Folklore, Cultural Performances, and Popular Entertainments*. Ed. by Richard Bauman. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 139-44.

OCD 1999 *Concise English-Chinese, Chinese-English Dictionary*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Oring 2003 Elliot Oring. *Engaging Humor*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Rubin 1995 David Rubin. *Memory in Oral Traditions: The Cognitive Psychology of Epic, Ballads, and Counting-out Rhymes*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Shepherd 2005 Eric Shepherd. *Eat Shandong: From Personal Experience to a Pedagogy of a Second Culture*. Columbus: Ohio State University Foreign Language Publications.

Shepherd 2007 _____. "A Pedagogy of Culture Based on Chinese Storytelling Traditions." Unpubl. Ph. D. Dissertation, Ohio State University.

Sherzer 2002 Joel Sherzer. *Speech Play and Verbal Art*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Stevens 1975 — Catherine Stevens. “Peking Drumsinging.” Unpubl. Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University.

Sun 2009 — Sun Lisheng. *Zhui meng zhai yi yu* [*Dream Talk from the Pursuit of Dreams Studio*]. Jinan: Shandong youyi chubanshe.

Turner 1988 — Victor Turner. *The Anthropology of Performance*. New York: PAJ Publications.

Von Sydow 1999 — Carl Wilhelm Von Sydow. “Geography and Folk-Tale Oicotypes.” In *International Folkloristics: Classic Contributions by the Founders of Folklore*. Ed. by Alan Dundes. New York: Rowman and Littlefield. pp. 137-51.

Wang 1985 — Wang Jingshou. *Gao Yuanjun he tade Shandong kuaishu* [*Gao Yuanjun and His Shandong Fast Tales*]. Harbin: Beifang wenyi chubanshe.

Wang 1994 — _____. *Zhongguo quyi yishu lun* [*A Discussion of Chinese quyi Arts*]. Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe.

Wang 2004 — Wang Xuetai. *“Shuihu” yu jianghu* [*“The Water Margin” and Rivers and Lakes*]. Beijing: Zhongguo gongren chubanshe.

Wang 2009 — Wang Yanzhao. *Wang Yanzhao quyi xiezuo tan* [*Yanzhao Wang’s Writing Quyi Discussion*]. Beijing: Zhongguo guoji guangbo chubanshe.

Wu 2002 — Wu Wenke. *Zhongguo quyi tonglun* [*A General Survey of Chinese Narrative and Performed Arts*]. Taiyuan: Shanxi jiaoyu chubanshe.

Xue 1987 — Xue Baokun. *Zhongguo de quyi* [*China’s* quyi]. Beijing: Renmin chubanshe.

Zhang 1981 — Zhang Jun. *Shandong kuaishu de chuangzuo yu biaoyan* [*The Creation and Performance of Shandong Fast Tales*]. Jinan: Shandong renmin chubanshe.

Zheng 1938 — Zheng Zhenduo. *Zhongguo suwenxue shi* [*A History of Chinese Vernacular Literature*]. Shanghai: Shangwu yishuguan.

Zhongguo 1983 — *Zhongguo xiju quyi cidian.* [*Dictionary of Chinese Drama and* quyi]. Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe.

Zhongguo 1988 — *Shuochang yishu jianshi* [*A Brief History of Telling and Singing Arts*]. Ed. by Zhongguo yishu yanjiu yuan quyi yanjiusuo. Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe.

APPENDIX

In order to give the reader a feeling for the fundamental linguistic structure of fast tales, a Romanized version of *Auntie Wee* is provided here using the Hanyu Pinyin system. Tones indicate the patterns used in the fast tale narrative register rather than those used in Mandarin Chinese.

shuǒ liao wèi dà sāo shìzài cuò,
zhèi wèi tòngzhi wèn le,
“cuò shì shènme yìsi?”
cuò jìushi āi āi jìushi dǐ
dǐ jìushi bù gǎo(r).
shuǒ liao wèi dà sāo shìzài cuò,
hùn shěn chuǎn bú shàng bàn fěn de lùo.
bàn fěn de lùoqǜn(r) chǔan bú shàng,
nà le gěn(r) tòushèng(r) dǎng wèibò.
zhè yì tiǎn, pòmūniàng jiào tǎ qǜ zuò fàn,
huò! tǎ cì zhe nà guǒtài
gòu bu zhāo guǒ.
pòmūniàng yí kàn yōu le qì,
bào(r)! yì bǎzhāng,
dā dào liao dì xìa
zhāo bu zhuò le.
gēi tǎ niàng jiǎ sòng le gè xìn(r),
huò! lài liao tǎ, dàgě, èrgě,
shǔbai gěge,

gě gě jìn mèn(r) bá yān děng,

15 “jiào liao shěng dàniàng mèimei de pòpo,

nī sán tiǎn zhāo zhuò cuò mèimei,

yì bī góu xiǎo, mèi huà shuǒ.

sán tiǎn zhāo bu zhuò cuò mèimei,

ān gěn nī fāyuàn qǜ jiējuè.”

20 gǒnggong xià di gè déde zhàn,

pòpo xià di gè zhàn duòsuǒ.

yì jiǎ rènjiǎ dǒu hàipà,

jì màng qǜ zhāo nǜ jiāo è.

shǎizi lībiǎn(r) shǎi, bòqi bò,

25 guò wàn cǔ luò guò xì luò.

hài mèi zhāo zhuò.

nīmen yào wèn cuò dàsāo nāli qǜ,

tǎ zài nà guǎzi(r) kè lī dā pǔkè.

Oral Tradition, 26/1 (2011): 71-124

Crossing Boundaries, Breaking Rules: Continuity and Social Transformation in Trickster Tales from Central Asia[1]

Ildikó Bellér-Hann and Raushan Sharshenova

Introduction

The Arguments

Although oral literature has conventionally been considered a field of study for folklorists, anthropologists started taking an interest in the subject very early on, conceptualizing such materials as socially embedded communicative strategies.[2] The present paper investigates a body of texts that emerged in the Kyrgyz[3] speech community in what is today northern Kyrgyzstan over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In an effort to implement Soviet nationality policies, Soviet folklorists in the 1960s identified and collected a sizeable body of Kuyruchuk stories and published them in Russian (Bektenov 1964).[4] Since Kyrgyzstan's declaration of independence in 1991, two new books have been published, one containing some of the figure's adventures and the other summarizing and analyzing stories about him, this time in Kyrgyz (Öskönalï uulu 1997, Kenchiev and Abdïrazakov 2002). The stories are generally simple and evoke the style of folktales; under socialism a number of such

---

[1] An earlier, shorter version of this article has appeared in German; see Bellér-Hann and Sharshenova 2008. It emerged from the project entitled *Kuiruchuk: Quotidian Application of Ancient Kyrgyz Wisdom*, funded by the Central Asia Research Initiative, Open Society Institute, Higher Education Support Program, 2002-04. Our thanks are due to Chetin Jumagulov, from whom the idea of the project originated and to Giedre Mickunaite for her valuable comments and help in improving the work at the initial stages of the project. We are grateful to Eva-Marie Dubuisson, who has given useful advice concerning both the structure and the theoretical emphasis of this reworked version, and to Ingeborg Baldauf, Beate Eschment, Chris Hann, Svetlana Jacquesson, and Krisztina Kehl-Bodrogi for their insightful comments. Svetlana Jacquesson has also provided the map. We thank Donall Omaran, Jibek Iskakova, and Mark Hann for their support and help with proofreading.

[2] For a definition of oral literature and for an overview of earlier anthropological theories, see Murphy 1978.

[3] The transcription of the terms "Kyrgyz" and "Kyrgyzstan" follows modern English usage. Other Kyrgyz terms are transcribed according to the system adopted in H. Komatsu et al. 2005.

[4] It is not quite clear if Bektenov's work had been preceded by a Kyrgyz language publication or not. Unfortunately, none of the Kuyruchuk-related publications say much about the methods of accessing the stories, nor do they acknowledge the use of previous publications.

stories were published in journals aimed at a young readership (e.g. *Zhash Leninchi*, *Kirgizskie pioneri*), and Kuyruchuk is also mentioned in shorter publications (e.g. Bektenov 1959, 1978, 1981; Toygonbaeva 1987; Naymanbay 1990).

The paper is organized along two axes. First, it identifies a classic "Trickster" figure set in modern Kyrgyz history, ranging from the period of the last decades of Russian rule to early Soviet times. It will be shown how in the wake of major social upheavals, Central Asian oral tradition mobilizes the figure of the Trickster to demonstrate the ambiguities of everyday life at times of rapid political and social transformation. Second, the materials presented illuminate more general processes of cultural production and entextualization in socialist and postsocialist Central Asia. It will be argued that the Soviet and the Kyrgyz states at times deploy very similar strategies to pursue overlapping goals of identity-building. Shifting strategies aimed at supporting different state projects can be recognized in the meta-folklore of a text corpus taken from Kyrgyz oral tradition. Since the text corpus is available as printed materials, we see it as being situated at the interface of oral and written realms (Goody 1993).

The stories in question were published in Russian and Kyrgyz during the Soviet and post-Soviet eras, and we have no detailed reliable information concerning performative and receptive aspects, yet they are clearly rooted within the established genre of Central Asian oral tradition. Given the lack of extratextual evidence, the lines of argument mentioned above will be elaborated on the basis of evidence provided by the stories themselves.[5]

In view of these two central concerns, the classification of the stories poses a dilemma. Several possibilities presented themselves. Of these we considered two in particular: one was to follow the historical setting of the stories, starting with Kuyruchuk's adventures in the Russian Empire and continuing with those set in the young Soviet Union. The other was to concentrate on the major historical periods in which the stories were published: the Soviet Union in the early 1960s and the early years of independence in the mid-1990s. These two competing organizational possibilities underline the complex nature of the concept of "context," ranging from the geographical/spatial to the broader social and historical.[6]

The latter option initially seemed more attractive, since it offered a suitable structure to elaborate on shifts in ideological strategies concerning important themes such as the unequal distribution of resources, the need for social justice, attitudes toward religion, the force of local tradition in constituting ethnic identity, inter-ethnic relations, and the like in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. After seriously considering this possibility, we have decided not to follow this path for several reasons.[7] It must be emphasized that at no time has a systematic analysis of all the stories included in these volumes been carried out, and the same holds true for those stories

---

[5] See note 21 below.

[6] As has been elaborated in Godwin and Duranti 1992.

[7] Raushan Sharshenova has translated into English a number of stories selected from the two published collections, with the aim of using them for her translation classes, in which she also wished to demonstrate the importance of persisting Kyrgyz traditions. As the project progressed, we further reduced the number of tales used for discussion in this paper. The present analysis is based on our repeated readings of this selected text corpus, which we believe to be representative of both collective volumes: 20 were translated from the Russian published in 1964 (Bektenov 1964) and 16 represent the Kyrgyz collection published in 1997 (Öskönalï uulu 1997). For these representative examples, see the Appendix.

that have been published separately in various journals over the course of the socialist and postsocialist decades. A full comparison of the stories published in Soviet and post-Soviet times will become possible only when all printed stories from both periods have been systematically collected and analyzed. Following this path would be appropriate if we wished to focus exclusively on the deployment of oral tradition in support of state projects, a topic that certainly deserves more attention within the Central Asian context. However, such a focus would not do full justice to the Kuyruchuk corpus as we know it at present, since not all stories included in the collections bear explicit, identifiable markers of ideological manipulation. The ideologically "unmarked" ones are nonetheless relevant in upholding and reproducing the Trickster tradition. We also feel the need to make a case for recognizing Trickster cycles as a well-established genre in Central Asian verbal arts since, although Central Asian oral tradition seems to be full of Tricksters, so far these figures have been mostly neglected by international scholarship. When they have attracted attention, typically no explicit connection has been made between them and the Tricksters of other oral traditions.[8] One reason for this neglect may be that an exaggerated persistent focus on heroic epics, also motivated by nation-building efforts, has diverted attention from other types of oral traditions, although, as we shall see, the latter reveal just as much if not more about social relations in the local setting as do the epics.

For all of these reasons we have decided to use a more conservative classification based not on the setting of the *cultural (re-)production* of these texts (which should be done by future research) but on the historical context in which the stories themselves are embedded. In this way we maintain a dual focus, on the one hand connecting Central Asian oral tradition to the Trickster tradition of the world, while also pointing out how repeated re-contextualizations of selected parts of Kyrgyz oral tradition have been harnessed in service of state projects. At the end of this paper we shall attempt to bring together these two strands of inquiry.

The Protagonist

Kudaybergen Ömürzak uulu is said to have been born in 1866, in Kïzïl-Tuu village, Jumgal region, Narïn oblast, and he died in 1940 in Kïzïl-Tuu village, Jumgal region, in the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic.[9] He later acquired the nickname Kuyruchuk, meaning "Little Tail," when his special talents started manifesting themselves. Kuyruchuk came from a very poor family: his father was a shepherd who herded his landlord Sultankhan's sheep while his mother cleaned, cooked, and washed for the rich man's family. She died of hunger and exhaustion. We are not told what happened to his father, but following the death of his mother, as a young child Kuyruchuk had to take care of his younger brothers and sisters. He did this by begging, helping out for small rewards, or singing. One of his many talents was his ability to recite Kyrgyz oral poetry. According to his memoirs written in 1938, he started performing the famous Kyrgyz epic, *Manas*, when he was nineteen, which meant that he became a recognized *akïn*, or "singer of

[8] The only exceptions known to us are an article about the Uyghur Taz (Bellér-Hann 2004), and a book about Nasreddin Hoca, whose figure connects Central Asian and Anatolian Turkish oral traditions (Başgöz and Boratav 1998).

[9] See the map on the following page.

tales."[10] Although he was an excellent singer, he did not consider himself comparable to the great contemporary bards such as Toktogul, Jengijok, or Eshmambet; his unassuming utterance "I have poetry" was widely known. Nevertheless, he was an excellent *akïn*, and some of his public performances were memorable events. So it was no accident that in 1928 in Frunze (modern Bishkek) several parts of the epic poem *Manas* were recorded following his recited version (Kenchiev and Abdïrazakov 2002:36-80). We know that he was married, had children, was an able horseman and a good fighter, and above all, served as a defender of the poor and oppressed.

A Kyrgyz Robin Hood, Kuyruchuk lived much of his life under Czarist rule, and he was 51 at the time of the October Revolution. By that point he was a well-known figure in his native Jumgal region in northern Kyrgyzstan and beyond, and his opinions and actions carried weight. He spent his final years in the capital of the Kyrgyz SSR, working at the Bishkek Philharmonic Orchestra, after having spent a great deal of his life traveling.[11]

---

[10] To explain the Kyrgyz term we have borrowed Lord's famous title (Lord 2000). On the *Manas*, see, for example, *Manas* 1968, Straube 2007. For Kuyruchuk's memoirs, see Chorobaev 1940.

[11] Bektenov 1964:5-9; see also the entry on him in Asanov 1998. Of course, at this point it remains an open question as to what extent these renderings do justice to Kuyruchuk's actual biography.

Kuyruchuk was more than a mere singer of tales. He was, according to Russian and Kyrgyz commentators, also a lover of jokes, an eloquent orator, a seer, and above all a man of the people. Acting as a social critic, he poked fun at the rich, semi-feudal landlords and merchants, who in presocialist Central Asia had been the oppressors of the subjugated and the downtrodden (Kenchiev and Abdïrazakov 2002:36-80; Öskönalï uulu 1997:226-28). A champion of the principles of equality, in Soviet times he continued to criticize social misdemeanor, which he defined not in terms of accepted communal norms or established legal systems, but in terms of his own sense of social justice and morality. His social criticism invariably found expression in his roguery, ruses, and pranks, and the Kuyruchuk stories undoubtedly owe their sustained popularity to their fundamentally humorous nature: they used to circulate as local oral tradition to be eventually collected and fixed in Soviet and post-Independence publications.[12]

Here we have to emphasize that we are not so much interested in Kuyruchuk as a historical figure whose historicity needs to be proven and reconstructed. Rather, we are interested in him as a Trickster, also present in European, North and South American, African, South Asian, Semitic, Chinese, and Japanese tales and myths, as a figure who in the Kyrgyz stories appears as historically firmly embedded and ideologized. The stories constructed him as a folk Trickster, who, in spite of various ideological manipulations, has retained his essential ambiguities and other features that in their entirety continue to mark him out as a Trickster. Thus the significance of the Kuyruchuk stories goes well beyond Kyrgyz oral tradition; they represent important additions to the oral traditions of the world.

The Trickster

The figure of the Trickster has interested representatives of many scholarly disciplines, including anthropology, religious studies, classics, modern literary studies, psychology, education, semiotics, and history as well as the history of art, to name a few. Although we are fully aware of the abundance of relevant scholarly analyses, for the purpose of this paper we shall only make reference to some such studies, privileging the anthropological perspective as well as literary approaches to oral traditions.[13] Among the views of classical theorists one can identify both relativist (Boas, for example) as well as universalist approaches (such as Radin, Kerényi, and Jung), the latter also featuring a strong psychological twist. Without unequivocally accepting the Trickster as something of an archetype, we argue that Trickster stories should be recognized as a genre in Central Asian oral tradition, and that they are comparable with similar genres occurring in the oral traditions of many other regions of the world.[14]

---

[12] Some years ago Raushan Sharshenova formed the impression that, although Kuyruchuk tales are still known, they were rapidly disappearing. Recently, however, the anthropologist Svetlana Jacquesson has found that there is a certain revival of interest in them (personal communication).

[13] But we are not referring to studies pertaining to the occurrence and treatment of the figure in literary works.

[14] In the concept of genre we see “a distinct form of discourse” (Ben-Amos 1976:xxx).

The term Trickster was first used by Daniel G. Brinton in his *Myths of the New World* (1876, quoted in Ricketts 1987:51) as the generic name for an imaginary figure appearing in the oral traditions of many cultures all over the world. Although the Trickster takes many forms and shapes, his basic characteristics as jester and entertainer and the apparent discrepancy between his attributes as "culture hero" (who contributes to the creation of the world, or helps make the world safe or at least better for humans) and "selfish buffoon" (who attempts the inappropriate) appear to justify speaking in more general terms of the Trickster as a type.[15] Tricksters are endowed with special capacities, of which their intelligence and mental agility stand out: these enable them "to ease their passage through a treacherous and dangerous world, usually in spite of and at the expense of more powerful adversaries" (Owomoyela 1997:x).

In this connection, it is perhaps not inappropriate to introduce the Greek term *mêtis*, translated as "cunning intelligence," which draws upon "craft, skill, eloquence, and resourceful cleverness" (Zemon Davis 2006:266). It also comprises deceit, lie, and even the occasional disloyal trick, those "weapons of the weak" typically employed by those confronted with someone stronger or more powerful than themselves. In Greek mythology *mêtis* is typically at work in ambiguous situations at unstable times, and is characterized by multiplicity, polymorphism, diversity, movement, and incessant change that may require tricks such as metamorphosis or disguise, bearing "on fluid situations which are constantly changing and which at every moment combine contrary features and forces that are opposed to each other" (Detienne and Vernant 1978:20).

It comes as no surprise, then, that one central feature of the Trickster stories is the deeply paradoxical nature of their protagonist. Lévi-Strauss explains this characteristic with the figure's essentially mediating function: his oscillation between the two poles means that "he must retain something of that duality—namely an ambiguous and equivocal character" (1963:226). The Trickster has often been described as an incorrigible boundary crosser, who is both human and divine. He often appears as a man (very seldom as a woman); Hermes, Saint Peter, Till Eulenspiegel, or the Taz in Uyghur/Central Asian tradition are all human in appearance (Hynes and Steele 1993; Williams 2000; Rüegg 2007:33-35; Bellér-Hann 2004); in North American and African traditions he almost always appears in animal shape, either as a raven, a coyote, a spider, a hare, or a tortoise endowed with human qualities.[16]

He may defy gender boundaries, for example by dressing or speaking like a woman. He also mediates between social groups without fully identifying with any of these, and his tricks may even involve temporarily crossing the boundaries separating life and death. Trickster figures also connect past, present, and future through soothsaying, divination, and seeing what is hidden, be it lost objects or concealed human characteristics, the past history or future fate of an unknown person.[17] Following Van Gennep and Victor Turner, this permanent state on the margins can be best described with the concept of liminality, which characterizes the court jester

[15] For brief overviews of the main directions of Trickster research, see Basso 1987:4-5; Rüegg 2007:41-60.

[16] For an animal Trickster in the European tradition, see the figure of Fox Reinhard or Reinecke Fuchs (Rüegg 2007:30-31).

[17] For a functional explanation of this Trickster characteristic, see Rüegg 2007:37.

as much as some symbolic figures in folk literature. They usually come from the lower classes or represent despised or marginal groups, are opposed to the dominant, ordered structure, and stand for anti-structure, the moral values of *communitas* (Turner 1995:108-11).

One of the Trickster's striking characteristics is his accentuated bodily nature; he often has exaggerated body parts and biological drives, above all an insatiable appetite. Many of the stories start with the problem of the Trickster getting hungry, so he sets out to satisfy his needs, using tricks and duplicity. In the process, he may be tricked and humiliated himself, but he also achieves his goal.

Through breaking social rules and norms, the Trickster draws attention to them, which is why these tales are an excellent vehicle for reaffirming the very same rules that the Trickster challenges. The rebellion of mythical hero-Tricksters in the beginning of the world may end in their providing humankind with essential inventions such as fire or language. The North American Winnebago Trickster was credited with no less than the creation of the world (Radin 1956). Thus the Trickster's disruptive and sometimes even destructive behavior makes place for the new: he is a potentially creative force, a transformer. He often acts in an impulsive and uninhibited manner; he is unable to tell good from evil—religious, moral, and social norms appear to have little meaning to him, but some Tricksters are conscious defenders of social justice.

The Trickster is often taught in introductory courses in cultural anthropology and in the history of religions, which in itself suggests that comedy and laughter are part and parcel of everyday life and of religious belief (Pelton 1992:122; Rüegg 2007). Even those Tricksters who lack mythological grandeur and appear as comic characters in folktales have a religious dimension. Uniting aspects of the divine and the human, perfection and imperfection, the Trickster stands for no less than the human condition for many (Sullivan 1987, Rüegg 2007:16-17).

Kuyruchuk as Trickster

From Soviet times we have no published analysis of the Kuyruchuk tales. In their post-Soviet study, the Kyrgyz authors Kenchiev and Abdïrazakov stress Kuyruchuk's peculiar sense of humor, his ability to imitate both animals and people, his storytelling and singing skills, his talent to improvise, his "prophetic abilities," his strong sense of social justice, his humanity, his generosity, and his courage (2002). However, even these Kyrgyz authors, who praise him as the embodiment of Kyrgyz values and as the depository of positive traditions, have to admit a certain ambiguity, which is invariably explained away with Kuyruchuk's propensity to laughter and entertainment. We argue that approaching him as a Trickster provides the clue to this intrinsic ambiguity.

Kuyruchuk is in some respects very different from the classical Trickster figures such as Hermes in Greek mythology, Coyote of Navajo tales, Eshu of Yoruba stories, or Raven of the Tsimshian cycle. They are all mythical figures who transgress boundaries of order, and through this act they change life for humankind. Raven's theft brings daylight to the dark world, Coyote steals fire, Hermes invents the lyre (and perhaps also sacrifice), and Eshu invents divination and

sacrifice (Hyde 1998).[18] In contrast, Kuyruchuk was a historical figure;[19] we know his date and place of birth, key events from his life, and one Kyrgyz encyclopedia entry even includes a photo of him (Asanov 1998:270).

Like other Tricksters he is in constant motion, and most of his adventures take place on the road. Sometimes he is on his way to sell sheep, to accompany a rich patron, to take part in a funeral, or to look for work, but often the purpose of his journey is not at all clear. All of his movements are geographically bounded and specify Kyrgyz land, typically the north, which is his home territory, while some stories take place in his home village. He is a somewhat "domesticated" Trickster, who is firmly anchored in a specific period of Kyrgyz history and landscape, a feature that underlines his historical authenticity. References to historical events often provide the setting and the starting point for his tricks: sometimes approximate or precise dates are provided; at other times a hint at a major political event provides a clue, such as mentioning that the story took place in the early years of collectivization.

Kuyruchuk's geographical and cultural embeddedness are part and parcel of this assumed authenticity, since, as has been pointed out with reference to Till Eulenspiegel, an identifiable social setting is needed to understand the prevailing norms that he disregards or violates (Williams 2000:146). Although a specific historical timeframe is not an essential component of Trickster tales, when it is introduced it has the role of pinning down normative rules characteristic of a period. A major historical turning point accompanied by all-encompassing social transformations involves both the persistence as well as the disruption and occasionally the subversion of existing rules. The time when the traditional social order is not merely called into question but is turned upside down is a fertile ground upon which the Trickster can play and demonstrate the ambiguities inherent in everyday life.[20]

In what follows we shall give a brief analysis of the selected stories, demonstrating to what extent Kuyruchuk fits the general model of the Trickster.[21] We do not wish to claim that this correspondence is complete; there is no Trickster in the world's oral traditions who displays all the characteristics ascribed to the assumed ideal type figure. Neither do we focus on the question of the social function of these stories, since we know nothing about the performance and reception of these traditions. Instead, we shall try to pay equal attention to correspondences and regional/cultural specificities, while pointing out tendencies that reflect ideological strategies. Although individual stories are introduced under specific labels, most of them could be

---

[18] For the Trickster in Greek mythology, see Kerényi 1956 and Detienne and Vernant 1978. For a somewhat more recent collection of Trickster studies, see Hynes and Doty 1993.

[19] For a hypothesis that Trickster figures could have their origins in historical figures, see Van Deursen 1931.

[20] For a functionalist explanation of the Trickster's role at times of major social upheavals, see Williams 2000:147.

[21] The present analysis is based on a selection of 36 Kuyruchuk stories, all of them translated by Raushan Sharshenova either from Russian or from Kyrgyz, with 20 tales from Bektenov (1964) and 16 published after independence by Öskönalï uulu (1997), himself a native of the Jumgal region. All 36 stories are published in the Appendix, arranged in the order in which they are first mentioned in our essay. In the translations every effort was made to follow the original closely; however, occasionally changes were deemed appropriate to facilitate comprehension.

mentioned under more than one subheading on account of the referential richness lurking behind the simple style.

Name and Early Years

Kuyruchuk's official name is the Central Asian Islamic "Kudaybergen" meaning "God-given," which is suggestive of connections to the divine. Although the explanation for his nickname, Kuyruchuk, that is, "Little Tail," is that his adventures follow him like a tail, it may also be suggestive of his Trickster nature. The story titled *I Am Kuyruchuk* (1964) is built on name symbolism and the animal motif. Kuyruchuk is confronted with a malicious rich man nicknamed "Rat." He pretends to be a generous host to the tired and hungry visitors as custom dictates, but he has the habit of feeding his guests bad food. He then laughs at their tortured expressions, as the unwritten laws of hospitality oblige them to consume the food. Kuyruchuk plays along, draining the cups of the revolting concoction offered to him without batting an eyelid. This irritates his host, who eventually suggests that they both go down on all fours and pretend to be dogs. Kuyruchuk obeys, and his host mocks him by saying that his guest has turned into a male dog. Kuyruchuk retorts that a strong dog has more dignity than a stinking rat. In another of the selected stories (*Kuyruchuk's Predictions*, 1964), the narrator relates that many believed Kuyruchuk could transform into different animal shapes, assuming the appearance of a dragon, a golden eagle, a tiger, or a wolf. Many other stories include the motif of his imitating an animal.

From *Kuyruchuk's Childhood* (1997) we learn that his early years were marked by suffering from rickets, a painful, debilitating illness from which he is eventually cured, using time-honored but drastic methods. Because of his illness he is swaddled in a specially designed cradle, and when visitors come he greets them from the cradle as if he were an adult, but we are not informed how old he was at the time. Hearing "a baby speak like an adult" implies precociousness. The childhood illness marks him out as different, and early maturity, unusual intelligence, and the unresolved ambiguity of real and pretend all fit the Trickster's nature (Ricketts 1993). Kuyruchuk's childhood illness and miraculous recovery, after which his cunning and intelligence start to be manifested, remind one of the fateful illness of the future shaman, a quality signifying that he has been chosen to become a mediator between the spirit and the human world. Ricketts' study of a wide range of North American Trickster tales seeks to explain the connection between the shaman and the Trickster and concludes that the two stand in structural opposition to each other. The shaman enlists the help of the spirit world, while the Trickster has no such belief, and Ricketts convincingly argues that many of the Trickster stories are parodies of shamanism. In this connection Hyde remarks that, while the shaman represents rituals that have been created to make order in the chaotic world, the Trickster, a symbol of chaos, mocks rituals, and by doing so he breaks the rules and opens the way for renewal and change (1998:295).

As he grows, Kuyruchuk finds ample opportunity to display his wit. Although he himself steals on occasion to feed himself and his hungry brothers and sisters, during his first employment in Tokmok he works very hard as a rich man's servant. Soon he becomes promoted to watchman, and he earns his employer's respect by catching some thieves (*Kuyruchuk's*

Adolescence, 1997). The thief who catches thieves displays the duplicity characteristic of all Tricksters.

Some of the stories cited above were included in the Soviet collection, others in the post-Independence collections. Apart from establishing Kuyruchuk as a member of the laboring classes and an opponent of the rich, they seem to be by and large ideologically unmarked: Soviet propaganda and Kyrgyz traditions, themes that become prominent in some other stories, are not foregrounded.

Extolling Kyrgyz Traditions: Rituals, Hospitality, Morality

In line with the Trickster tradition, many of Kuyruchuk's adventures revolve around the cooking pot. In *Supotay's Spirit* (1964) we learn that, as a child, he often resorted to stealing food to satisfy his hunger, and it is the promise of food that causes him to help the womenfolk prepare the commemoration feast to mark the first anniversary of the rich Supotay's death. Kuyruchuk climbs into the rich man's grave and, as the mourning crowd arrives carrying ceremonial food, he responds from the grave to the widow's exaggerated wailing, imitating the voice of the dead man. He reproaches the woman for having been unfaithful to his memory by starting an affair almost immediately after his death. The voice of the "dead" and his public revelations of village gossip frighten away the crowd, who leave all the ceremonial food there, which Kuyruchuk then shares with the other children. In a truly Kyrgyz and Islamic setting, young Kuyruchuk tricks the adults, plays with death, and mocks it in order to satisfy his hunger. His trick is successful because he, like the North American Coyote Trickster, is an excellent imitator (Hyde 1998:42-43). As a true Trickster, he mocks the most solemn of rituals, which, while fully integrated into the Islamic belief system, has the domestic cult (the veneration of the spirits of the dead) at its core.[22] By poking fun at the death rituals and essentially preventing villagers from carrying out the prescribed rites, he breaks taboos and disrupts order.[23] Furthermore, to redress the balance, young Kuyruchuk also shares the ritual food thus gained with the poor children of his village.[24]

Playing with death is a recurring theme in the Kuyruchuk corpus. In *I Am Dead Now* (1964) he takes part in a wrestling competition organized as part of the commemoration feast for a rich man. Having found out that his opponent is poor but has to support a big family, he lets him win, pretending to be badly injured himself. Upon hearing that his host confiscated the cattle that should have been given to the winner, he claims that if he dies, the host on whose land he had been killed should pay compensation for his death. Kuyruchuk then spreads the news of his own approaching death. This is an open challenge and a threat for an ensuing blood feud, so the

[22] For an elaboration of the significance of the domestic cult, see DeWeese 1994. For the social and political importance of Kyrgyz funerary rites, see Jacquesson 2008.

[23] Eulenspiegel is also well known for introducing disorder in religious rituals and even misusing religious sacraments (Williams 2000:162).

[24] Kuyruchuk's introducing disorder into religious ritual echoes Eulenspiegel's prank, who dresses up as a priest and, having got hold of a relic, claims that only those women who have remained faithful to their husbands are allowed to make an offering. He then makes a handsome profit from the women who wish to publicly demonstrate their fidelity (Williams 2000:165).

host of the commemoration feast visits Kuyruchuk on his "deathbed." Kuyruchuk orders him to give the winner his dues, and threatens to reveal a disgraceful story about the young man's late father unless his wishes are fulfilled. To what extent attacks on superstition can be interpreted as supporting Soviet propaganda remains open, since taboo-breaking and parodying existing institutions also happens to fit archetypal Trickster behavior, and anticlericalism was also characteristic of many a medieval fabliau in Christian settings.[25]

Supotay's spirit has also shown Kuyruchuk as a guardian of sexual morality, a theme that recurs in *The Disgraced Jigit* (1964). On the road as usual, Kuyruchuk is in need of hospitality and accommodation. He is confronted with an elderly couple and their young daughter-in-law, who is about to commit adultery with a rich man's son. Kuyruchuk understands the secret signs exchanged by the lovers while making arrangements for the young man's nocturnal visit, and makes sure that he is assigned the young woman's bed instead. At night he is visited by the young man: in the darkness Kuyruchuk imitates the woman's voice, but when it comes to physical contact, he squeezes the young man's hand very hard in order to cause him pain, thus revealing his true identity and disgracing him. His pretending to be a woman reminds us of Trickster the imitator and Trickster the cross-dresser, who straddles the dividing line between the sexes. As an upholder of sexual morality embedded in pre-Soviet patriarchal ideology, Kuyruchuk here deviates from the "archetypal" Trickster, who is often characterized by an exaggerated sexual appetite. Nevertheless, since some of the Kuyruchuk tales were said to be "unsuitable for young maidens' ears" (Bektenov 1964:5), or entertaining stories about libertine women "which would be difficult to put down to paper" (Kenchiev and Abdïrazakov 2002:55), we can assume that such motifs were purged from both the Soviet versions (because of their incompatibility with the ideal of *homo sovieticus*) and from the post-Independence Kyrgyz versions (because they do not fit the national self-image).

Women in the selected tales are mostly haughty and young from rich families to whom Kuyruchuk stands in structural opposition. In *Young Wife, Young Mare* (1964) Kuyruchuk is confronted with a spoiled young woman who, in the absence of her husband, fails to offer the expected hospitality to her visitor on account of his poor clothes. Kuyruchuk explains the situation to the arriving host using symbolic language: he starts kicking his mare. To his astonished host he explains that this is how disobedient mares that disgrace him in front of other people need to be treated. Although these stories transform Kuyruchuk into a relentless guardian of sexual morality, they also aptly reflect the perpetuation of a conservative patriarchal ideology through major political shifts that is consistent with our present knowledge of gender relations under socialism and postsocialism. Although we know that he had a family, in the stories he typically appears as a solitary figure, a loner with no companion, factors that conveniently position him on the margins of community; he is simultaneously integrated into and detached from it.

Hospitality, the obligation to offer, accept, and share food, is a highly valued social institution in Central Asia and continues today to be identified as an essential Kyrgyz national virtue. A number of Kuyruchuk stories focus on this theme, which is closely connected to the protagonist's relentless interest in the cooking pot. As we have already seen, in some stories

[25] For this last observation we are grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers.

Kuyruchuk provokes and shames inhospitable landlords or landladies, as is also exemplified by the tale *As the Call, So Is the Echo* (1964). Kuyruchuk gets caught in the rain while traveling, and is forced to ask for shelter in a village. Counting on the obligatory hospitality expected among the Kyrgyz on such occasions, he enters a yurt where his hosts violate this age-honored customary law: neither is he offered the seat of honor, nor is he given any food. Kuyruchuk provokes his host by taking bowls of soup almost by force without being offered any. When he finally reveals his true identity, he threatens his host with spreading the word about his lack of generosity. The host apologizes and invites Kuyruchuk for a meal, but once again he reveals his meanness. This time, Kuyruchuk mobilizes his talent and fame as a singer, who can recite the Kyrgyz epic *Manas*, and mocks his host by performing only two lines of the epic. The poet's miserliness with words echoes the host's parsimony. Published in 1964, this story aptly illustrates how Soviet ideology fostered an attenuated form of national expression as long as it was free of religious connotations. Kuyruchuk's talent for telling entertaining stories, engaging in verbal duels, and reciting the *Manas* emphasize his closeness to the Trickster; in some tales the Trickster may be credited with inventing language, but even when this is not the case he is a lively, articulate, and eloquent talker, a master of speaking (Hyde 1998:76, 299).[26]

Hospitality continues to be extolled as a Kyrgyz virtue in the post-Independence collection. In one such story the protagonist himself pretends first to be inhospitable, creating tension and discomfort in his guests, but eventually assumes the role of an excellent host (*How Kuyruchuk Played a Trick on His Visitors*, 1997). Here, hospitality as a national trait is implicitly praised through the Trickster's prank.

In contrast, *The Leprous Yak* (1964) bears explicit ideological markers: Kuyruchuk's host slaughters his guest's horse and serves its flesh to him, before accusing Kuyruchuk of ripping off poor people. Finally he sets Kuyruchuk a trap, offering him a number of animals as compensation for the insults. He brings more than he had promised, hoping that Kuyruchuk will take everything, thus revealing his greed. But Kuyruchuk only takes the horse, distributing the rest of the cattle among the village poor and setting the surplus animal free, describing it "as leprous as his host." The protagonist and his adversary engage in a certain role reversal typical of the Trickster, which involves the abuse of the very institution of hospitality. This negative hospitality involves a major deviation from the law of hospitality and is peppered with insults. The conflict between host and guest is an ideological one over the distribution of resources, which is finally resolved by Kuyruchuk's generous redistribution of the surplus.

Agent of Redistribution

In the above story a close conceptual connection is made between hospitality and charity, both being institutionalized forms of redistribution. It also demonstrates Kuyruchuk's wish for social justice, which is curiously reconcilable with the Trickster's drive to satisfy his own needs. In the introduction we have characterized Kuyruchuk as a Kyrgyz Robin Hood: the comparison is fitting, since he often takes from the rich and gives to the poor. In *Supotay's Spirit* (1964) he shares the food left by the frightened mourners by the graveside with the poor children, and

[26] Eulenspiegel was famous for his linguistic pranks (Williams 2000:167-68).

sharing everything he has with the poor is what most likely made him suited to represent socialist ideology.

In *Hey, This Is Kuyruchuk* (1997) he makes a handsome profit using his landlord's animals in the traditional ram fight: the setting is Kyrgyzstan, the fights take place between the rams of the northerners and southerners, and for no apparent reason Kuyruchuk's landlord's animal wins all the time, it seems, only because of his connection to Kuyruchuk. He shares the profits with his fellow shepherds. In the second half of the same story, Kuyruchuk confronts the representatives of the religious establishment: he takes the alms collected by a Muslim preacher on the eve of an Islamic holiday, and distributes them among the poor and destitute. Thus the religious dignitary is shamed, and has to admit Kuyruchuk's moral superiority. In this connection another story is remembered by the narrator, in which Kuyruchuk had collected money from the rich passers-by in the market place: whomever he asked for a certain sum could not refuse him; they felt compelled to give. He then distributed the money among the poor and needy.

One of Kuyruchuk's essential, unchanging characteristics is his poverty, which is also emphasized in his appearance: he is typically poorly dressed, sometimes even in tatters. Like many other Trickster figures, he comes from a modest background; he is socially marginal by birth, sometimes appearing as a shepherd, a servant, a laborer, or a client but never as a patron. He is thus a natural representative of the oppressed, subordinated, and exploited social groups, and therefore of Soviet ideology. However, as a Manaschi or singer of tales, he is often invited by the power holders, be it a traditional tribal leader or headman of a Soviet *kolkhoz*. In this mediating role between social groups, he reminds us of Eulenspiegel's popularity with the nobility, the ambiguity of their obedience in both cases indicating their anarchic potential in any ordered society (cf. Williams 2000:158-59).

As these stories testify, Kuyruchuk is different from the Trickster of myths, who "knows neither good nor evil yet is responsible for both" (Radin 1956:ix). His motivations may be very un-Trickster-like, but in his acting as an agent of reallocation we may recognize Trickster-like behavior; as Hyde (1998:72) puts it, "our ideas about property and theft depend on a set of assumptions about how the world is divided up. Trickster's lies and thefts challenge those premises and in so doing reveal their artifice and suggest alternatives." His collecting donations from rich individuals in the marketplace stands for his opposition to market forces. His redistributing wealth demonstrates his role as an agent of social change but also echoes the most fundamental principles of socialist ideology. Kuyruchuk does not use any special tricks here; he relies on his innate ability, so that when he asks people for something they are unable to refuse.[27]

Kuyruchuk's opposition to the market and his dislike of merchants whom he perceives as bloodsuckers and swindlers are recurring themes of the stories. In *The Three Merchants* (1964) Kuyruchuk is on his way back home, accompanied by poor shepherds without any provisions for the long journey, when they meet three rich merchants. Pretending to be a rich man himself, Kuyruchuk boasts about his possessions and is invited by the merchants to share their meal. He touches the meal dished up in one communal pot but then refuses to eat from it. By way of explanation, he claims that he had been to the bushes but forgot to wash his hands afterwards,

[27] Awareness of inequalities and a strong sense of social justice are also characteristic of the Eulenspiegel stories (Williams 2000).

and the wild onions used for preparing the meal had also been picked there; thus, the food is doubly polluted. The merchants refuse to eat it, and it is then left to the poor shepherds.

In stories set in the presocialist era, Kuyruchuk calls dominant property rights into question using methods that verge on the amoral: his innate ability to get what he wants, his verbal talents, cunning, force, or a combination of these. In some stories he takes the initiative; having observed injustice, he quickly thinks of a scheme to redress the balance. In other stories, coincidence plays an important part: he is provoked and he merely responds.

In *He Bought a Head* (1964) Kuyruchuk is confronted by the powerful Bekten, whose violence and exploitation is a burden to the people. Bekten suggests that Kuyruchuk strike his head in exchange for a large sum of money, thinking that Kuyruchuk would not dare to do this. Kuyruchuk uses only force, rather than wit and cunning; he simply strikes Bekten's head with all his might. Bekten's men do not dare to interfere since they see this as part of a normal bet, and Kuyruchuk, having been paid the money promised, warns him not to continue with his cruel and oppressive ways.

A similar end was served in *The Slander* (1964), in which a rich man accused a poor person of theft. To save the innocent man from imprisonment and from the burden of having to pay compensation, Kuyruchuk pleads guilty instead, and, upon being questioned by the judge, he starts accusing his opponent of robbing travelers and of having taken and slaughtered his horse. The judge is confused by this sudden, unexpected inversion of roles, and acquits the accused, refusing to deal with the case any more.

Unsurprisingly, social justice is a recurring theme in the 1964 stories, but these themes are not entirely absent from the post-Independence stories either. *Hey, This Is Kuyruchuk* (1997) is particularly interesting since it allows for several interpretations: the commitment to social justice and the need for redistribution to alleviate poverty fit both Soviet and postsocialist state ideologies, as does the anti-clerical stance. However, it could be argued that, unlike the Soviet publications that attacked religious practices considered to be central to Kyrgyz traditions, here only corrupt religious dignitaries are criticized, a change in focus that indicates a shift in state ideology. At the same time, the question arises to what extent an overt criticism of the market principle in post-Independence Kyrgyzstan can be reconciled with the dominant state project.

It is our contention that these apparently simple stories contain multiple referential layers and interpretative possibilities. Precisely because of the inherent qualities of the Trickster tales, they are also suitable for conveying the ambiguities that underlie ostensibly clearly formulated state ideologies and policies.

Ethnic Boundaries

Divisions between local groups, competition, and ethnic conflict are repeatedly addressed in the stories. We have seen how the story titled *Hey, This Is Kuyruchuk* (1997) makes reference to the division between Northerners and Southerners. In *The Dead Man Has Come to Life* (1964) Kuyruchuk is asked to assist with washing the corpse of a dead Kazak. He secretly manipulates the body parts of the corpse so that it moves, creating the impression that it has come back to life. Then he pretends to have a fight with the dead man in the tent and comes out victorious,

gaining the respect of the Kazak for the Kyrgyz with this heroic deed; the apparent endorsement of Kyrgyz superiority is of course highly ambivalent.

In *How Did Kuyruchuk Acquire This Nickname?* (1997), Uzbek merchants are presented as usurers who charge high interests when lending money to the Kyrgyz. They are also accused of using religion to gain profit, for example by selling amulets to barren women, thus abusing religious sentiments. They also take advantage of young girls, and rob people. Sharing a tent with some Uzbeks, Kuyruchuk crawls into the bed of one of them who had to briefly go out at night, and snarls, pretending to be a dog. To get rid of the dog in his bed, the returning Uzbek whips the "dog" but hits his landlord instead, while Kuyruchuk darts back to his own bed without anyone noticing. The result is a major argument between the Uzbek merchant and his landlord, whose face becomes disfigured from the stroke intended for the "dog." Only Kuyruchuk's mediation saves the situation, advising the Uzbeks to disappear before dawn in order to prevent revenge on the part of the Kyrgyz. Thus Kuyruchuk saves his own people from a major infliction, the Uzbek usurers, an act that amounts to a heroic deed.

In *Dmitriy's Story* (1997) Kuyruchuk once again engages in the redistribution of resources but the theme is presented with an ethnic twist. Dmitriy, a young Russian boy, is sent by his father to sell fruit at the commemoration feast organized in memory of the death of a Kyrgyz strong man. The Kyrgyz take his fruit, but many refuse to pay him. Having learned about this obvious injustice, Kuyruchuk calls on the participants of the feast to donate money for the young Russian to compensate him for his loss. Kuyruchuk once again champions social justice, but this time in an inter-ethnic setting: in the confrontation between the two groups it is the Russian whose rights he defends, and the Kyrgyz who commit injustice. In the selection of tales this is the only story where ethnic conflict is represented in such a way that Kuyruchuk takes the side of the non-Kyrgyz. This fits his Trickster-like nature as a boundary-crosser, as well as the colonial situation of Soviet rule, in which the Russians had the upper hand. The post-Independence context of the publication suggests ambivalence: it could be a reference to the persisting colonial legacy as well as a critique of Kyrgyz nationalism.

Ethnic difference figures in both Soviet and post-Independence stories, although our small sample points to a heightened emphasis in the 1997 publication. Regional divisions are mentioned only in the latter. While our sample is too modest for making broad generalizations, such a shift of emphasis could be considered a reflection of an increasing interest in such differences. However, it is less obvious to us to what extent this could be taken as an accurate reflection of the dominant state ideology, which at the time of publication still emphasized a commitment to ethnic diversity, although actual policy was already tending to favor the Kyrgyz at the expense of other groups. This situation again suggests that the stories should be seen as reflections of the inherent ambiguities of the state project, rather than simple, one-to-one mirroring strategies.

Acting for His Own Profit

In some of the stories no obvious trick is played; instead, Kuyruchuk makes use of his innate powers to force others to give him what he wants. Typically he does not abuse his supernatural ability to gain profit. He mobilizes his gift to benefit others, and when he is offered

more than what he has asked for, he refuses to take the extras (*Kuyruchuk's Tale* 1997). Although some of the stories suggest that he shares out the profits he gains from his confrontations with the rich, in others this is not made clear, leaving room for considerable ambiguity. In *How Kuyruchuk Came In Dry From the Rain* (1964), he is accompanying a rich man on his travels when they are caught in the rain. Dressed poorly and thinly as usual, Kuyruchuk wants to hurry to the next village but his patron does not let him. He then falls off his horse at the next lightning strike and pretends to be dying. Afraid of being accused of having caused the famous jester's death, the head of the party wraps Kuyruchuk up in a warm coat and carries him to the next village as fast as he can. As Kuyruchuk "decides" not to die after all, his superior is so relieved that he even presents his thick fur coat to Kuyruchuk.

In *Thirty Samovars and Two Old Goats* (1964) Kuyruchuk tricks the rich of his village in order to be able to commemorate the first anniversary of his mother's death. He borrows samovars from each, then invites them to the commemoration feast at which he serves them the chewy meat of old goats. During the ensuing horse race he gives the participants the borrowed samovars as prizes, making sure that each person gets his own property back. In these tales Kuyruchuk instrumentalizes his wit not for the communal good but to help himself to perform his traditional duties, which were evidently compatible with the ideal of the *homo sovieticus*.

Some of these stories seem to lack humor and wit either because they have been "sanitized" and made more palatable, or because the emphasis is on the shocking display of Kuyruchuk's courage, insights, and other superhuman abilities. In *Who Will God Listen To?* (1964) Kuyruchuk gambles and wins a flock of sheep from the wealthy Esenbay. Instead of simply distributing the animals among the poor, he drives them to the market and offers them to people on credit, saying that they only have to pay him back when Esenbay dies. The sheep are thus "sold" quickly, but Esenbay, having heard about the events, accuses Kuyruchuk of wishing his death. Kuyruchuk's response befits the Trickster: he replies that he was the only one wishing for Esenbay's death, while he caused ten other people to pray for his longevity. God would surely listen to the prayers of ten rather than to the prayer of one, he says, thus proving that Esenbay should be grateful to him. The story could of course be read as yet another example of anti-religious Soviet propaganda. However, such simplistic interpretation would ignore Kuyruchuk's Trikster-like propensity to act in order to gain private profit through questionable means, such as gambling and perhaps even usury.

Kuyruchuk and the Young Soviet Union

So far we have introduced those stories that are situated in presocialist times. *Tell Him What I Said!* (1997) takes place soon after the October Revolution when the rich men's power was declining, but, being conveniently away from the center in the Kyrgyz countryside, many people carried on in their old ways. Kuyruchuk is visiting a rich childless Kyrgyz, who, having offered him hospitality, complains that he will die heirless. Kuyruchuk predicts the birth of several children, and in his blessing he wishes that his children may have a good life and avoid their father's fate. The story is concluded by the fact that Kuyruchuk's prophecy comes true: owing to the vicissitudes of history, the Kyrgyz loses all his wealth, is imprisoned, and dies in poverty, while his children live in safety and health.

A number of stories take place when Kuyruchuk was at the height of his fame: an adult man, his talents and commitment to justice were known in many regions and he was respected as a famous *Manas* singer. This period in his life coincided with the early years of the Soviet Union. *Had I Become Younger?* (1964) is dated with more than usual precision to the year of 1921, at the time when "the Soviet Union was young and its officials inexperienced." During his stay in Pishpek, Kuyruchuk is summoned by the authorities: they are awaiting a high-ranking guest from Almaty, and Kuyruchuk is expected to entertain the visitor. He watches the preparations for the visit with contempt; upon confronting the guest, Kuyruchuk, who as usual is dressed in tatty old clothes, asks him: "Have I become younger?" Since the addressee does not understand the question, Kuyruchuk has to explain that the elaborate preparations in anticipation of the Soviet official's visit to the white yurt, the ceremonial meal, and expensive gifts remind him of the reception of rich patrons in pre-Soviet, "feudal" times, which is not at all compatible with Soviet morality. The official admits that Kuyruchuk is right and "after this the reception of visiting Soviet leaders has become much simpler."

Some stories deal with the difficulties of collectivization, in which Kuyruchuk is occasionally confronted with representatives of the old ruling classes, who insist on continuing with exploitation and accumulation for private profit and refuse to join the collective. In *Fill the Holes* (1964) the villain is Karïmbay the speculator, who buys up grain from the peasants cheaply soon after the harvest and stores it in holes in his yard in order to sell it in the spring when prices are high. He is introduced as an unashamed representative of the market principle; he publicly boasts that he can even buy happiness in the bazaar. Kuyruchuk pays him a visit, turning down his hospitality as well as his offer of a gift, thus effectively denying him community membership. Instead, he reproaches him with sharp, mocking words for not entering the *kolkhoz* and thus alienating himself from the rest of the people.

White Kulak, Black Kulak, All the Same Kulak! (1964) takes place during the early years of collectivization. A Soviet official arrives in Kuyruchuk's village to explain to people the significance of joining the *kolkhoz*. People are registering one after the other, among them members of the former ruling classes, who, trying to disguise their "bad class origins," pretend to be poor and turn up clad in tatters. Kuyruchuk's passivity attracts attention. Making a pun on the color symbolism of the dominant ideology, which prohibited the "white kulaks" from joining, he points out that as long as a number of kulaks clad in borrowed rags (the "black kulaks") are entering the *kolkhoz* he would refuse to join. His words again have the desired effect; the names of these kulaks are deleted from the list.

Omor, the Evil Magician (1964) is also set in the early years of collectivization, sometime during the 1930s. Omor, a poor man by birth, is given a mill by a rich person who is anxious to show his good intentions in acting according to socialist ideals. Omor, however, abuses his newly acquired wealth: not only does he refuse to enter the *kolkhoz*, but he also starts accumulating wealth through speculation, exploiting others and behaving like any feudal landlord in presocialist times. Kuyruchuk pays him a well-orchestrated visit, having arranged that all villagers gather at the mill. He then asks the miller to grind his grain, but in fact his sacks have been filled with sand instead of wheat. When Omor points out that Kuyruchuk's sacks contain only sand, Kuyruchuk accuses him of being an evil magician who has turned his wheat into sand. Moreover, pointing at the miller's flock he accuses him of having acquired his wealth at the

expense of the poor, orphans, and widows. The story ends in Omor's total social isolation and the news that the *kolkhoz* soon builds its own mill, thus putting an end to the villagers' dependence on Omor's services.

I Shall Take Neither 99, Nor 101 (1964) is set soon after the *kolkhoz* had been established, and criticizes the old mentality that privileged private over collective property. Kuyruchuk is again on the road, visiting his friend who has been made chairman of the local Soviet. Kuyruchuk notices the difference between collectively owned cattle that are neglected and starved, and cattle in private ownership that look fat and well looked-after. Since at dinner everyone expects him to come up with witty stories, he displays a cow horn that he has broken off the skull of a dead animal, asking the other guests if this horn needed hay. The assembled people still expect a joke and reply positively, promising upon Kuyruchuk's request to deliver a hundred stacks each the following day. Since he is guest of honor, he is offered the head of a sheep, and he amuses people by pretending to listen to it. In reply to the inevitable question as to what he heard, he reveals that the sheep slaughtered for the feast used to belong to the collective, because the chairman did not want to sacrifice any of his own sheep for his guests. On the following day, as the promised haystacks are being delivered, Kuyruchuk explains that this hay is not for him, but is needed for the cattle in collective ownership. He admonishes the members of the *kolkhoz* to take good care of the collective's livestock, and not to indulge in drinking too much vodka.

The selected stories above all focus on the problems encountered by people on the local level in the wake of Soviet social engineering in the early years of collectivization. Our small sample highlights the low level of political commitment to socialist principles. While continuities between the presocialist and early socialist era are generally emphasized, only the stories published in 1997 go so far in their critique as to address the issue of individual tragedies, including impoverishment and imprisonment of "bad class elements."[28]

Religion

In the last story mentioned above, Kuyruchuk's information concerning the state of affairs is based on his personal observations, but his knowledge of where the sacrificial sheep came from may have stemmed from his supernatural ability to see things that are invisible to human eyes. We have already mentioned his talent to get people to give him what he asks for without using persuasion or force. His unusual gift is more explicitly foregrounded in post-Independence publications, in which Kuyruchuk seems to have (re)gained his spiritual, almost saintly qualities. Relying on his supernatural insight, in *Shame on You, Mergen* (1997) he reveals Mergen to be the thief of an old woman's sheep, and obliges him to compensate her. In *What Jumash!* (1997) Kuyruchuk lives up to his fame as a seer, and makes a prophecy to a man that his wife will bear him a son. He gets the man's promise to call him when the child is born, so that he can name him. Out of respect, the man names his son Kuyruchuk even before the latter arrives. Because his wish has not been respected, Kuyruchuk punishes the family by making a

[28] Cf. also the story titled *Three Times You Will Go to Hell* (1997), mentioned below.

prophecy that the child bearing his name will grow up lacking an organ. His words, of course, come true.

Kuyruchuk, like the Trickster, has a prophetic insight into the "hidden design of things" (Hyde 1998:283-312) that is revealed again and again, in stories taking place both under Czarist rule and in the Soviet era.[29] These could relate to predicting major historical events, suffering, or changes in the family, especially the birth of a child. In *Kuyruchuk's Predictions* (1964), while visiting a particular village he predicts that a major cataclysm is to take place there. Retrospectively, people understand it as being the prophecy of the Great Patriotic War, which caused starvation and epidemics and decimated the population of this particular village.

In *Three Times You Will Go to Hell* (1997), Sheraldï, the chairman of a collective farm, wants to celebrate his appointment in time-honored Kyrgyz fashion by asking for the village elders' blessing and sacrificing a mare. Kuyruchuk happens to arrive in the midst of the celebrations. He praises Sheraldï for honoring Kyrgyz traditions, but admonishes him for sacrificing a mare on *kolkhoz* property rather than his own, and as punishment he prophesies that Sheraldï will go to hell three times. The prediction comes true, since Sheraldï is imprisoned three times in his life. Kuyruchuk's connection to the unspecified supernatural, and especially his ability to predict, are again familiar from the Trickster corpus: the Yoruba, the Fon, and the Dogon see their Trickster God as the "chief possessor of divination's language" (Pelton 1987:47).

In some stories Kuyruchuk appears as soon as people talk or even think about him. In *Kuyruchuk's Predictions*, a recently appointed judge doubts Kuyruchuk's special powers: Kuyruchuk appears almost immediately and asks for a precise sum from him, which is exactly the amount the judge happens to have in his pocket. Upon Kuyruchuk's request, he feels compelled to hand over the money. The story of *Kuyruchuk and the Judge* (1997) builds on the same element: he correctly guesses the amount of money the judge has in his wallet and asks him to give it to him. He then presents the money to the poorest-looking boy in the crowd.

In *The Son Will Be a Smith* (1997), Kuyruchuk predicts that the smith's small child will continue his father's profession, and blesses him. It is attributed to the power of his blessing that the prediction comes true. As the young child becomes a grown up and hears that Kuyruchuk is in the vicinity, he goes to see him and, before introducing himself, Kuyruchuk miraculously recognizes in the adult the small child he blessed many years before. The act of blessing certainly adds a supernatural quality to his character, but an even more obvious connection between Kuyruchuk and the supernatural is made in *Janake's Story* (1997). Upon approaching a saintly shrine, Janake starts thinking of Kuyruchuk and his ability to get whatever he wants from people. Minutes later he meets none other than Kuyruchuk, who asks for the money that he happens to have on him. Janake obeys, without comprehending how it happened, concluding that Kuyruchuk must have supernatural powers and a guardian angel.

The spirit is in fact spotted by Kuyruchuk's son in *The Guardian Angel* (1997). In his recollections, he remembers how the children were forbidden to disturb their father while he was reciting his prayers, and if they happened to come in they were under strict instructions to wait

[29] This is particularly emphasized in post-Independence publications (Öskönalï uulu 1997:46; Kenchiev and Abdïrazakov 2002:35).

quietly but without falling asleep. The small son once entered the room where his father was praying and sat down quietly. Next to him was a naked baby with a long beard, none other than Kuyruchuk's guardian angel. However, the boy fell asleep while waiting, and upon waking up his father admonished him and told him that he had lost the opportunity to become a second Kuyruchuk, and he was doomed to live an ordinary life. The possibility that his son could, on condition, inherit his supernatural powers, is also compatible with Central Asian beliefs in inherited charisma.

The religious, praying Kuyruchuk is mentioned in the postsocialist Kyrgyz editions. According to *My Road Leads Me Far Away From Here, I Won't Come Back* (1997), Kuyruchuk predicts his own death, saying his farewells to his relatives, neighbors, and friends on his final day before returning home to pray. He dies while praying, the utmost grace that can befall a Muslim. We have mentioned that practically all Trickster figures have a religious dimension, and in this respect Kuyruchuk conforms completely to the pattern. Although most obviously elaborated in stories published after independence, this element was not entirely purged from the Sovietized publications, which emphasized his abilities as a seer (Kenchiev and Abdïrazakov 2002:35; Öskönalï uulu 1997:46). In agreement with the dominant ideology, the Soviet publication represents religion as a conservative and ultimately destructive force and plays down Kuyruchuk's supernatural side; in contrast, post-Independence tales often foreground his personal religiosity and his innate supernatural abilities, thus reflecting current state attitudes toward non-political religious expressions.

The Kuyruchuk Cycle and Central Asian Oral Tradition

In line with the major political events of the twentieth century, it is possible to pinpoint several phases in the history of Central Asian oral tradition as well as fluctuations in official Soviet attitude toward it. In the beginning of the twentieth century, oral tradition was a vehicle of social and national protests against unpopular Russian politics. In the traditional genres, the new bards of the anti-Russian movement were celebrated as heroes (*batïr*)—in other words, the Kazakh and Kyrgyz bards, the *akïn*, came forward as active propagators of resistance. This may have been one of the reasons why in the 1920s, the recitation of epics was either completely forbidden or allowed only with considerably altered contents. These measures were no doubt also motivated by the fear that the glorification of the past, a typical characteristic of the epics, could strengthen people's nostalgia for the previous era. In the 1930s, the repressions were relaxed somewhat, most likely due to Maxim Gorki's famous speech held at the First Congress of Soviet Authors in 1934, in which he emphasized the importance of oral tradition research. This intervention opened up the way towards lively research activities that continued until World War II.[30] It was probably during this period that the first Kuyruchuk stories were collected and published (*Kirgizskie pioneri*, 1938).

World War II was followed by a new phase of intolerance towards oral tradition, during which the idealization of the feudal legacy, the nationalist undertones, and the neglect of social

[30] This brief overview is based on Winner 1958:150-52.

conflicts and class struggle were particularly attacked and criticized (1947-50). In 1951 the campaign against the epics intensified in the Turkic-speaking republics, and in Kyrgyzstan it ended in a compromise. Thanks to the resistance of the intelligentsia, research into oral tradition could continue. In the 1960s and 1970s the restrictions were further relaxed, and it is no accident that most of the Kuyruchuk stories were published during this time. Parallel to researching traditional oral transmissions, a new category of the oral narrative tradition emerged in Soviet Central Asia that did not bear the hallmarks of oral tradition (spontaneity and anonymity) and primarily served the purpose of political propaganda. Nevertheless, it represented a transition from conventional genres to new Soviet folklore, and the two were inextricably entangled. The bards who composed these new songs and narratives were well-versed in the pre-Soviet oral tradition, enabling them to continue to fulfill their traditional tasks such as disseminating and commenting news, while spreading Soviet political propaganda. Although many Kyrgyz and Kazakh bards were inspired by Soviet ideology or were even directly in the service of the Soviet power holders, it is significant that, in line with Stalin's famous saying "national in form, socialist in content," they continued their work within the parameters of conventional forms and genres (Winner 1958:156).

Following the breakup of the Soviet Union, the epics started to be mobilized in the service of national historiography, which in the new independent republics has been characterized by the glorification of an idealized national past. In 1991 the Kyrgyz epic *Manas*, which had already been recognized as national treasure during Soviet times, was elevated to become the symbol of national unity. The *Manas*, which the former President Akaev praised as a collection of traditional values, is considered by this national ideology to have the capacity to guarantee the consolidation of the peoples and ethnic groups of Kyrgyzstan in a sovereign and democratic country. In addition, the epic is supposed to assist in the moral education of young people, the "re-Kyrgyzation" of the Kyrgyz, as well as the solving of the most urgent problems of the country, such as economic crises, corruption, the legacy of tribal mentality, nepotism, and alcohol and drug abuse (Straube 2007:134; Prior 2000).[31]

It was this changing political context that shaped the Kuyruchuk corpus as we know it today. In the Soviet era the stories were reduced to children's tales, a genre that nonetheless allowed for the propagation of a certain contained form of nationalism.[32] More recent post-Independence publications, on the other hand, try to promote Kuyruchuk as a full-fledged national hero, albeit not quite on a par with the mythical Kyrgyz hero, Manas.

Scholarly emphasis on oral tradition *as performance* implies that, once printed, the texts no longer display the communicative intentions of the narrator, which in the printed version are bound to become obscured by ideological distortions of one sort or another. In this essay, such assumptions have been reviewed. On the strength of the evidence of the Kuyruchuk tales, we argue that texts that have been transferred from the oral to the printed realm should not be dismissed as entirely meaningless because they have been decontextualized, but rather reassessed as recontextualized narratives. In a seminal article, Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs make

[31] There are numerous publications concerning the epic; see, for example, *Manas* 1968; Hatto 1990.

[32] The consequence is that the Kuyruchuk stories, like many Trickster tales elsewhere, have been mobilized to aid the socialization of young people.

the important point that researchers have strongly argued for the contextualization of verbal art on the grounds that "verbal art forms are so susceptible to treatment as self-contained, bounded objects separable from their social and cultural contexts of production and reproduction" (1990:72). These authors then propose to shift the emphasis from contextualization to decontextualization, and to work with the concept of entextualization. Based on a distinction between discourse and text, entextualization is defined as "the process of rendering discourse extractable, of making a stretch of linguistic production into a unit—a *text*—that can be lifted out of its interactional setting. A text, then, from this vantage point, is discourse rendered decontextualizable" (73).

Due to this entextualization and subsequent decontextualization of the Kuyruchuk stories that were then repeatedly recontextualized first in the Soviet, then in the post-Independence era, the story of the stories is told by the texts themselves. In her article on meta-dimensions in folk narratives, Barbara Babcock points to externally marked meta-narrational devices as well as to implicit forms of narrative self-referencing (1984:71-72). In reference to implicit meta-narrativity she states that "perhaps no form of narrative does this so fully as the ubiquitous trickster tale" (73). This is no place to elaborate on all the meta-narrative devices deployed in the Kuyruchuk stories, which range from the narrator explicitly drawing attention to the fact that he is telling a story to the many references to Kuyruchuk's eloquence and talent as a singer of the *Manas*. Let it suffice here to point out that many if not all the stories introduced here bear witness to their repeated recontextualization. The implications are that we potentially have to do with an example of repeated meta-folklorization orchestrated or inspired by the state, rather than by individual performers.

Conclusion

The Trickster appears in many parts of the world in myths and folktales as well as in literary works. Kuyruchuk is a historic folk Trickster rather than a legendary, mythological "culture hero." In the published stories, the Kuyruchuk of Czarist times behaves like a man of the people whose strong sense of social justice manifests itself already in his youth in the wake of the Russian conquest of Kyrgyz tribal territories. His later efforts to reallocate resources coincide with the eve of the October Revolution. During Russian rule he applies those principles of re-allocation that will provide the dominant ideology in the coming era, which itself testifies to his powers of prediction. But he would not be a Trickster if in the new social order he merely saw the realization of his predictions: this enemy of boundaries once again spots the continuities between the old and new systems, and appears as a social critic of these continuities, bringing more confusion and chaos into the recently established and very fragile social order.

Questioning, criticizing, or subverting the dominant social order is one of Kuyruchuk's most striking characteristics. In the tales taking place in Czarist times, he attacks the dominant ideology, while in the Soviet era it is the methods of applying the principles of fair redistribution that he questions and criticizes. In both cases he does this by breaking taboos: in the presocialist tales he mocks power holders and representatives of the higher echelons of religious and secular hierarchies, and challenges central Kyrgyz values such as death rituals, the veneration of the

dead, and hospitality, while simultaneously subscribing to these same values. In the Soviet period, he breaks the taboos of the new social order and ridicules both the excesses of Soviet officials and the ignorance of villagers and their leaders who fail to appreciate the value of collective property. In both eras he consistently remains highly ambivalent. Breaking taboos, outraging, and humiliating, but at the same time bringing something good to his community through pointing out both the pitfalls as well as the benefits of some patterns of behavior—these Trickster characteristics also fit Kuyruchuk.

We have seen how the primary features of the Trickster include his interest in food, sex and money, and his often exaggerated selfishness. Kuyruchuk definitely displays these characteristics, although explicit sexuality is missing from the selected tales, which may well be due to the strong sexual taboos informing censorship. However, implicit sexuality and scatology do play a certain part in the published stories. Inasmuch as Kuyruchuk plays with corpses and with the concept of pollution, his stories conform to Trickster tales as narrative dirt-rituals, in which the character playing with dirt brings about change (Hyde 1998:153-99).

Kuyruchuk's interest in money is somewhat different from that of the archetypal Trickster, because he sets himself limits; he usually shares what he gets or gives it away altogether, and when we are not actually told that this happens we may at least assume that it does. Since he mobilizes his supernatural ability to take what he wants and people appear to give to him willingly, and since he never uses force, it seems that his getting what he desires obscures once again the boundary between gift and theft, and by extension between clean and dirty, what is socially permitted and what is not. While in some stories he does have a specific aim, in others the performance of a prank and the ensuing laughter are the end itself, a characteristic that Kuyruchuk also shares with other such figures (Williams 2000:143). Although not a mythical culture hero, he liberates the Kyrgyz from the blood-sucking Uzbek money-lenders, frees others from oppressive patrons, changes the ways of new Soviet officials, influences recruitment principles into the collective, and reflects notions of collective and private ownership.

Soviet nationality policies recognized minority rights and promoted ethnic self-expression while simultaneously keeping them under control, a tendency aptly demonstrated by the Kuyruchuk stories. The stories in the Soviet and post-Independence publications must have been carefully selected and edited, and perhaps also manipulated in other ways, so that they give support to the dominant ideologies. We have argued that while deliberate state strategies are often blatantly recognizable (e.g., attitudes toward religion), at other times some published texts are presented as ideologically unmarked, while yet others point to certain ambiguities lurking behind explicit state discourses (e.g., attitudes toward the free market or inter-ethnic relations). In the area of religion, a major ideological shift between the two eras is discernible. In promoting Kyrgyzness, a shift of emphasis seems to have taken place: centering and de-centering play a part in the complicated processes of endowing texts with authority (Bauman and Briggs 1990:77). In spite of their apparent simplicity, the stories do allow for expressing inherent tension and ambiguities; for example, the need for social justice remains a constant even in the post-Independence publications, which, if they were consistent with current state ideology, should unequivocally promote the principles of the free market. Similarly, in the 1964 collection a number of stories comment critically on the early years of collectivization. While these stories consistently extol the virtues of socialist principles, they also serve as a projection screen for a

measure of self-reflexivity and self-criticism on the side of the Soviet power holders, rather than as simple reflections of the dominant ideology.

The Kyrgyz Trickster has no doubt been "tamed," domesticated and reshaped by both Soviet and postsocialist ideology. It is also possible that at times other tales and anecdotes have infiltrated the Kuyruchuk corpus.[33] Yet in spite of these manipulations, Kuyruchuk has retained his basic Trickster characteristics, including his propensity to imitate, his eloquence, and his deep ambiguity.

At the beginning of this essay we suggested that fixing a corpus of oral traditions in print and subjecting it to ideological distortions should not necessarily be viewed negatively as decontextualization, but rather positively in terms of strategic recontextualization. Of course, we can no longer analyze the texts as performance if performances cease, but this process should not necessarily be seen as a loss of authenticity. Franz Boas has shown how some tales may be "the property of social groups possessing definite privileges" (1996:453). More explicitly, Edmund Leach claims that there is no "authentic" or "correct" version of Kachin tales that would be acceptable to all Kachins; instead, existing versions reveal competing status claims (2001:266-78). Raymond Firth explicitly considers the relationship between Tikopian oral tradition and social status, and suggests that tales reflect social conflict and competition rather than harmony and unity; variations may reveal the perspectives of different interest groups (1961:175). The context of storytelling always influences the interpretation. Once we accept that traditional tales are also told with some political or didactic intent (or both), it follows that the printed versions of the Kuyruchuk stories are also best seen as variations in which the novel elements of ideological bias represent the interests of the new power-holders. The interpretation of such stories remains as context-dependent as that of the orally transmitted tales. Given that no single "authentic" version can be recovered, we have postulated that all the stories have retained some of their authenticity as orally transmitted tradition. Since we do not have access to any versions untouched by state ideology, we have resorted to a simple content analysis, which has revealed enough structural consistencies with comparable features of other oral traditions for us to claim that the stories have not been completely uprooted from their cultural milieux. They are better regarded as competing varieties rather than distortions of an assumed authentic original.

Thus the stories reveal much about the interface between the oral and written domains, about state strategies, but also about cultural persistence in face of great social transformations that is discernible through the unintended perseverance of the characteristic features of the Trickster genre. The Kuyruchuk stories exemplify the social life of discourse, as it is repeatedly decontextualized only to be recontextualized as part of the diverse ideological strategies of massive state projects. The repeated decontextualization and recontextualization of the text corpus may turn out to generate inaccurate or partial expressions of deliberate state strategies, but accurate reflections of the ambiguities of everyday life, especially at times of accelerated social transformation. Nevertheless, they leave little room for doubting the efforts of the state to influence cultural production and to appropriate selected, entextualized parts of folk discourse through processes of meta-folklorization.

---

[33] We would like to thank one of the anonymous reviewers for pointing out this possibility.

Finally, the fate of this figure, pushed to the margins of oral tradition studies, demonstrates within the Central Asian context once again that the Trickster is not the exclusive property of simple societies. The need to celebrate the spirit of disruption and renewal continues in complex societies and may be successfully mobilized for justifying and even legitimating new ideologies.

University of Copenhagen
Kyrgyz National University, Bishkek

References

Asanov 1998 — Ü. Asanov, ed. "Kuyruchuk." In *Narïn oblusu entsiklopediya*. Bishkek: Kïrgïz Respublikasïnïn Uluttuk Ilimder Akademiyasï. pp. 270-71.

Babcock 1984 — Barbara Babcock. "The Story in the Story: Metanarration in Folk Narrative." In *Verbal Art as Performance*. Ed. by Richard Bauman. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press. pp. 61-79.

Basso 1987 — Ellen B. Basso. *In Favor of Deceit: A Study of Tricksters in Amazonian Society*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Başgöz and Boratav 1998 — Ilhan Başgöz and Pertev N. Boratav. *I, Hoca Nasreddin, Never Shall I Die*. Turkish Studies Series, 18. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Bauman and Briggs 1990 — Richard Bauman and Charles L. Briggs. "Poetics and Performance as Critical Perspectives on Language and Social Life." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 19:59-88.

Bektenov 1959 — K. Bektenov. "Kuyruchuk (ocherk)." *Zhash Leninchi*, 10:22-27.

Bektenov 1964 — _____. *Smekh Kuiruchuka*. Trans. by V. Goryaikh and K. Dzhanalieva. Frunze: Mektep.

Bektenov 1978 — _____. *Kuyruchuk*. Frunze: Mektep.

Bektenov 1981 — _____. *Kuyruchuk: Angemeler zhashtar üchün*. 3rd ed. Frunze: Mektep.

Bellér-Hann 2004 — Ildikó Bellér-Hann. "Hair-Raising Stories: The Trickster in Uyghur Oral Tradition." *Asian Anthropology*, 3:13-38.

Bellér-Hann and Sharshenova 2008 — _____ and Raushan Sharshenowa. "Gegner oder Befürworter der sozialen. Ordnung? Ein kirgisischer Trickster in der mündlichen Tradition Zentralasiens."

In *Über Gereimtes und Ungereimtes diesseits und jenseits der Turcica*: *Festschrift für Sigrid Kleinmichel zum 70. Geburtstag*. Ed. by Helga Anetshofer, Ingeborg Baldauf, and Christa Ebert. Ost-West Diskurse, 7. Schöneiche bei Berlin: scrîpvaz-Verlag. pp. 199-219.

Ben-Amos 1976 — Dan Ben-Amos, ed. *Folklore Genres*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Boas [1940] 1996 — Franz Boas. "Mythology and Folk-tales of the North American Indians." In *Race, Language and Culture*. Ed. by Franz Boas. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pp. 451-90.

Brinton [1876] 1970 — Daniel G. Brinton. *Myth of the New World: A Treatise on the Symbolism and Mythology of the Red Race of America*. New York: Greenwood Press.

Chorobaev 1940 — A. Chorobaev. *Kuyruchuk (Kudaybergen Omurzakov)*. Frunze, 1940, Ms. 245 (93 pp.), The Manuscripts Fund of the Academy of Sciences of the Kyrgyz Republic.

DeWeese 1994 — Devin DeWeese. *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde: Baba Tükles and Conversion to Islam in Historical and Epic Tradition*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Detienne and Vernant 1978 — Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant. *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society*. Trans. by Janet Lloyd. Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press.

Firth 1961 — Raymond Firth. *History and Traditions of Tikopia*. Wellington, New Zealand: The Polynesian Society.

Godwin and Duranti 1992 — Charles Godwin and Alessandro Duranti. "Rethinking Context: An Introduction." In *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon*. Ed. by Alessandro Duranti and Charles Godwin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 1-42.

Goody 1993 — Jack Goody. *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hatto 1990 — Arthur T. Hatto, ed. *The Manas of Wilhelm Radloff*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.

Hyde 1998 — Lewis Hyde. *Trickster Makes This World*. New York: North Point Press.

Hynes and Doty 1993 — William J. Hynes and William G. Doty, eds. *Mythical Trickster Figures: Contours, Contexts, and Criticisms*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.

Hynes and Steele 1993 _____ and Thomas J. Steele. “Saint Peter: Apostle Transfigured into Trickster.” In Hynes and Doty 1993:159-73.

Jacquesson 2008 Svetlana Jacquesson. “The Sore Zones of Identity: Past and Present Debates on Funerals in Kyrgyzstan.” *Inner Asia*, 10, ii:281-303.

Karïmbaev 1970 K. Karimbaev. “El shayïrlarïnïn zhoruktarï (Kuyruch, Akish, Ïsïrail).” *Zhash Leninchi*, 113:4.

Kenchiev and Abdïrazakov 2002 Zh. Kenchiev and Z. Abdïrazakov. *Kuyruchuktun özgöchölöktöru*. Bishkek. Biyiktik.

Kerényi 1956 Karl Kerényi. “The Trickster in Relation to Greek Mythology.” In *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology*. Ed. by Paul Radin. New York: Philosophical Library. pp. 173-91.

Kirgizskie pioneri 1938 *Kirgizskie pioneri*, 1938, No. 54.

Komatsu et al. 2005 H. Komatsu et al., ed. *Chūo-Yurashia o shiru jiten* [*An Encyclopedia of Central Eurasia*]. Tokyo: Heibonsha.

Leach [1954] 2001 Edmund R. Leach. *Political Systems of Highland Burma: A Study of Kachin Social Structure*. London: Continuum.

Lévi-Strauss 1963 Claude Lévi-Strauss. *Structural Anthropology*. Trans. by Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf. New York: Basic Books.

Lord 2000 Albert Bates Lord. *The Singer of Tales.* 2nd ed. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Manas 1968 *Manas—kirgizskii geroicheskii epos*. Frunze: Ilim.

Murphy 1978 William P Murphy. “Oral Literature.” *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 7:113-36.

Naymanbay 1990 “Naymanbay menen Kuyruchuktun aytïshï.” *Alaa—Too tanï* (Issïk-Kul), 15 dekabrya.

Owomoyela 1997 Oyekan Owomoyela. *Yoruba Trickster Tales*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Öskönalï uulu 1997 Erkalï Öskönalï uulu. *Ey, bu Kuyruchuk*! Bishkek: Sham.

Pelton 1987 — Robert D. Pelton. “African Tricksters.” In *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. Ed. by Mircea Eliade. vol. 15:46-48.

Pelton 1992 — _____. *The Trickster in West Africa: A Study of Mythic Irony and Sacred Delight*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Prior 2000 — Daniel Prior. *Patron, Party, Patrimony: Notes on the Cultural History of the Kirghiz Epic Tradition*. Papers on Inner Asia, 33. Bloomington, IN: Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies.

Radin 1956 — Paul Radin. *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology*. New York: Philosophical Library.

Ricketts 1987 — Mac Linscott Ricketts. “North American Tricksters.” In *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. Ed. by Mircea Eliade. vol. 15:48-51.

Ricketts 1993 — _____. “The Shaman and the Trickster.” In Hynes and Doty 1993:87-105.

Rüegg 2007 — Gilbert Rüegg. *Der Trickster Nordamerikas im Vergleich mit dem christlichen Sündenkatalog*. Berlin: Uni-Edition.

Straube 2007 — Hanne Straube. “‘The Spirit of Manas Lives’: The Importance of the Manas Epic for the Formation of the Nation of Kyrgyzstan.” In *Cultural Changes in the Turkic World*. Ed. by Filiz Kıral, Barbara Pusch, Claus Schönig, and Arus Yumul. Istanbuler Texte und Studien, 7. Würzburg: Ergon. pp. 131-45.

Sullivan 1987 — Lawrence E. Sullivan. “Tricksters: An Overview.” In *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. Ed. by Mircea Eliade. vol. 15:45-46.

Toygonbaeva 1987 — S. Toygonbaeva. “‘Toktogul, Sharshen, Kuyruchuk’ Okurman kozgogon oy (Kïrgïz filarmoniyasïnïn janïna uluu akïndardïn esteligin kurdu).” *Sovettik Kïrgïzstan*, 29. noyabrya.

Turner [1969] 1995 — Victor Turner. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. New York: De Gruyter.

Van Deursen 1931 — Arie Van Deursen. *Der Heilbringer: Eine ethnologische Studie über den Heilbringer bei den nordamerikanischen Indianern*. The Hague: J. B. Wolters’ Uitgevers-Maatschappij.

Williams 2000 — Alison Williams. *Tricksters and Pranksters: Roguery in French and German Literature of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Winner 1958 Thomas G. Winner. *The Oral Art and Literature of the Kazakhs of Russian Central Asia*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Zemon Davis 2006 Natalie Zemon Davis. *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim Between Worlds*. New York: Hill and Wang.

APPENDIX

1. I Am Kuyruchuk

Once upon a time there lived a *bay* called Shaake. His nickname was Kelemish, which means "rat." People were not sure what was more important to him: his wealth or his conceited malice, more likely the latter.

Shaake enjoyed inviting travelers to his yurt, pretending to be a good host while making fun of his guest. A traveler would dismount from his horse without suspecting anything and Shaake would invite him into his yurt. The host would offer his guest the seat of honor and engage in polite conversation with him. Then, his servants would bring a large cup of sour milk mixed with ashes for the guest while the *bay*'s men guarded the entrance. There was no way out of this situation. The unfortunate traveler would feel sick and choke on the milk, but would still have to drink it.

But one day, Shaake fell into his own trap. His men brought along a poorly dressed traveler. As Shaake received his guest, he could hardly wait to make fun of him. The unfortunate traveler entered the yurt suspecting nothing, and sat down in the appointed place. The *bay* gave orders to serve the special guest with refreshments that had been prepared for him. A stinking cup was produced. But, to everyone's surprise, the guest drank everything without batting an eyelid. A little disappointed, the *bay* ordered that another cup should be brought. The strange guest drained the second cup. Shaake was dumb-struck because usually all his guests would be making faces and spitting . . . some of them would even swear under their breath. Shaake ordered that a third cup should be filled, but his guest pushed it aside, thanking him politely:

—Thanks, I am full.

Shaake frowned. The expected entertainment did not take place. He ordered his wife to fill two cups. Having drunk a little, he thought: "This scoundrel won't dare to refuse."

But again nothing interesting happened. When Shaake started sipping, the guest did the same; as soon as Shaake stopped, the guest also put down his cup. Moreover, the guest imitated all the host's gestures and grimaces. He did it so well that the others present started to chuckle. This only made Shaake angrier. He had made a fool of himself, and his pride could not take it. He had to make a laughing stock of this stinking scoundrel, at any price.

After thinking a little, Shaake suggested:

—Let's go on all fours and lap like dogs!

—All right!

The traveler went on all fours.

The *bay* pointed at him, roaring with laughter.

—Look! Look! He is a dog! He has turned into a dog.

The guest was not embarrassed at all. He looked around before he answered, smiling:

—Well, a strong dog has more dignity than a stinking rat with a bare tail.

The guests started laughing. The host turned purple with rage and jumped up like a young goat.

—Who are you to mock me?

—I am Kuyruchuk.

2. Kuyruchuk's Predictions

One day some people were gathered in the village pub drinking beer. They were speaking about Kuyruchuk. One of them was Baykorin—he had recently come to Jumgal and had been appointed judge of the Chuy region. He said:

—Hey, Jumgal people, stop it! You boast of your Kalïk and Kuyruchuk all the time! Well, Kalïk might be an accomplished singer, but Kuyruchuk . . . I don't believe that his predictions always come true. I wish he were here so that he could demonstrate his miracles! At this moment the door opened and Kuyruchuk appeared at the threshold as if he had been eavesdropping. He looked right into the judge's eyes and ordered:

—Give me the forty *soms* that you have in your pocket!
Those present jumped up in surprise. The judge took out the forty *soms* with shaking hands and gave them to Kuyruchuk. Kuyruchuk gave twenty *soms* to those present, and the other twenty to the travelers.
—You should keep your eyes open! You will be a judge for many years. —Kuyruchuk said and went out.
—Well, you wanted to meet Kuyruchuk.—people told the judge.
—Was it Kuyruchuk?
—Yes, that man was Kuyruchuk whom you wished to see.

First he assumed the appearance of a dragon, and then I saw him as a man, said the judge. They say that sometimes Kuyruchuk took the appearance of a golden eagle, a tiger, or a wolf.

The elder Mamatemïr recalled.
"I was headmaster at the time. One day I was watering the millet in the field along the main road. It was getting dark. Suddenly a horseman stopped nearby and asked:
—Is your name Mamatemïr?
Recognizing Kuyruchuk's voice, I came up to the edge of the field and greeted him. He shook my hand and asked cunningly:
Will you slaughter a lamb?
—What lamb? But . . . —I was at a loss.
—I see you have no idea, let's go home then.
When we came up to the house we actually saw a black lamb tied by the tree. My father Sulayman was a mullah, he could cure illnesses by casting a spell. It turned out that the lamb was left by a man whose child was a sleepwalker.
—That's all right. —Kuyruchuk said —the child will recover.

The lamb was slaughtered. While the meat was being cooked, we went outside to have a talk. Suddenly, Kuyruchuk fell silent and said after a while:
—Mamatemïr, this place used to have another name: Oy-Tal. Little by little this name was forgotten, and now it is called Kok-Oy. The soil here is at a level lower than before. Some cataclysm is sure to take place . . . .
Having said these words, he fell silent again. I was surprised, but didn't bother him with questions because he wouldn't have liked it. That day he stayed at our place and in the morning he left us and continued his trip.

Soon, the Great Patriotic War broke out. The people of Oy-Tal joined the war to defend their country. At that time, people were close to starvation, and illness killed many. From the one hundred and twenty houses in the village, ninety people died. Those left alive received telegrams notifying them of their relatives' death. This grief entered many Jumgal houses. Kuyruchuk's prediction had come true.

3. Kuyruchuk's Childhood

In his infancy, Kuyruchuk was ill with rickets; as the illness got worse, it paralyzed his legs. Whenever his mother had to leave him somewhere, she swaddled him in a cradle specially designed for the sick child. Once, at the time of an Islamic holiday when his mother was away visiting, a group of cheerful girls came from the neighboring village and crowded into the house. There was nobody at home. But, complying with custom, the visitors uttered the formula: "Happy holidays!"
—There is nobody at home, remarked one of them.
At this point Kuyruchuk lifted his head in the cradle and said in the manner of an adult:
—Happy holidays!
The merry girls were stupefied for a moment, and then rushed out of the house screaming. No wonder that they got a fright, hearing a baby speak like an adult!

When Kuyruchuk reached the age of seven, his parents resorted to a time-honored cure to make their child walk. They took him to the steppe and left him there; then they drove horses on him. Seeing the horses running directly towards him, he was frightened, jumped to his feet, and began to run. He was unable to stay on his feet and soon fell. Then he began to walk with the help of a stick and after three months he managed without a stick. When he was seven years old he made the whole village laugh with the following song:

Remember, once and for all,
My legs were unable to walk for six years.
Having nicknamed me a "sitter,"
Father left me in the steppe.
Alïmbay's stallions

Almost trampled me
And then my poor legs
Began running.

And, whoever asked him, he always sang this song obligingly:

At the age of nine, Kudaybergen lost his mother.
His sobbing touched everyone:
I was looking for you everywhere,
Shedding tears.
With whom have you left me, mother,
Your orphan crow?
I searched and looked everywhere,
Crying.
Answer me, dear,
What is left for me now?
And with whom have you left me,
Your only joy?

4. Kuyruchuk's Adolescence

When Kuyruchuk was seventeen years old, he was ready to earn money to support himself. He went to Tokmok and got a job as a guard in a shop owned by a rich man. [This is how it happened.] He was in town for the first time and on his first day there, out of curiosity, he joined the townspeople's assembly.
—Welcome! —He was greeted.
—Would you like some tea? an Uzbek tea-vendor asked him.
—Yes —He answered, taking a seat.
The tea-vendor brought bread and tea. "What a hospitable man!"—Kuyruchuk thought. He drank his tea and was about to leave when the tea vendor seized him by his collar and shouted:
—Give me my bucket back!
—The bucket is at home. I'll go and fetch it. Just let go of my collar!—Kuyruchuk begged.
But the tea-vendor had no intention of letting him go. Then Kuyruchuk started running:
—I have no bucket. You invited me for tea and afterwards you demand a bucket from me. The bucket is full of water.
But the tea vendor got hold of him again:
—Are you making fun of me, you scoundrel?

A rich man who was watching this scene gave 10 *tiyïn* to the tea vendor to help Kuyruchuk: he understood that this was the boy's first visit to town. So he took him to his home and employed him for a small wage. Kuyruchuk had to shift as much coal in one day as others would shift in three days. He took his dinner and pocketed his earnings. The rich man was pleased with his ability to work and decided to make him his servant. He entrusted his shops to him. They agreed on a payment of 2.50 *soms* a month.

At that time two cunning thieves came to town. Many people became the victims of their tricks. One day, lying in wait for them, Kuyruchuk caught the thieves red-handed as they were carrying a cauldron full of pilaf and took them to *bays*. For this reason, his payment was raised to 7 *soms*. After this incident, Kuyruchuk was allowed to work on horseback.

A month later Kuyruchuk saw a thief making a hole in the roof of the shop. He got in, filled his rubber boots with money, and threw them up to the roof. Kuyruchuk seized the boots and raised the alarm. People gathered quickly. In spite of the fact that the thief had been trapped, nobody dared to go in. Kuyruchuk had to tie him up and drag him out. For this display of heroism, his wages were raised to 15 *soms.*

In the course of time he got himself good clothes, bought a horse, and began to live prosperously. But soon his father Omurzak came to Tokmok and took Kuyruchuk away to Jumgal. When he returned, the *manap* Kokumbay took his only mare as compensation**.** Using his earnings, Kuyruchuk got married and settled down to domestic life. He became a swarthy, strong, and muscular man who could win every horse race. The piercing look of his deep-seated eyes resembled the eyes of an eagle, and he assumed an important appearance. In short, Kuyruchuk was transformed into an energetic man with severe looks.

5. Supotay's Spirit

This is one of the tricks little Kuyruchuk played. He was always hungry; he never had enough to eat. He survived on the donations of charitable women. It must be added that sometimes he stole a piece of meat or some flat cake from old women. One is capable of many things because of hunger!

One day, wandering about the village, Kuyruchuk found himself at the rich Supotay's tent. Its owner had died the year before and his relatives were getting ready for the first anniversary repast. Kuyruchuk became excited by the good smells: women were cooking meat, and large amounts of meat and fat were boiling in enormous pots. The tasty red *borsooks* were sizzling in copper pans. The boy could not take his eyes off this abundance. He was not the only one mesmerized [by the sight of cooking food]: all the village children gathered around the yurt and the ovens. But they waited in vain: Supotay's wife was sharp-sighted and not a single piece of *borsook* or meat fell into the hands of the beggar children.

Kuyruchuk didn't wait around for alms; instead, he gave the women a hand. He helped to bake the pastry; he helped to wash the offal; he poured water upon the cooks' hands. He ran about all day and received two *borsook*s that had fallen on the ground as well as a piece of boiled lung. There was nothing he could do but be thankful for small mercies. He ate the piece of lung and gave the *borsook*s to his little brothers.

The next day the Supotay family loaded their horses with the sacrificial food and, taking the mullah with them, they went to Supotay's grave. The women wailed so loudly that they frightened away the birds and other small creatures that took refuge in the steppe. The second wife of the deceased Supotay was particularly zealous. (The first wife had already died.) Others tried to calm her, begging her to stop wailing—all in vain. She cried even more loudly. One of the old women noted disapprovingly:

—A truly devoted wife does not behave like this.

Having heard this remark, the widow started scratching her face and shouted with all her might:

—Oh, Supotay! Take me away with you! It would be better for me to die than to hear such words! Give me a knife!

Having seen that it was useless to calm her, the relatives of the deceased spread the ceremonial tablecloth, and placed the meat and the *borsook*s by the grave.

The widow continued to wail:

—Oh, my hero! How could you leave me? Oh my darling, take me to the grave! Take me!

All of a sudden an angry voice was heard from the grave:

—Stop this! I know you very well! No sooner did you bury me than the herdsman Shukura was in our yurt! —The widow and the people around the tablecloth stood dumbstruck, they were frightened and their mouths dropped open in amazement.

But the terrible voice spoke again:

—Hey, why are you standing around so still? It is too late to mourn for me! I suffered a whole year because of you. Why have you come? Clear off!

People were convinced that what they heard was Supotay's voice, irate and impatient. Some of those who were the most scared took to their heels, while others started to saddle their horses. The mullah began muttering prayers.

The echo of the choked voice could still be heard over the graveyard when Supotay's relatives fled. Who was it who spoke? Supotay, or the devil himself? No! Kuyruchuk came out from the neighboring grave. Seeing the empty graveyard and the heaps of meat and *borsook* left there, he whistled with pleasure. His trick had proven to be a success. Now it was only a matter of sharing the food with the other children. [After all] Supotay had had a good life, so there was no reason to take offense.

6. "I Am Dead Now . . . ."

Once there was a poor man who had many children. Three misfortunes settled on his house: hunger, cold, and a bad-tempered, untidy wife. The poor man summed up his life in the following song:

Barley broth is without salt
Poverty and hunger used to
Torment us two,
Then they were tormenting us four.
My bad-tempered wife and a crowd of children
They are now tormenting us six.

Kuyruchuk wanted to help the unhappy man, but, since he had made no profit from his cattle, he was not able to.

But if you yourself are not happy, how can you help another unhappy person? Once a rich and influential *bay*

came from Aq-Tal and settled down not far from Son-Kul. Later he set out for Mecca and died on the way. His sad (and perhaps not so sad) relatives organized a splendid funeral feast for him.

Rich and poor came invited and uninvited to attend the feast. Kuyruchuk joined the communal meal in the company of the poor man. Most people were delighted at the sight of the famous jester, but the rich resented his presence. The son of the deceased collected some cattle from the villagers to display them as a prize for the winner of the race.

Following the race it was time for wrestling. Kuyruchuk's poor friend was a strong and healthy man, although he was not a famous champion wrestler. Sly Kuyruchuk decided that he should fight. But, seeing the ragged fellow, the participants only laughed at him. Suddenly Kuyruchuk announced that he himself would take part in the wrestling, and asked for the people's blessing . . . . The people around made encouraging noises as they recalled his encounter with the Kazakh champion and his victory over him. The elders recited a prayer. The only thing left to do was to find an opponent. It was the strong Mambet who was to fight Kuyruchuk. He was stretching out his hands to greet the audience as the sly Kuyruchuk, ready with a plan, calmly asked:

—How many children do you have?

—I have seven children.

—Ah, so many! So then I must let you have the prize.

[Indeed, Mambet won the fight.] Mambet's relatives were thrilled with delight and carried the winner off the field . . . . Kuyruchuk continued to lie on the ground. At first nobody paid attention to him, but time passed and he lay motionless in the middle the field. Some people approached him and said:

—Stand up, Kuyruchuk!

—Why are you still lying down? —asked others.

Kuyruchuk only whispered:

—I am dying.

The rumor about Kuyruchuk's approaching death passed from mouth to mouth. People got excited. Crowds of people gathered around him in the twinkle of an eye, full of sorrow and indignation.

At this moment the anxious Mambet made his way to Kuyruchuk, holding the reins of the horse that was the winner's prize. Bowing**,** he asked with alarm:

—What happened to you, Kuke?! Stand up, please, and take this modest prize.

—Those who had participated in many fights knew very well that maiming one's adversary, let alone killing him, could lead to court dispute. In such situations the injurer is ready to give away his house and his last shirt. Kuyruchuk knew this well, but he did not want to harm innocent people. Without opening his eyes he whispered quickly:

—You may keep the horse. But what did you get apart from the horse?

—Nothing. The other animals that I was to have as prizes have been confiscated by the respectable *bay*'s son and his men . . . .

—Oh, in this case tell him that I have just died. I was killed on his land. He should pay compensation for my death.

The young *bay* heard the news quickly enough. Although not very clever himself, he realized how people would take revenge on him for the offense he had inflicted on Kuyruchuk. He decided to do his duty at once and went up to Kuyruchuk. Hearing the hurried steps, the "dead man" opened one eye and groaned:

—Why did you take away the animals to be given to the winner as a prize? —whispered the sly trickster. As the young *bay* bowed his head, he continued. —Give Mambet everything back at once, down to the last lamb. You must also give me a lamb in compensation for maiming me. Otherwise I shall sing your praises that you will not be pleased to hear. Also, you had better remember your father. Do you know why the deceased used to prefer to ride a donkey rather than a good horse as befits a respectable *bay*?

The son went pale and he fell on his knees in fear:

—You do not need to do this, dear Kuke, keep silence, I beg you! I shall do everything you want.

He gave orders and all the animals were returned to the winner at once and three fat lambs were given to Kuyruchuk.

—This is my honorable Kuke, —said the young *bay* in an ingratiating voice. —I am only asking you to say a good word about my father.

Kuyruchuk jumped up like a young goat and, shaking the dust off, he turned to the people:

—The deceased was not a bad man, but he liked to ride on a hee-haw.

He bellowed, imitating the donkey! The loud laughter that followed made the top of the mountains shake.

7. The Disgraced *Jigit*

Once, while traveling around, Kuyruchuk spent the night in a yurt on the edge of a village. There lived an old man and an old woman and they were trying to light a fire in the hearth. Kuyruchuk greeted them and the hosts sat

him in the place of honor.

The old man continued with the fire. His eyes filled with tears because of the smoke. Kuyruchuk was about to help when a well-dressed young woman came in. She wore white headgear, which marked her married status, and an expensive satin dress; her arms and hands were decorated with numerous rings and bracelets. The woman did not even greet Kuyruchuk but knitted her eyebrows angrily and began to make tea. Her mother-in-law asked her to cook some meat for the guest, upon which the young woman gave her a sulky look.

Suddenly the door-curtain moved and a well-built and smartly dressed young man, the son of a *bay*, entered. He gave a nod to the old people, then sat down and started staring at the young woman. The woman brightened up: in no time she made tea, spread the table-cloth, served *borsook*s, cream, butter, and sugar. "Something is wrong here," Kuyruchuk thought, watching them.

Using sign language, the young man asked the woman on which side her bed was going to be. The woman pointed to the *chïgdan*, the side where food and dishes were stored. The *jigit* gave a nod and took his leave. Before departing he remarked in passing that he had just visited Andijan and made a good profit by selling his sheep, so that he could bring many lovely things. The *jigit* left; the young woman wanted to follow him on some pretext, but the old woman stopped her. The young woman sat down and sulked. Her mother-in-law told her to make the beds. Kuyruchuk went out and tied up his horse to the side of the yurt where the *chïgdan* was inside. When he came back, he saw that the young woman had made his bed in the place of honor. Kuyruchuk asked her to move his bed to the side of the *chïgdan* because his horse was there and in the night he was going to let it free to graze. But the woman refused, saying:

—Why, you'll sleep here!

—I say no! I must take care of my horse.

—You'll sleep here, I say! —the young woman whispered furiously.

—Mother, please, tell your daughter-in-law that I want to sleep at this place.

—The old woman ordered her daughter-in-law to obey the guest and the daughter-in-law had no choice but to do as she was told.

In the dead of night when everybody was fast asleep, Kuyruchuk heard a slight noise from the *chïgdan*. Then someone stretched his arm through the latticework of the wall.

—Are you sleeping, honey?

—No, I have been waiting for you. —Kuyruchuk whispered, changing his voice.

With trembling hands the *jigit* reached out for Kuyruchuk's hand to give him the gifts he had bought in Andijan: some perfume, soap, and a hair-comb.

—Where are the nuts, dried apricots, and raisins? You must have given those to your wife—Cunning Kuyruchuk said in an upset voice.

—Darling, is your wife as tender as I am?

—No, sweetheart, I was in a hurry, I forgot. Next time I shall bring them. Oh, I missed you so much! Is the door open?

—That stupid guest is sleeping there.

—Then come closer to me, my dear!

The wall lattice creaked and Kuyruchuk felt the *jigit*'s hand touching him. Kuyruchuk caught the hand and squeezed it.

—Oh! —The fellow cried through his clenched teeth and tried to pull away his hand but Kuyruchuk squeezed it harder. The *jigit*'s arm was badly scratched by the wooden latticework. At last he cried:

—Please, let me go, my reputation is ruined! Please! I was wrong to do this!

—Shame on you! You visit other people's wives and tempt them with presents! I shall tie you up to the yurt so that everyone can see you in the morning.

—Please, forgive me! I shall never do it again. You've taught me a good lesson.

—Go away from here!

The *jigit* ran away and Kuyruchuk fell asleep. In the morning the young woman did not look him in the eye. Kuyruchuk had some tea, saddled his horse, and, having said goodbye to his hosts, he left. Not far from the village the *jigit* was waiting for him, with a guilty look on his face.

—Please forgive me and do not tell anyone about what I have done. I'm a *bay*'s son and if someone hears about this, everybody will laugh at me. He offered Kuyruchuk a purse, begging him to keep his secret. Kuyruchuk smiled, pushed the purse away, and whipped his horse. No one knows who told this story first, but it became widely known.

8. Young Wife, Young Mare

One autumn, Kuyruchuk was returning to his home village carrying a lamb, and wanted to stay with *bay* Toktorbay to have a rest. But the host was not at home, he had gone out hunting. The *bay* had four wives, each one

living in a separate yurt. Kuyruchuk decided to stay with the youngest wife, Byubyuïna, who was the *bay*'s favorite and the most spoiled of them all.

Seeing the badly dressed rider, Byubyuïna decided that he was not to be welcomed as one would receive an honored visitor, and turned her face away with contempt. This angered Kuyruchuk, but he resolutely entered the yurt and took the seat of honor. Hours passed, but the host still did not appear. Kuyruchuk became hungry, and since he was tired of sitting, he lay down. Byubyuïna said,

—Why is this dirty creature lying here? What does he want from the *bay*? He'd better go away!

"The young wife seems to be very economical with food, she should be taught a lesson," Kuyruchuk thought. A maid with some clean washing entered the yurt. The hostess looked at the clothes with disgust and started quarreling with her maid.

—I have been trying hard—said the latter timidly.

—How dare you defend yourself? —shouted Byubyuïna. —I'll teach you a lesson! —and started to pull the maid's hair.

The poor maid burst into tears. At last the hostess got tired and left the yurt. This time she started a quarrel with the other servants and her co-wives.

Having abused everyone, Byubyuïna returned to the yurt to have a rest. Suddenly she noticed Kuyruchuk sitting on one of her mats.

—Hey! —she called to her maid. —Take the bedding from this man, shake it out and hang it up!

But Kuyruchuk pretended not to hear her and continued to lie there with his legs stretched out. Like a she-wolf, the hostess took the bedding from him and threw it at the maid. The yurt was once again full of crying.

—Wait until the *bay* comes home! Either I shall stay in this yurt or this man! And these old hags are taking the servants' side! I'll show them! They try to compare themselves to me, we'll see . . . . And this bastard tied his lamb to my yurt. —She continued, and having gone out of the yurt, she untied the lamb and, pulling its ear, she kicked it.

Kuyruchuk had no choice but to leave the yurt. He had not felt so humiliated for a long time. This woman who had got fat from idleness was mocking him. He swore not to leave before taking revenge. Fortunately the *bay* appeared at a distance, followed by his retinue. When they reached the yurt, Kuyruchuk took a stick and started beating his mare. The *bay* asked with surprise.

—Kuke, what has happened to you? What has your mare done?

—*Bay*, it is my second mare. She is so jealous; she cannot forgive me for having ridden another mare. She often kicks and bites me, sometimes she even throws me off her back, she disgraces me in front of other people. I do not know about you but I always teach her this way. She needs to be kicked and sent away if she does not respect her owner . . . .

The *bay* understood the hint. He was tired of the haughty woman's scandalous behavior. And now she had even dared to hurt Kuyruchuk . . . . The *bay* punished his wife. He ordered her hair to be cut to disgrace her and sent her back to her parents.

9. As the Call, So Is the Echo

One day Kuyruchuk happened to be caught in bad weather on a journey. It was dark already. He decided to spend the night in a village. He tethered his horse by the nearest yurt, where there was still some light. A man wrapped in a camel hair coat was sitting in the place of honor. Tea mixed with fat and flour was boiling in a pot. The man seemed to be sweating.

Kuyruchuk greeted him, but the host didn't answer. Kuyruchuk stood, expecting that the host would ask him to take a seat, but the host remained silent. With her back turned to them, the hostess was busy by the fire. Kuyruchuk got angry. Even the poorest of the poor invites the traveler to have a rest, and even if he does not have a slice of bread and a pinch of barley flour left, he would light the fire and offer him a bowl of strong tea. That is the age-old custom of hospitality. The host of that yurt was far from being poor—the ornaments and the sacks filled with food showed this.

Kuyruchuk stepped forward and sat down between the host and the hostess.

The hostess poured tea in a bowl and gave it to her husband, passing over the guest. But Kuyruchuk intercepted the bowl and began gulping the hot tea. Without raising his head the host listened to the guest, who puffed and panted as he drank his tea. Having drained the bowl, Kuyruchuk calmly returned it to the hostess. She poured some tea again and gave it to her husband. That bowl was again intercepted by the clever Kuyruchuk.

The host opened one of his eyes and, looking suspiciously at Kuyruchuk, cleared his throat without saying anything. Kuyruchuk was sipping his fragrant drink and waited with interest for further reactions.

At last the host lost his patience.

—Hey! Give me some tea! —he shouted to his wife.

The woman filled the second bowl and gave it to her husband. But Kuyruchuk snatched it again and began drinking

from two bowls, taking turns.
That was the straw that broke the camel's back.
—How could you be such a skunk? —the host shouted.
—And you? —Kuyruchuk retorted.
—Oh my God! What a confounded man!
—And you are an insatiable glutton! You eat without stopping; you would eat your neighbors out of their fortune. Even in your sleep you would stuff yourself! I'm sure that you would not even refrain from eating the remains of a dead donkey.
—What nonsense are you talking? Why should I put up with this? Hey, *jigits*! Where are you? Seize him!
—Catch the air instead! I wanted to sing to you about Manas, but you have turned out to be a bad man. I shall go to another yurt and tell people about the honorable *bay*, about his so-called hospitality and his generosity to the cold and hungry traveler.
Kuyruchuk walked to the door.
The host peeped out from his coat and, seeing his back, he became scared.
—Can it really be Kuyruchuk? —He had heard a lot about his sharp tongue and did not want to become a laughing stock. Overcoming his arrogance, he shouted:
—Wait! Take a seat, let's have a talk. Wife, cook some meat for us!
Kuyruchuk agreed to stay. Having sat down, he noticed out of the corner of his eye that the host had pointed at the smallest piece of meat, which would not have satisfied a five year-old child. The *bay*, reluctant to offer a warm welcome to his guest, said:
—Well, if you are such a skillful Manas singer, then let's hear it!
—Would you like to hear a song about the "quarreling Manas"?
—What nonsense! What do you mean "quarreling Manas"? Manas was famous for his heroic deeds! How ignorant of you!
—Then listen, honorable *bay*! —Kuyruchuk said meekly and started his song:

Hey! Manas . . . Manas . . . Manas . . .
Manas from Talas, bogatïr Manas . . .
Manas . . . Manas . . . Manas . . .

He continued to repeat these words, raising and lowering his voice. At last the host lost his patience.
—How long are you going to repeat the same thing? Are there no other words?
Kuyruchuk stopped singing, stood up, and said calmly:
—As the call is, so is the echo; as the host is, so is the song. There are as many words in my song as there are pieces of meat in your pot. Be quiet, eat your meat and get fat!

Needless to say, Kuyruchuk found shelter in another yurt for the night, where he entertained people with his singing till dawn. The greedy *bay* stayed awake the whole night, listening to the sounds of laughter. As for his meat —he was unable to swallow a single piece of fat. He was already aware that some awful biting nickname invented by Kuyruchuk would be given to him by the morning.

10. How Kuyruchuk Played a Trick on his Visitors

Isabek, Kochorbay, Boronchï, these three left one end of the region of Jumgal and were traveling toward its center. At sunset they reached Bagïshan and decided to spend the night at Kuyruchuk's place and continue their journey the next day. They turned into Kuyruchuk's village. He was sitting with some men on top of a hill. The travelers dismounted and joined them. Kuyruchuk asked:
—Hey, *jigits*, which way are you going?
—We are from the people of Kulzhïgach. We were on our way to Bazar-Turuk when it started getting dark, so we decided to call on you and to look at your house, —answered one of them.
—All right, if your desire is to look at my house, let's go! —And he led the visitors to his house. He went ahead, opening the door:
—This is the door; the cane for it was collected by Chilzhilbay and Ayïmkan wove it. The edges of the felt outside were embroidered by Suyumkan. This is the seat of honor. In the same place you may see a stack of blankets and under them some felts. This is my threshold, this is my house. Have you seen it? Are you satisfied? Now, let's go back! He did not even look at the cooking pot, or say a word about it. Have a good journey! Kuyruchuk said.
Not knowing what to do and what to say, the three visitors lowered their heads.
—Saddle your horses! Move! —continued Kuke.
They, however, did not know whether to saddle the horses or to come into the house. At the end Isabek said:

—Kuke, it is dark, and we simply decided to spend the night at your place.
—So you should have said so. Leave the baby talk aside and learn to speak as befits adults! All right! Come into the house! —He said laughing.
The door of the yurt was opened again and the travelers entered. They sat in the place of honor. Now they were not travelers anymore but honored guests. The tension was gone, they were carefree and cheerful. They slaughtered a ram, and put the cauldron over the fire. Kuyruchuk sat there and told many humorous and fascinating stories. This encounter was remembered by all three.

11. The Leprous Yak

One day on the way to his friend's house Kuyruchuk passed a place called At-bashï. As it was late, he made up his mind to spend the night in the village. He went to the biggest yurt. It belonged to *bay* Kazï, Choko's son. Kazï was a cruel, self-willed man. He had a saber that he never took off, even at night. When someone made him angry or disturbed him in his sleep, he attacked the man, sometimes only to threaten, but sometimes he even shed blood.

The *manap* recognized Kuyruchuk and, trying to appear polite, he offered Kuyruchuk accommodation for the night. Then Kazï went out and ordered his *jigits* to slaughter Kuyruchuk's horse. Full of enthusiasm the *jigits* did as they had been told, then chopped up the horse, washed the meat, and put it into a cauldron. The *bay* treated Kuyruchuk kindly. In the morning Kazï said with a sneer:
—Kuke, people say you are an *akïn* and a clever jester, but rumor also has it that you rip off the common people. Tell me about your tricks and the amount you make. You must tell me, because you can't leave without your horse.
On hearing Kuyruchuk's impudent reply:
—Are you calling me a wolf? Kazï asked angrily.
—Not a wolf but a pack of wolves! — Kuyruchuk answered boldly.
—How dare you . . . ?!
—Yes, you are like a pack of hungry wolves. You made no effort to find a scruffy lamb in the valley, instead you slaughtered your poor guest's horse. What should I call you after that? I can do without the horse, but your tricks will be known in every Kyrgyz village. Shame on you and your whole family!

Kuyruchuk stood up and took his clothes. His words made an impact: Kazï was scared stiff. He did not want to be a disgrace in the eyes of others, especially of the *bays* and *manaps* who were his social equals, so he tried to hush up the scandal. He made an effort to apologize to Kuyruchuk, and asked him to spend another night at his place and slaughtered a sheep for him. Kuyruchuk stayed for the night. In the morning Kazï said:
—Kuke, I beg you to forget the incident and tell no one. I have made a mistake and [in compensation] I shall give you nine head.
But when Kuyruchuk was about to leave, Kazï told his men to bring in nine oxen and a horse. If Kuyruchuk had taken the horse, Kazï would have spread the word that Kuyruchuk was a shameless, greedy man, for he had been promised only the nine. Kuyruchuk mounted the horse and turned to the poor people who came to see him off.
—Good people, Kazï has kindly given me "the nine," and I'm grateful to him. But I don't want his animals, so I give these to you. It seems to me that the tenth ox is leprous; let's give it back to Kazï. A leprous ox for a leprous man.

He chose the tenth "ox" and hit it against the muzzle with a whip. The animal started to run and people laughed watching it run away. This is how Kuyruchuk brought shame upon the arrogant *bay* Kazï.

12. Hey, This is Kuyruchuk

Kuyruchuk decided to take the poor people's sheep to market in order to buy tea, sugar, and clothes with the money. Everybody agreed with him; they gathered the sheep and some brave young *jigits* were ready to accompany him. For the sale of animals a letter of permission was required from the head of the administrative district, who in the Jumgal valley was a certain Bayzak. Kuyruchuk called on Bayzak in the village and explained what he wanted. He approved and issued the letter of permission. Then he brought a gray sheep from its pen and said:
—Kuyruchuk, sell this sheep for me and bring me only its sale price; if it wins a prize, you may keep that.
Kuyruchuk and his companions set out. They arrived in Jalalabad, where they were unable to sell the sheep. But there was something interesting going on here: sheep fights were regularly held. During their visit such a fight was taking place. The winner's owner was awarded a prize and the loser was left with nothing. The winning sheep had been fattened on carrots and grass so that grease was dripping from its wool. Its eyes were blazing and it seemed that, were it to fight a bull, it would still come out winning.

The people of Jumgal were about to witness such a fight. Kuyruchuk's suggestion to bring out Bayzak's sheep was greeted with approval. The gray sheep was not as large as the others, but its legs were fat, its horns were twisted, and its wool had a bluish shade. Kuyruchuk went to the middle and addressed the crowd:

—Brothers, I see that your sheep can butt. This northern sheep also wants to fight. Explain to me the terms of the fight.
A tall, swarthy man began to explain the terms of the fight.
—Northern brothers, sheep fights are a tradition left by our forefathers. The judges decide who will get the prize. Two men have to bring their sheep into the circle and give them an opportunity to sniff each other. After the fight, the loser gives the winner his prize.

A large, black, shaggy sheep with twisted horns was put up to fight the gray sheep. It looked like a bear. The gray sheep looked like a lamb in comparison. Some voices were heard from the crowd, saying that the gray one would be knocked down at once, which was especially likely since it had never taken part in such a fight before.
—We shall see —said Kuyruchuk. It was likely that the sheep from Jalalabad had won fights several times already. Two men brought out the sheep; they let them sniff each other, then took them away and set them free. The sheep charged against each other and people could hear the crashing of horns. Retreating, they charged again and the black opponent fell.
—The winner is the northern brother's sheep! The prize is the cost of a sheep.
After this the gray sheep took part in many fights on the way from Jalalabad to Andijan and never lost. It knocked down many of its opponents and deprived them of their horns. Many people wanted to buy it, and Kuyruchuk eventually sold it in Andijan for the price of forty sheep. The prize was shared out among the shepherds, and the money for the sheep was kept for Bayzak. More than half of the sheep were sold at a profit and it was decided to sell the rest at the next market.

The fast of Ramadan was just coming to an end.
—Today is the eve of the holiday and I shall go to the mosque.
Kuyruchuk went to town, taking two *jigits* with him. People had gathered in the big mosque for the holiday prayer. Kuyruchuk found a place in the last row. After the first prayer came the second one. Kuyruchuk stayed for the second and then for the third prayer. A large cloth had been spread in front of the mullah; on this cloth people who had not kept the fast were putting their donations.

In order to be remembered by the mullah, Kuyruchuk donated some money three times. The mullah indeed remembered him. After everybody had left, Kuyruchuk stayed there. Pointing at Kuyruchuk, the mullah told his helpers that this man had donated three times and must be a pious person. Kuyruchuk, after putting on his galoshes, came up to them and greeted them theatrically.
—This is all you have earned in a day. Let me take the money. —He picked up the cloth by its edges.
—Brother, you have no right to take this cloth, leave it! —said the mullah.
—Hey, mullah, this is Kuyruchuk! You should thank God, if he takes only this cloth! —One of his companions said. The two men stood there watching as Kuyruchuk distributed the money among the poor and destitute. Looking after him, the mullah ordered his companion to summon Kuyruchuk.
—Mullah, have you called me because you are unhappy about me taking that money, or because you wish to give me more? —asked Kuyruchuk.
The mullah took his hand and said:
—Welcome, Kuyruchuk from the North! I watched you handing out alms to poor people. You are a truly good man. I would not have distributed this money myself. —He confessed and ordered his helpers to give Kuyruchuk the cost of a horse.
—I have told you that you are lucky if he takes only that scarf with the money. —His companion said while getting the money out of a trunk and giving it to Kuyruchuk.
Kuyruchuk took the money and they shook hands before he went away.
—How do you know this man? —the mullah asked his companion.
—Two years ago I went to a big market and he was standing on some steps, and whomever he asked to give him five or ten *soms*, this person could not refuse him. Among those giving him money there were some rich merchants. Kuyruchuk then distributed the money thus collected among the poor. Even the greediest of the rich could not refuse him. That's why I warned you.
Kuyruchuk then shared out the money among the shepherds. The next day they sold the rest of the sheep, loaded the horses with merchandise, and returned to Jumgal.

13. The Three Merchants

Kuyruchuk did not like merchants. He had seen them cheating and knew that all merchants were bloodsuckers, swindlers, and robbers. As people say, one cannot avoid one's destiny.

Once in the autumn, Kuyruchuk had to take one of the *bay*'s sheep to market in Andijan. The horse given to him by his master was so old, bony, and weak that Kuyruchuk had to lead her by the reins there and back. In

Andijan he sold the sheep at a good profit. The *bay* was satisfied and decided to stay in town and go on a drinking spree. Kuyruchuk and the other shepherds were sent back in order not to disturb their master by their presence. He ate so greedily that the next day his shepherds had to set out on an empty stomach. Everybody knows that to a hungry traveler a mile seems like ten, cobblestones seem sharper than knives, and the day seems endless. On the whole, it is dull to walk with an empty stomach. The shepherds had already become completely demoralized when they ran into three horsemen. Kuyruchuk looked at them; they were well-fed and wearing expensive clothes, each carrying a full saddlebag. It meant that they were merchants. If they were merchants, there was some hope that the poor fellows could benefit from the encounter.

It turned out that the merchants were taking this road for the first time, and asked Kuyruchuk to guide them. He agreed at once, and with great pleasure. The merchants' horses were not tired and they hurried on the way. The shepherds were finding it difficult to keep up with them. The merchants stopped only at midnight high in the mountains. By that time Kuyruchuk and his friends could hardly take a step, and they felt sick with hunger. But Kuyruchuk overcame his fatigue and went to gather dry sticks to make a fire. When the merchants saw the big fire, one of them held out a teapot and asked them to make tea. Another one, who appeared to be an Uzbek, gave a deep sigh and murmured:

—I would love to have some pilaf now. The last time I had pilaf was three days ago.

The third merchant agreed.

—It is the same with me. If we had a cooking pot, we could cook it in no time. I have all the ingredients.

Kuyruchuk understood that this was an opportunity for the shepherds to avoid going to bed hungry. The *bay* who had stayed in Andijan had bought a new cooking pot and ordered the shepherds to carry it home. Kuyruchuk immediately unpacked it and held it out to the merchants with a bow.

—Here it is, please. The pot is new and clean.

The merchants were delighted. One of them took out a big piece of fat meat, a sack of rice, and a bottle of oil, but could not find any onions. And what kind of pilaf is it without onions? So Kuyruchuk sent his friends to pick wild onions and gave them to the merchants. Soon the cooking pot was sizzling . . . . While the pilaf was cooking, the merchants got into conversation. Kuyruchuk, a great lover of jokes, called himself Chuchukbay and began boasting of his wealth, thousands of sheep and horses and bars of gold. The merchants were listening to these tales with flashing eyes, clicking their tongues respectfully . . . . At last the pilaf was ready. The merchants politely invited Kuyruchuk to share the steaming dish, but they did not even glance at the other shepherds. Well, Kuyruchuk knew the rich: for them, poor people do not even count as human. He sat down near the pot in silence, then started tossing bits of rice with his finger here and there, then he did the same with a piece of meat. The Uzbek, who had cooked the pilaf, asked him in surprise why he was not eating properly.

—Well, I went to the bushes, but I forgot to wash my hands, and this is also where the onions had been picked and where the horses are grazing. They are filthy. . . I didn't want to tell you about it, but you asked me yourselves.

The merchants moved aside with disgust. It was just what Kuyruchuk wanted. He seized the pot full of pilaf impudently and took it to his friends.

—Take a seat, brothers! I didn't go anywhere, and the onions had been washed. Eat! The merchants, looking spitefully at the feast of the poor men, began eating dry bread and drinking thin tea. There was nothing they could do . . . .

The next morning Kuyruchuk led the caravan along the most difficult path. The horses climbed the steep mountains shaking from exhaustion. And the merchants with their bags were also shaking, together with the horses; by noon they were desperately praying for an easier route.

—There is no other way; Kuyruchuk answered flatly to their lamentation. Completely exhausted, the merchants dismounted, spreading their legs wide. Kuyruchuk stopped. The ridge that they were about to take was covered with snow.

—Hey, honorable merchants! Do you see that hollow? Keep to it all the way. After passing the snowy field you will find a slope leading to the valley. We are going the other way. While the merchants stood there confused and scared, the shepherds took the path that led to their native village.

—Those bloodsuckers are not to be pitied. They have filled their sacks with combs and glass beads, and then they will exchange them for Astrakhan skins and felt mats. Let them get a little bit cold; the road is safe behind the path, even the blind can find it.

The merchants came down the valley with great difficulty. First of all they rushed to the head of the community and complained about Chuchukbay, but no matter how much they complained and screamed, the villagers couldn't understand who Chuchukbay was. So the merchants could not take revenge.

14. "He Bought a Head"

Bekten, the son of the *manap* Janïbek, had a gang of forty *jigits*, all thieves and scoundrels. He gave them weapons and they started to rob poor travelers and those *manap*s whom he did not like. The gang was called "the forty robbers" and they terrorized people.

Even the *bays*, *manaps,* and *biys* had no power over them. The robbers kidnapped young girls and whoever tried to do something against them was killed by being bound to a galloping horse and mercilessly dragged behind it.

At that time Kuyruchuk was in his heyday. He came to Tokmok to drink vodka with Bekten. On Sunday, the robbers took the horses that other people wanted to sell at the market, and having sold them they assembled near the market. Bekten was sitting on his horse with his feet dangling and counting the profits. Seeing Kuyruchuk, he addressed him menacingly.

—Hey, stop! Why don't you greet me?

—I didn't want to have anything to do with you, so I was trying to go past quietly.

—I'm sure that you don't know who I am.

—I've come here just to get to know you.

—What did you say? Who are you? —He said indignantly at this insolence.

—Do you think I'm just anybody? I'm Kuyruchuk!

Bekten had heard of him.

–Here take a hundred *soms*, but for it you should let me strike your head. Or strike my head but give me a hundred *soms*—he said, thinking that Kuyruchuk would not dare to do it.

Then Kuyruchuk told Bekten:

—Offer your head! Bekten mistook this for a joke, took his sable headgear off calmly and offered Kuyruchuk his head.

Kuyruchuk half rose in the stirrups, folded his whip in two, and struck with all his might. Everything went dark before the robber's eyes and he fell off head first. Kuyruchuk took a hundred *soms* out of his pocket, threw the money at him, and said:

—Don't you dare rob people and hold them in fear ever again!

Having said this, Kuyruchuk rode through the crowd of robbers and escaped. The robbers who had witnessed that Bekten had offered his head for a hundred *soms* were not sure whether to pursue Kuyruchuk or not. After this incident Bekten did not dare to continue in his old ways. He parted with his forty men and gave up robbing forever.

15. The Slander

Once Kuyruchuk came to Narïn on business. The street was full of people. It turned out that a well-known man, the robust Samankulak, who did not even own a dog and whose roof was leaking, had been accused of robbery. Manap Kazï from At-Bashï accused him of stealing his nine horses and covering his tracks. Kazï hired a judge who sentenced Samankulak to twelve months' imprisonment and obliged him to pay his alleged debt of nine horses. Who would listen to poor Samankulak when the authorities and the judge were all in Kazï's hands? Having learned the details of the affair, Kuyruchuk stood up in front of the crowd:

—Oh, silent crowd! Wise men! Listen, this is what I have to say! —He said. Those who did not know him thought that the poor man was asking for trouble. —Samankulak is not guilty. The man who accuses him has no idea who is guilty. Having seen Kuyruchuk, Kazï frowned.

—Well, if you are really such a brave man, show me the thief!

—The thief is my nose. —Kuyruchuk answered.

—What did he say?

—I've stolen your horses. Be fair to Samankulak and sentence me. I can give you your horses back within ten days.

The judge thought for a while, and questioned Samankulak again and again. Samankulak swore his innocence. The judge eventually decided that Samankulak was innocent, and started to question Kuyruchuk. Kuyruchuk turned to Kazï:

—Let's leave the stolen horses aside for a short time. Answer me, do you plead guilty to forcibly taking my horse and slaughtering it? Do you plead guilty to robbing the travelers who passed through your village? Try to prove your innocence in this matter in front of the people and the judge! Kazï, who up until then had been demanding the punishment of the guilty person, hung his head and admitted his guilt:

—It is true, —he said.

The judge was perplexed; he did not know anymore who was the plaintiff and who was the accused.

—To hell with you all! You should settle your own accounts. Do it yourselves! —Having said this, he left, swinging his arms. The people were impressed with Kuyruchuk's presence of mind and courage.

16. The Dead Man Has Come to Life

Once Kuyruchuk went to Chï, which was Shabdan's native village. Shabdan received him as befitted the rules of hospitality. At this time, news came about the death of a Kazakh *bay*'s brother. Shabdan took Kuyruchuk to accompany him. According to custom, the corpse had to be ritually washed, but no one wanted to do this, finding some excuse. Eventually, Shabdan suggested:

—Kuyruchuk, can you come and help?

—I have never seen a corpse in my life. I shall come in, but I won't touch the corpse. Otherwise I'll faint and disgrace all our people. Let me pour the water.

Shabdan asked for the elders' advice, who decided that Kuyruchuk should only pour the water. Five men came in for the ablution.

While performing his duty, Kuyruchuk noticed that the index, middle, and ring fingers of the corpse were half-bent, and nobody could open them. Kuyruchuk made up his mind to use the occasion for a joke. He hooked the corpse's half-bent fingers to the robe pocket of one of those washing the body. As soon as this man stood up, the corpse's head rose following him, then the whole body. Seeing the rising corpse, the man ran to the door screaming. The fingers came unhooked and the body was left upright leaning against the yurt frame.

—Has the dead man come back to life? —Kuyruchuk shouted.

Everybody who was washing the body rushed to the door, tearing the curtain strings. The women sitting in the yurt also ran out, shouting. Only Kuyruchuk stayed in the yurt and kept yelling: "He is killing me!" Everybody began to pray, but no one was brave enough to come in. Some people even mounted their horses to get away quicker. After some time Kuyruchuk, pretending to look weak, went out to the people.

—This corpse has nearly killed me. I happened to be at his place. I just about managed to tie him to the frame of the yurt. What shall I do with him now, take him out or try to lay him down with the help of prayers?

—Try to lay him down somehow, —The host begged. — I'll give you everything you want. Kuyruchuk went back into the yurt and began praying aloud for everybody to hear:

—If you go out, you'll frighten away all the people. It's a bad omen when the dead come alive. Lie down!

He repeated this several times. Then he went out and said:

—He doesn't want to lie down. Perhaps the prayer of the chief mullah will convince him.

The *bay* sent for a mullah. When Kuyruchuk suggested that he should come into the yurt, the mullah answered that, according to custom, he should pray without looking into the dead man's eyes. Then Kuyruchuk said that if he was afraid he could pray outside. The mullah knelt down and, closing his eyes tightly, began to pray. Keeping it short, he finished his prayers quickly.

—Moldoke. —Kuyruchuk addressed him. —Since I am the man who has overcome the dead man, I shall come into the yurt. —With these words he entered the yurt.

—Well, enough! No good will come out of this! Moldoke has prayed and now you should really die. What did you say? Do you want to take the mullah with you to the other world?

Some time later he shouted:

—God has mercy, Moldoke! He has fainted. Come here, we shall lay him down together.

Having heard this, the mullah, trembling with fear, said:

—Lay him down yourself! According to Islamic law a mullah should not see a person who has died twice.

Kuyruchuk went out and said:

—If it were not for Moldoke's prayers, he would still be fighting me. Come in! I don't think he will stand up again. If he rises, the end of the world has come.

He could hardly persuade the women to come in.

—Rest in peace, my Kazakh brother. You almost took me with you to the other world. If you come alive again, I won't come.

With these words he opened the curtain and left the yurt. Everybody was amazed at his courage.

—Oh, God! If it were not for this brave Kyrgyz, —the Kazakhs said, —we would have been disgraced.

The dead man was buried. As a token of gratitude Kuyruchuk was given a blue hat and a gray horse. Shabdan received a harnessed gray horse. On their way back Shabdan expressed his admiration for the honor and good reputation Kuyruchuk acquired. When Kuyruchuk was asked how he had managed to overcome the dead man, he answered:

—Try to die and come alive again. Then you'll see how Kuke fights!

17. How Did Kuyruchuk Acquire this Nickname?

He was very young at the time. Kuyruchuk arrived in Bayzak's village. As usual, Bayzak was sitting with the *aksakals* on a small mound and talking. Having tied his horse nearby, he approached the group and, greeting the elders, he sat down near them. The *aksakals* were drinking fermented mare's milk and were absorbed in the conversation. Meat was being cooked. Kuyruchuk washed his hands and they were all offered some meat. The younger ones started to eat. Kuyruchuk had *besh-barmak* and *shorpo*, after which he rose from the table, licking his fingers.

Bayzak asked:

—Would you like to have more?

—The falcon, having had his fill, does not put his beak in the food the second time around —answered Kudaybergen.

Pleased with the boy's witty answer, Bayzak-batïr remarked:

—Look, how this Kurmuchuk speaks!

He gave Kuyruchuk a horse, his old coat, and saw the visitor off, saying:

—Come again, my son Kuyruchuk.

It was due to his jolly tricks that he received the nickname Kuyruchuk, rather than "Kurmuchuk" as Bayzak first addressed him, but this nickname was also bestowed upon him by Bayzak-batïr. One *manap*, or rich man, named Kobegen lived in Kochkor. At that time the Uzbeks who were living among the Kyrgyz gave credit to people at high interest so that many debtors became impoverished. The Uzbeks also used religion to gain profit. Some deceived childless women, assuring them that they could conceive with the help of their amulets. Besides, they also amassed wealth in the form of cattle and household utensils. One day three Uzbeks from Tokmok, involved in such affairs, arrived to collect debts. They were eyeing a ram, hoping to make a profitable deal.

It was around this time that Kuyruchuk happened to call on Kobegen, and Kobegen's wife complained about the Uzbek merchants, who took advantage of young girls and robbed people. Upon hearing this, Kuyruchuk decided to teach the merchants a lesson, and stayed in Kobegen's house, where the Uzbek guests were also put up for the night, and settled close to their beds. Winter was approaching. At night one of the guests went out into the yard to let his horse graze. Kuyruchuk took his place, and, having seen the returning guest, he started snarling like a dog. The guest, wishing to get back into his warm bed as quickly as possible, called Ismat-ake. But Ismat-ake was fast asleep. When the guest stretched out his hand to whip the dog, Kuyruchuk darted into his bed. The guest swung his whip and with all his strength and struck the *bay* lying beside him. Being hit on the face, the *bay* woke everyone with his furious screaming. They all started accusing one another in search of the culprit. The guilty Uzbek excused himself, saying that he only wanted to chase the dog away. There was nothing they could do: the bed was soiled with blood, the *bay*'s face was disfigured, and he could not show himself in front of people.

At this point Kuyruchuk suggested to the Uzbeks:

—There is only one way out! You must disappear before the day breaks. If you do not, you will be ridiculed by the Kyrgyz and they will never forget this incident. The merchants begged him not to say a word about what had happened to anyone, and they left that same night. It was thanks to Kuyruchuk that people were freed from their debts.

18. Dmitriy's Story

Once, engineers were doing some work on the dam building in the Chui valley between Chïm—Korgon and Tokmok. There were four workers with me. They were put up in the house of an old Russian man, Dmitriy Ivanovich Kulakov. He was over eighty. He told us a story about Kuyruchuk. He spoke Kyrgyz very well.

It was time to hold Shabdan's funeral repast. My father advised me to drive there with a cart of apples, melons, and watermelons for the arriving Kyrgyz. Many people came. We began trading and the Kyrgyz took everything very quickly, many without even paying for my goods. My father went to complain to the Russians, but they merely advised us to either punish some of the Kyrgyz or to complain to the head of the administrative district. But he was likewise unable to help. Then we noticed a horseman around whom a large crowd had gathered; the man was entertaining them with his stories. There were also many Russians among the guests who had come to participate in Shabdan's funeral repast. One of them, a man called Alyosha, explained that the man was Kuyruchuk, a Kyrgyz jester who advised people to ask him for help. My father went up to him and explained everything to him in Russian, while I translated into Kyrgyz. I learned this language when I played with Kyrgyz boys. Kuyruchuk ordered a blanket to be spread near the cart. Then he began to shout:

—Newcomers to the funeral! You have come here in order to pray and get God's grace in return, is that so?! You have eaten Dmitriy's melons and watermelons. God will not forgive your sin. Let's pay him even if you have not eaten anything!

Having said this, he was the first to come to the blanket and put 50 *tïyïn* on it. All the Kyrgyz followed him and gave some money, 10 or 5 *tïyïn*, and a large sum was collected.
—Since that time I have not forgotten the name Kuyruchuk—finished Dmitriy.

19. Kuyruchuk's Tale

I heard this story from Shïykumbay uulu Joldoshbay.

I first met Kuyruchuk at the age of twenty-five, in Toluk. He was a tall man with protruding cheekbones and at the time he was staying at his friend Omoke's house.
—I knew many *manap*s during my life. —Kuyruchuk began. —At this time Kasïmbek uulu Sultangazï had three thousand houses under his authority. He invited me twice, but I could only accept his invitation the third time. He had prepared a big yurt, so spacious that the word uttered at one end could not be heard at the other end. His men met us and took us to this yurt. Some time later Sultangazï appeared with a tiger skin coat thrown over his shoulders.
—You only accepted my invitation the third time. Perhaps you have never heard my name, or maybe you don't like me?
—Try to figure it out yourself, even though you are younger than me. I thought, maybe this *manap* deserves more than the dog's leftovers. Only then did the *manap* become silent. Some time later he asked his *jigits* how many guests had come. They answered that there were eighty guests. Then he ordered them to slaughter a mare. After they had eaten some of the meat, he asked.
—Kuke, they say that you take all you want. Maybe I can prepare something for you to take, too. Tell me what you wish!
—All right, but first let me warn you. You will give me ten yaks, all of which should have a black forehead. Then add an ox that should also have a black forehead. All in all, eleven head. That is what I will take from you; I don't need anything else.
—All right, everything will be as you said, but stay with us for three days. In honor of your stay, each day we shall slaughter a sheep. Three days later:
—Let us leave. —Kuyruchuk said.
Ten yaks were tied to the tree. But the ox turned out to have a red forehead.
—I shall not take the ox because it has a red forehead. —He said. At once a yak was brought with a black forehead to replace the ox. In addition nine cows, nine horses and nine sheep were prepared for him to take, but he only took what he had asked for and left the rest.
—I have all this prepared for you. Why don't you want to take it? —asked Sultangazï.
—I'm not that sort of person. I take only what I have asked for. —Kuyruchuk answered and left. Sultangazï was greatly impressed:
–Thank you, Kuke! Now it is clear why people call you Kuyruchuk.

20. How Kuyruchuk Came in Dry From the Rain

One day Shabdan, on his way from Tokmak near the Boom ravine, met Kuyruchuk and decided to take him along to accompany him. As they came to the land of Chong-Kemin, dark clouds appeared over the mountains. Of course, Shabdan was dressed warmly but Kuyruchuk, as usual, was in his thin trousers and cotton shirt. Soon it began to drizzle, and then to rain heavily. Shabdan and his retainers put on their coats, but Kuyruchuk got wet immediately. And it was still a long way to the village.
—Oh, Master, perhaps we can halt at that village and wait until the rain is over, —said Kuyruchuk, turning to Shabdan with chattering teeth.
—Hey, fool, are you afraid of the rain? —Shabdan laughed and continued his way calmly.
—Oh, Master, perhaps we can hurry up, at least.
—Nothing will happen to you, you'll see, God doesn't need you! You aren't made out of clay, you won't melt —snapped Shabdan.
What can you do? You can't just scream at the powerful Shabdan, and you can't disobey. But it continued to rain heavily, and it was cold. Kuyruchuk had to come up with something.
—Oh, Master, you and your *jigits* may ride slowly, but I shall gallop ahead to inform people about your arrival. —Kuyruchuk suggested. He whipped his mare and Shabdan had no time to open his mouth. But obviously God got angry with the poor man: deafening thunder was heard and the lightning struck. Kuyruchuk fell off his mare. When Shabdan saw him, he sent two of his men. They dismounted and began to shake Kuyruchuk by his shoulders.
—Open your eyes! Wake up!
Kuyruchuk raised his eyelids slightly and whispered weakly.

—Tell the *batïr* that I'm dying because of his obstinacy. I am Shabdan's victim. My children will be orphans . . . —he dropped feebly.
Arriving, Shabdan saw Kuyruchuk's motionless body and asked anxiously.
—What has happened to this fool?
—Kuyruchuk is dead, but before he died he blamed you for his death.
Hearing these words, Shabdan trembled, then he took his spare coat and wrapped the body in it. They all hurried to the village in silence. The *bay* did not wish to become known as the cause of Kuyruchuk's death. People loved Kuyruchuk, and word gets around quickly. Indeed, even before they reached the village the rumor had already spread:
—Shabdan is guilty of Kuyruchuk's death.
Kuyruchuk's body was not brought to the *manap*'s yurt, but to a poorer one. Shabdan suspected that Kuyruchuk may have played a trick on him, so he kept sending his men to the yurt, hoping that Kuyruchuk would rise, but he lay there motionless. Shabdan lost face and had no idea what to do. The cattle had already been sacrificed for the funeral, and they were about to send a messenger to Kuyruchuk's family. Meanwhile Kuyruchuk was lying wrapped up warm and chuckling. Each time one of Shabdan's servants approached to check upon him, he pretended to be dead; but when the person left, he opened his eyes and listened attentively to the conversation and noise behind the yurt. Having waited until all the villagers had assembled to pay their respects to the dead man, Kuyruchuk decided that it was time to show signs of life. When the next servant came in, Kuyruchuk moved his toe that was sticking out from under the old coat. The *jigit* was scared and ran out of the yurt. Having heard about the miracle, the villagers got excited. Forgetting his pomposity, even Shabdan ran out of his yurt and immediately sent his *jigits* to Kuyruchuk. When they started approaching the yurt with big clubs in their hands, Kuyruchuk came out and stood in the doorway, wearing the *bay*'s coat. He went straight to Shabdan without saying a single word. The *manap*, unable to face the encounter, ran back into his yurt.
—*Batïr*, don't run. It appears that Allah did not need me. Besides, you kept on sending your brave *jigits*, so I have changed my mind about dying, so as not to frighten them.
On hearing the familiar voice, the crowd laughed.
—Master, what should we do with your coat? It has already been on a corpse.
—Oh, you might as well choke on it! —Came the angry voice from the yurt.
Kuyruchuk bowed towards the yurt, saying:
—So I have emerged unharmed.

21. Thirty Samovars and Two Old Goats

Since Kuyruchuk was very poor, he was unable to organize a feast marking the first anniversary of his mother's death. He thought a lot, but he did not have the means to do it. At such feasts, one must offer hospitality and organize a horse race for which cattle are needed as prizes. But where could Kuyruchuk possibly get them?

The *manaps* or *bays*, who were the rich men in the village, such as Kokumbay, Kurman, and Mïrzabek, were surely not going to help Kuyruchuk. Time went by without the son fulfilling his duty. At last, Kuyruchuk found a way out. He called his young male friends and asked them to invite guests and to borrow samovars from the *bays*. He asked his friends to bring as many samovars as possible.

The *jigits* brought the samovars and Kuyruchuk arranged them in rows near his yurt. Someone asked him:
—Why do you need so many samovars?
—I shall brew a special tea to treat the *bays* at the commemoration feast.
—What makes it so special?
—I have found the water of life. If a person drinks it, he will live forever.

Soon the guests started arriving. Common people came on time, but Kokumbay, Mïrzabek, and Kurman demonstrated their reluctance to come and arrived late. Kuyruchuk understood this and prepared a suitable dish for them: he slaughtered two old stinking goats and boiled their meat. The *bays* were seated in the place of honor, washed their hands, and took their knives . . . . The meat was served by the host himself. He felt nauseated as he dished out the meat and served it up to his guests. But he managed to put it on the table and to offer it to them loudly so that everybody present could hear his words:
—Dear honorable guests! This meat is from Mecca. It is sacred and it is a great honor to be able to offer it to you. The *bays* had no choice but eat this meat. To reject hospitality at a commemoration feast would have meant offending not only the hosts but also the deceased.
—Oh, dear! What a horrible stench! Mïrzabek shouted, taking a bone.
—Help yourselves, dear guests, I was in luck. The other day a pilgrim returning from Mecca passed by, and gave me this meat as God's gift.
—But where is the head? Kurman asked with distrust.

—There are honorable men in Mecca, too, and they are not in the habit of giving away meat with the head; the head was eaten there.
While Kuyruchuk regaled the honorable guests with the stinking, sinewy goat's meat, the commoners were eating fresh lamb heartily. Finally, the dinner was over. It was time for the horse race. The guests looked at the fast horses, and the race began. After some time the horses started the last lap. The first rider crossed the finish line, then the second, then the third. Standing by the samovars, Kuyruchuk, putting on airs, presented them as prizes. People laughed but took the prizes; after all, it is useful to have a samovar at home.

But there was one strange thing: each winner got his own samovar back, which the *jigits* had borrowed from him a day or two before. In giving away the samovars, Kuyruchuk did not make a mistake: the poor man had no horses, so no one was offended. When the *bays* gave Kuyruchuk a puzzled look, he only shrugged his shoulders and screwed up his eyes.

When the commemoration feast was over and the guests had departed, Kuyruchuk wrapped himself up in a fur coat and retired to his yurt to sleep. But some greedy guests came back, demanding their samovars.
Kuyruchuk gave them a surprised look and said:
—What samovars are you talking about? Everybody saw me handing them over to you today! Go away!
He turned over and fell asleep.

22. Who Will God Listen To?

They say that once Kuyruchuk struck it lucky: in a game of *ordo* he won a whole flock of sheep, all in all ten head, from *bay* Esenkul. The owner was a wealthy man and he simply prayed to Allah. As for Kuyruchuk, he drove the sheep to the bazaar, where he started yelling:
—Hey, beggars, you can buy these fat, heavy sheep on credit. You will have to pay me back only when *bay* Esenkul dies. As long as he is alive, I will not ask from you even a penny. You have credit until Esenkul dies.
The sheep, of course, were bought, and the *jigits* informed Esenkul that Kuyruchuk had wished for his death in front of all the people. The *bay* was furious and he sent for Kuyruchuk. Kuyruchuk came and looked impassively in the eyes of the powerful *bay*, the fame of whose bad temper superseded rumors about his kindness.
—Is it true that you wish I were dead? On top of disgracing me by winning the game, you also want me to die soon?
—Worthy Esenkul, tell me whether a smart person will listen to one or several people?
—Even my youngest son knows that the word of two people is to be trusted more than the word of one.
—What is my fault then? Just think: I'm the only person who wishes your early death, but ten poor men are praying for your immortality day and night. Who will God listen to? You should be grateful to me rather than angry.
What could the *bay* reply to this? He was gritting his teeth furiously:
—You have got away once again, you damned impostor! —And he let Kuyruchuk go.

23. "Tell Him What I Said!"

One day Kuyruchuk went to Ter-Jaylak to visit Orozbay. It was the time of the October Revolution and the power of the *bays* and *manaps* was declining. But as this place was a great distance away from the center, it did not affect the *bays* of Sarï-Kamïsh. Orozbay slaughtered a horse in honor of Kuyruchuk's arrival and received him with respect. Having noticed grief in Orozbay's eyes, Kuyruchuk asked:
—Is everything all right with you or are you suffering from some illness?
—Eh Kuke! Everything is all right with my health. I live in prosperity. But I have a problem that does not leave me even in my dreams. I'm already old and I have no heirs. When I close my eyes, there will be no son to continue in my footsteps. It is hard for me. My riches will not be needed. Who will be my heir?
—Orozbay, how can your spoiled young wife give you an heir if she sits in a saddle like a man both in winter and in summer?! It is not your fault, so do not reproach yourself with it. Your tomboy of a wife Saadat will bear you two sons and a daughter. Your children will grow up sensible and thrifty . . . . Orozbay cried with joy:
—May your words come true!
—When a child is born, you will give me a present for the good news, regardless if it happens in winter or in summer. My village is in Jumgal.
A year later Orozbay and Saadat had a son and they named him Karï. Orozbay gave Kuyruchuk a mare and a colt. Having received the news, Kuyruchuk blessed the child, telling the messenger:
—May the ties be strong! May his children avoid Orozbay's troubles. Tell him what I said!
As Kuyruchuk had predicted, after Karï a second son, Sejit, and a daughter, Sandal, were born. Later nothing was left of Orozbay's riches, and he fell into poverty and died in prison. But his children still live in safety and health.
. . . And this is how Kuyruchuk's prediction came true.

24. Had I Become Younger?

In the summer of 1921, Kuyruchuk came from Jumgal to Pishpek in the north of Kyrgyzstan, which was part of the Semirechinsk district. The Soviet Union was young, and its officials inexperienced. I have no reason to hide the fact that occasionally the *bays*' sons and scholars, who had served the tsar, managed to enter the ranks of the Soviet authorities and carried on acting as before.

So Kuyruchuk arrived in Pishpek and visited the marketplace, where he bought some small things including textiles, sugar, and matches. Suddenly a man ran up to him and said:

—Kuke, our authorities are summoning you.

Kuyruchuk had no choice but to go. Several leaders were waiting for him.

—Kuke, —one of them said, —we are expecting a visit from an honored guest from Almaty today. We would like you to meet him, and when the time comes you should praise him: please say something flattering to him.

Kuyruchuk agreed. They went to the Almaty highway to meet the guest. One man working for the authorities was evidently worried and anxious, continually giving orders. Kuyruchuk watched this entire bustle quietly.

Suddenly some people started shouting: "He is coming! He is coming!" An open carriage appeared on the road. The spectators lined up and the honored guest walked slowly along the line, greeting each person with a handshake. Then it was Kuyruchuk's turn. He looked much like a poor man —he wore a tattered coat and an old skull-cap. The guest asked his guides:

—Who is this man?

—He is the famous Kyrgyz trickster, a just and honest man, the witty Kuyruchuk.

—Oh! I know him, I have heard about him! I want to ask you three questions, which you should answer without thinking.

Kuyruchuk bowed his head and replied.

—Dear guest, before hearing your three questions, would you please answer my only question?

—Well, ask it.

—Is it true that I have become younger? You have time to think . . . .

—Well, it is a strange question . . . . And why do you think that your youth has returned?

—Why? It seems to me that I have become twenty to thirty years younger.

—But why?

—I will tell you why I think so. I know that the Soviet leaders are simple and modest, they are not conceited. But some of our officials became pale as they heard about your arrival. They prepared a white yurt with thin carpets and soft pillows. You will eat the meat of fattened horses and tender lambs. A stallion, a silver saddle, and a lot of money have been prepared for you as a gift. These preparations remind me of the old visits of local dignitaries and district chiefs twenty or thirty years ago.

—Dear elder! Thank you for your warning. I have now been convinced that you are indeed a just and honest man, who also has courage and presence of mind. I am no feudal lord, nor district chief, of course, and I do not accept bribes. I have never lived in a white yurt and I do not intend to do so now. I used to be a shepherd, now I am a communist, and I have come here to become acquainted with the Kyrgyz people. Those who wanted to greet me as if we still lived in the past will be duly punished. I want you to be near me throughout my visit, I shall need you.

Everything happened as he said. The honored guest stayed in an inn, eating his meals in a dining hall. During his trips he was accompanied by Kuyruchuk and listened to his witty characterizations of people. Since then the reception of visiting Soviet leaders has become much simpler.

25. "Fill the Holes!"

This is a story about Karïmbaï, a sly businessman. In the autumn he usually bought up most of the grain cheaply and stored it in holes that had been dug in his yard. He sold the grain in the spring and in the early summer, when prices were high.

—Hey, I can even buy happiness in the bazaar! —He used to boast in public.

He prevented children from going to school whenever he could, because he was of the opinion that real wealth was to be found in the bazaar, and that there was no use in studying unless they wanted to be "great men."

—Studying is worthless, it's better to understand the bazaar well, and you will make money. Money is everything! He used to say.

When all the poor villagers joined the collective farm, he refused:

—What should I do there? I have my bazaar instead!

One day Kuyruchuk and his friend Tolesh were returning from the miller's and they decided to call on this peasant. As they drove into the yard they saw the holes. The whole yard was full of holes. Kuyruchuk was astonished and shook his head. But at that moment there came the host, a tall swarthy man with a long neck and a shiny bald head,

and asked Tolesh:
—Hey, who is that with you?
—It's the famous Kuyruchuk! Don't you recognize him?
Karïmbaï was almost paralyzed with astonishment, and thought: "Indeed, the famous Kuyruchuk has come to beg for some grain. Well, perhaps if I give him a sack of grain, he will praise me, and everyone will call me a good soul!"
—It's very good that Kuyruchuk has come to me. Get off your horses and follow me into the house. Please, have some dinner. Kuyruchuk must have come all the way from Jumgal.
In a short time the yard had filled up with people who wanted to see Kuyruchuk. But Kuyruchuk remained mounted, scratching his chin from time to time, without answering his host's flattering words.
—Kuyruchuk, why don't you dismount? —asked the astonished Tolesh. Firmly looking at Karïmbaï, Kuyruchuk said aloud:
—Hey, Tolesh *aksakal*. It's the best of times now, people everywhere are joining the *kolkhoz*, there is abundance and love everywhere, but look at this person torturing himself; he has dug up his yard by himself. This bald-headed devil dreams about profit; he thirsts after human blood. Is it worth visiting a man whose head is as empty as these holes? No, Tolesh, let's go.
Karïmbaï's face went first red then pale. He stood there perplexed. Trying to avoid shame, he began to beg Kuyruchuk again to dismount and to accept his hospitality. At last Kuyruchuk accepted the invitation and entered the house. The owner mumbled, anxiously bowing in front of the guest:
—Kuyruchuk, I shall not let you leave empty-handed. Take a sack of flour, but please don't say bad things about me in front of other people!
—Hey, Karïmbaï, I have had a long life and have seen many things, but I have never met a person who has found happiness in the bazaar. Thank you for the flour, but I will not take it. The flour is bitter from the tears of poor people who have to pay you three times the normal price for it. Why are you living in isolation from other people? Don't you see that people pass by you, as they pass over the holes in your yard?
—Kuyruchuk, what should I do?
Kuyruchuk burst out laughing.
—Hey, Tolesh, trading has made him so stupid that he is unable to understand human speech. Help him to join the others and enter the *kolkhoz* before he goes completely crazy. Help him to fill the holes between him and the people. Only bloodthirsty wolves and sly foxes live in holes. People must live above the ground . . . .
Kuyruchuk's wise words spread quickly among the people. And who knows—maybe not only Karïmbaï reflected over his words. Tolesh is now one hundred and five years old, and often tells this story.

26. "White *Kulak*, Black *Kulak*, All the Same *Kulak*!"

Kuyruchuk was well over sixty years old when the collectivization began. But he still had the eye of an eagle, a good mind, and a sharp tongue. That year towns and small villages forgotten by God and people, mountains and valleys, the poor people's huts and the houses of the rich were all in a state of unrest. Everybody everywhere was wondering what the unprecedented innovations would bring him.

The poor were hoping for a better life, the *bays*, *manaps*, *kulaks*, and *mullahs* were painting as dark a picture of the new life as possible, predicting hunger, cold, and the everlasting torments in the life beyond. While threatening the poor in this way they were trying to worm their way into the *kolkhoz*.

People gathered in Kuyruchuk's village to solve the problem of the *kolkhoz*. Family heads were joined there by women and children. The chairman of the village council opened the meeting and the [Soviet] official who had just arrived explained the significance of the *kolkhoz* and the life awaiting them there. People discussed this and decided in favor of joining and began to register. But Kuyruchuk was sitting there in silence, watching and listening attentively as the rich men's sons followed the poor into the *kolkhoz*. They were specially clad in rags for the occasion. They must have stolen the winter shoes and old patched fur coats of their shepherds for the purpose. The unfortunate beggars! The official did not know them, and local people could not bring themselves to unmask them: some were afraid; others did not want to betray their clan loyalties. So, the whole village joined the *kolkhoz*. The chairman asked:
—Who is still left? Every poor person must be in the *kolkhoz*.
Kuyruchuk kept silent. He then lifted both his fists and first looked at the one and then at the other. His neighbor looked at him and, jumping up, shouted:
—Comrades, why has Kuyruchuk not registered?
There was uproar. The chairman and the official asked in unison:
—Respectable Kuyruchuk, why are you silent? The old man stood up and raised his fists again.
Everyone went quiet, waiting for a joke. Kuyruchuk examined first one fist, and then the other and suddenly turned

to the official:
—You have said that the "white" *kulaks* are not allowed to join the *kolkhoz*. How about the "black" ones, are they allowed?
The official replied, perplexed:
—I don't understand which "black ones" you are talking about.
—These.
Kuyruchuk pointed at the men who had disguised themselves as beggars one after the other.
—This one is the son of a *bay*, and that one is the son of a *manap*. Look, they are wearing the dirty, ragged clothes of poor people. I think that—he raised his fists again—it makes no difference whether it is a right fist or a left fist —all that matters is that it is a fist. White *bay*, black *bay*, they are all *bays*. I shall never join the *kolkhoz* if they are admitted. I spent all my life fighting against their fathers. This was all he said. Kuyruchuk then sat down and the meeting took a new course. The "black *kulaks*" were deleted from the list, and Kuyruchuk, an old man with the brave heart of a young man, registered.

27. Omor, the Evil Magician

All this happened in the 1930s. Many poor people entered the *kolkhoz*, dreaming of a happy life. Thinking that property gained unlawfully would bring no profit, one *bay* summoned Omor, a poor man, and gave him a water mill as a present. This was the only mill for the whole district. This is how Omor began to keep house. Although he was ignorant and stupid, he understood quickly that everybody, members of the *kolkhoz*, orphans, and widows, needed the mill to grind their cereal. He made other people work for him and he sold his grain at a very high price. He bought sheep, cows, horses, and he became rich as if he were a *manap* or *bay* in pre-Soviet times.
Nobody could persuade him to join the others. He was advised many times:
—Join the others, enter the *kolkhoz*!
But he laughed:
—I have no time to argue with you.
In this village Kuyruchuk had an old friend by the name of Telesh. Once as Kuyruchuk was visiting him, they talked while sitting around the table and Telesh complained about the unscrupulous miller's behavior. Kuyruchuk thought a little while, then stood up and went out to the yard. He saddled his horse and went away, but soon he returned to his friend.
—Telesh, take me to Omor, please, and spread the news that I am going there and that everyone else should also go to the mill.
Telesh was surprised but did as he had been told. His wife ran to the neighbors.
—Oh, *bay*! Kuyruchuk is coming here! —said the workers to the miller.
Omor—a big man with a black beard—became very anxious. Of course, he was flattered to be visited by the famous Kuyruchuk, but he was also frightened: the sharp tongue of the guest was known to old and young, and people knew that if something was not to his liking, he could bring shame upon the ill-doers mercilessly. Omor invited the old man into the house. Kuyruchuk came up to the adobe wall, touched it, looked at his finger, and smelled it. The master, the workers, the women, and the omnipresent children watched each of his movements in amazement.
—Omor, it's too damp in your house. I won't enter it.
The master ordered the carpets to be spread out on the grass. The guest sat down. Omor saw several heavy sacks on Kuyruchuk's horse.
—Oh, dear Kuke, your horse must be very tired. Let me take the sacks.
—Black-bearded man, you seem to be a kind person. I bring the wheat. Please, ask your men to mill it.
—Hey, workers, mill the wheat from these sacks!
Three workers ran to carry out the order, but one of them returned immediately, looking confused, and whispered to his master:
—Master, instead of wheat, there is only sand in the sacks of the honorable guest!
—Why are you lying, you fool?
—I swear! If you don't believe me, you should see for yourself.
—Well, miller, have you milled the wheat? —asked Kuyruchuk lazily, looking at the miller and the worker mischievously. The miller turned to the guest with a frightened look:
—Dear Kuke . . . I don't understand . . . . There is only sand in your sacks but no wheat. The wheat turned into sand . . . . May God punish me if I lie . . . .
People who surrounded Omor and his guest were both anxious and astonished. Kuyruchuk was only waiting for this. He stood up and looked at the miller sternly.
—Hey, black-bearded man, you want to deceive me. You turned my wheat into sand and now you are pretending not to know about anything! No, you are not a miller, you are an evil magician! That's why you don't want to enter the

kolkhoz. Omor murmured anxiously:
—No, honorable Kuke, no! I'm a miller . . . no, I'm a miller, I'm not an evil magician!
—You are no magician?! And where do those black and white sheep come from?—Standing up, Kuyruchuk pointed at the animals.—I think you made them from the pieces of bread that you had taken away from poor people. And these horses? Don't they come from the orphans' soup? And this white house with big windows? You have built it from the widow's tears. No, let's run away from here, before he turns us all into bulls and donkeys in order to make us work for him!
Whipping his horse, Kuyruchuk rode towards the village. People followed him. Only the greedy Omor was left there standing in the middle of the yard with a silly look on his face, watched by his frightened workers from the door of the mill.

Soon, the *kolkhoz* built a big mill, and that was the end of the evil magician—Omor.

28. "I Shall Take Neither 99 nor l0l . . . ."

Soon after the collective farms had been organized, Kuyruchuk came to visit his friends in the Chuy valley. Kuyruchuk's friend Kasakun was chairman of the Soviet. He received Kuyruchuk cordially. When the active members of the collective farm had heard about Kuyruchuk's arrival, they came to Kazakun to be entertained by Kuyruchuk's jokes and interesting stories.

Kuyruchuk told many humorous, edifying, amusing, and biting stories. At the same time he was watching people, how they lived, how they worked . . . . It was spring and the weather was wet and muddy. Exhausted after a hard winter, the animals were standing in a leaking shed with their heads down. Earlier in the spring a disease had killed many of the animals of the young collective farm. But at the same time, those sheep that were in private ownership were well-nourished and frisky. While the collective farm had neither hay nor straw, several houses had huge stacks of hay in their barns.

On Sunday the collective farmers went to town to sell their hay and returned with good purchases. Many of them were drunk and could hardly hold themselves in the saddle. That evening Kuyruchuk was invited by the chairman of the collective farm. Kuyruchuk brought Kasakun along. On their way to the chairman's house they called at other farmers' houses and invited them to come along. On their way to the chairman's, Kuyruchuk suddenly noticed a dead calf that must have starved to death. He thought for a minute and then said "Continue your journey while I stay here." When the collective farmers went away Kuyruchuk got off his horse, broke off one of the cow horns, and followed them.

There were many guests in the chairman's house. They were drinking and they tried to persuade Kuyruchuk to tell them an entertaining story. Kuyruchuk pulled out the horn quietly and put it down. On seeing the horn the chairman and some of the tipsy farmers began laughing, anticipating a joke.
—Gentlemen, I have a question for you.—Said Kuyruchuk watching the people.
—Go ahead, Kuyruchuk!
—Be quiet, let him speak!
Everybody become silent.
—Tell me, what sort of a horn is it?
—Why! It's the horn of a cow!
—If you recognize it, then listen to me. Does this horn need hay?
—Of course, Kuyruchuk, of course.
The guests roared with laughter.
—Then each of you must give one hundred hay stacks or I shall shame you.
—All right, Kuyruchuk, we'll do as you wish.
—I shall take neither 99 nor l0l, only 100. I have sworn that I would only take what I have asked for, neither more nor less.
—All right, Kuyruchuk, for you we shall do everything. Where shall we bring the hay?
—Tomorrow at dawn you should bring the hay to the shed, where horses and cows belonging to the collective farm are, and do not forget that I shall collect the hay myself.
—All right, Kuyruchuk. Everything will be done.
After this Kuyruchuk entertained the people for quite some time. When they were too tired to laugh anymore, the host served meat. Kuyruchuk, as guest of honor, was given the head of a sheep. He looked at it amused and pretended to listen to it. All people in the house began to laugh and one of them asked.
—Kuyruchuk, has this head whispered something in your ear?
—You're right, this head says that it used to belong to the collective farm and the chairman slaughtered it because he did not want to sacrifice his own sheep. He saved his sheep but he could not save himself.
The people burst out laughing. But the chairman was in no mood to laugh.

In the morning Kuyruchuk asked his friend Kasakun to donate a hundred haystacks and came to the barn. Some people were delivering hay while others were preparing to do so. Kuyruchuk watched them making their donations. Women and children came running from the village and wondered: why does Kuyruchuk need so much hay? Does he want to sell it?

—Hey, men! —Kuyruchuk turned to them—Thank you for honoring me. Follow me—he led the puzzled farmers into the barn —look at these wretched animals, you see that they can hardly stand and once they lie down they will never stand up. This is it. You must understand that they are your cattle. I don't need the hay. You'd better use it to feed these animals and don't spend so much time thinking of vodka!

The collective farmers were hanging their heads in shame, and they looked as if it was the first time they had seen hungry animals or a barn full of hay.

Before leaving, Kuyruchuk reminded the farmers of the proverb: "If you don't feed an animal, it will die; if you don't take care of your wife, she will go away."

29. "Shame on You, Mergen!"

A sheep was stolen from old Apal's yard. Next day, asking people about the stolen sheep, she came to Kuyruchuk.

—My dear Kuyruchuk! Today or tomorrow my only daughter will visit me with her husband. The sheep that I wanted to slaughter for their arrival has been stolen. I have been searching for it everywhere. May the thief be cursed! People respect you. Please, ask them to bring me an animal to slaughter. I shall return the debt if I do not die before.

—Go home . . . . By the evening you will have a big sheep. But you should not return the sheep. Don't waste your time worrying!—Kuyruchuk calmed the old woman and sent her home. He then saddled his horse and rode to Mergen's house. Sitting on his horse he shouted:

—Hey, Mergen, come here! Come out of your house! Mergen came out. Seeing Kuyruchuk he became agitated.

—Shame on you, Mergen! If you were really a *mergen* [a hunter] you would hunt mountain goats in Sandïk instead of hunting sheep in the village at night. You have stolen the old woman's sheep and eaten it. One part of the carcass is still hidden under your floor. Let it be hidden. Don't steal from now on. In the evening when your flock comes home you must bring a gray sheep to old Apal. Apologize to her! —Kuyruchuk said and rode away.

30. What, Jumash!

Kuyruchuk was on his way to Kochkor and had already passed Ichke-Kïzart when he met a man whose name was Joldosh.

—Kuke, it looks as if there will be a storm today in Kïzart. The wind is getting stronger; it is beginning to blow from the opposite direction. You will not be able to go down from the Kochkor side. Stay for the night at our place.

He led him to his home, treated him kindly, and observed all the rules of hospitality. In the morning when Kuyruchuk was about to saddle his horse, Jumash told him the secret that was troubling him.

—I have no son. I don't want my yurt to remain empty . . . . Shall I ever have a son? Bless me!

— A good dream is half a blessing! I don't begrudge you my blessing. Next year your wife will bear a son. However, I make this condition: don't hurry to give him a name. I will come and name him myself. —He blessed him, saddled his horse, and left.

Days and nights went by, weeks, months passed, the appointed period was over. The day came when Jumash heard his child cry. Overcome with joy, he had a big celebration organized, forgetting the promise he had made to Kuyruchuk. "Thanks to Kuke's blessing, God has given me a son. May he be like him and serve the people." He gave his son the name Kuyruchuk. Kuyruchuk arrived at the appointed time. Jumash welcomed him with much hospitality.

—Jumash, bring your child, we shall name him.—Kuyruchuk ordered. Jumash turned red and, bowing his head, he said:

—Kuke, I have named him Kuyruchuk in the hope that he will become a man of the people.

–What, Jumash! —He exclaimed with regret. I warned you! Now your son will grow up lacking an organ. But his life will be long! —Having said this, he saddled his horse and left. Indeed, the child's nose turned out defective. Kuyruchuk, son of Jumash, still lives in Kïzart village.

31. Three Times You Will Go to Hell

Sheraldï was appointed chairman of the collective farm. Soon after this, to celebrate his appointment and to receive the *aksakals*' blessing, he slaughtered a mare. On the river bank in the Tuura-Terek ravine, the meat was being cooked in large cauldrons, and large quantities of *kumis* and *bozo* were offered. Suddenly a horseman appeared on the horizon.

—Who can it be? Obviously no one of our people, the horse does not belong to us. The guests were wondering. They watched the horseman approach and when he was quite near they recognized Kuyruchuk. Sheraldï ran up to him, took the bridle of his horse, and helped him to dismount. Kuyruchuk sat with the people, drinking *kumis* and explaining that he was on his way to Ketmen-Tobe to do business. As he was preparing to leave, people persuaded him to try some of the meat that was still cooking.

—Well, all right! he agreed. —It is impossible to leave a meal which is just about ready. I should also like to talk to your chairman, he said, looking at Sheraldï.

After they had eaten, he addressed Sheraldï:

—Chairman, listen to me! It is very well that you wish to receive the *aksakals*' blessing. But it will not be accepted. Because you have slaughtered an old mare that was not yours, but belonged to the collective farm. Whatever belongs to the collective farm belongs to the people. You will go to hell three times. Don't take offense! —He mounted his horse and rode away.

—Everything that Kuyruchuk predicted has come true, you see. You know that I was sent to prison three times. —said Sheraldï.

(*From the stories of the old man Sheraldï, from Ornok village in the Jumgal region*)

32. Kuyruchuk and the Judge

Jumgal and Kochkor were united under Stalin's name. Citizens of Jumgal often came to the Jumgal District Center to settle their affairs. All the officials were working in Jumgal.

One day some officials began to talk about poets and writers, and soon they were talking about Kuyruchuk's sense of humor and oratory skills. One of them mentioned his talent for predictions.

—I believe that Kuyruchuk has supernatural powers. There has been much talk about it. If he wants to take something he can do it, and he takes neither less nor more than what he had asked for. He always shares everything he has with poor people. He can even guess what each person has in his house, in his yard, in his pocket . . . .

—Don't tell tales!—The judge said.—How can he guess what a person has in his pocket? Besides, the idea that he can take everything he wants cannot be right either. If I don't want to give anything, then I do not give it. How can he take it? But it was obvious that he didn't know Kuyruchuk. They bet a horse on it.

It was an autumn day. One of the *jigits* who had taken part in the argument was going to his office and suddenly saw Kuyruchuk sitting at the bus-stop, surrounded by people who were listening to his stories and laughing. The *jigit* came up and asked:

—Kuke, when are you leaving? In three days. —He answered.

The *jigit* summoned all the participants of the argument and told Kuyruchuk about the bet.

—Introduce me to the judge! —said Kuyruchuk, and the *jigits* shouted that the judge was already on his way. The judge came up to the crowd and greeted the men. Kuyruchuk addressed him:

—Hey, *jigit*, why are you walking here like a Chui guard? Give me ten *soms*! The "*jigit*" turned red in the face and began to search for money in his pocket.

—Hey, *jigit*, look in the breast pocket of your shirt, inside your passport.—Kuke prompted him, smiling. The judge looked in his right breast pocket and he found ten *soms* in his passport.

—Take it, *aksakal*. —He stretched out his hand in haste.

Kuyruchuk chose a boy in the crowd who was wearing a coat over his naked body. He handed him the money and said:

—Buy two shirts and some sugar for your mother's tea. The *jigits* asked the judge:

—Why didn't you refuse to give him your money?

—I don't remember taking out my passport and giving him the money. —the judge admitted.

In the evening he slaughtered the horse that he had lost in the bet and invited Kuyruchuk and the others for a meal.

33. The Son Will Be A Smith

My father Sulayman worked as a smith all his life. In 1916 he escaped to Turfan with some others. Having returned, he settled in the village of Tash-Dobe in his sister's house, where he continued his trade. He also built a mill in the village, making the peasants' life easier. On account of his successful business he was called Sulayman the Smith.

One day he was busy as usual in his workshop, when the news came that Kuyruchuk had taken his five-year-old son, Sagïnalï, to a village high in the mountains. The father, unaware of Kuyruchuk's tricks, followed them on horseback. After a long search he found out that they were in the pilgrim Sagïndïk's house. He came into the house and greeted them. Seeing his son sitting on Kuyruchuk's knees and sucking sugar, my father, himself an orphan, was about to burst into tears.

—Well, my smith, come in! You would never have come to me yourself, but you have come because of your son . . . . Your son is mine now and you can take him if you give me a present. —Said Kuyruchuk with a smile.

—I have a young black lamb in my yard; take it. —The father offered.

—I will not take a lamb that you got for patching people's leaking buckets and pots. I will take only something that you have made with your own hands.

—Kuke, I have a knife . . . . But how can I give you only one? I had better make another one for your wife to cut noodles with.

Kuyruchuk hinted that he would leave late. Sulayman ran to his workshop and made a knife quickly and returned with the two knives for Kuyruchuk. Kuyruchuk liked the knives. He woke the sleeping boy.

—May your son have a long life! May he never know poverty, may he have many children, and may he continue your trade!—Kuyruchuk blessed him. As he was seeing them off, he sat the boy on the horse himself and said:

—Your son will be a smith, like you.

As Kuyruchuk had predicted, my brother Sagïnalï became a good smith. Thanks to Kuyruchuk's blessing, my own son has also learned my trade and has become a smith. —The father said.

Years passed. My brother became a young *jigit*. One day he arrived from Chet-Kuugandï to Chaek on business. Having learned that Kuyruchuk was at the smith's Beynazar, he wanted to see the man who had blessed him. He went to Beynazar's.

—You must be that son of the smith . . . . —He recognized my brother at once.

—He had last seen me when I was five years old. . . . How could he recognize me?

My brother was wondering. Now Sagïnalï is the father of nine children and he is eighty years old.

34. Janake's Story

At that time I was working as the chief of the savings bank-*aqsaqal*, Janake began his story. I rode out from Chaiek and was on my way to Kaiyrma. As I was approaching a *mazar*, for some reason Kuyruchuk came to my mind. People say that he takes everything he wishes, and his favorite targets are the bureaucrats. If I meet him and he demands something from me, I thought, I shall never give it to him . . . . It would be interesting to see what happens then. I went on thinking about it and didn't even notice how I got to the shrine. The road led to the river down a bendy slope. As I stepped into the water I saw a lonely horseman on the other side of the river, riding out of the forest. He also walked into the water and I suddenly recognized that it was none other than Kuyruchuk. We met right in the middle of the river. I greeted him, wondering how it happened that the very man whom I had been thinking about suddenly appeared. He returned the greeting and asked me without letting my hand go:

—Who are you, my son?

I answered that I was Konoy's son. He began to inquire about my father's health. Then suddenly he declared:

—Give me 15 *soms*! In fact I had exactly this amount in my pocket, and I gave him money without comprehending how it happened. Just as I was passing the shrine I collected my thoughts and was amazed at that man. I thought that he must have had a guardian angel and supernatural powers.

The *aqsaqal* Janake finished his tale.

35. Guardian Angel

The story was told by Ashïrakman's son Altïmïsh. In 1976 he was in Bagïsh village, situated in the Jumgal region, and heard this story straight from Mukat, who was Kuyruchuk's son.

"When I was about six years old, I saw my father's guardian angel with my own eyes. The guardian angel was naked like a baby and had a long beard. My father had instructed me: 'My son, never come in when I recite my prayers, but if you have to come in, then sit down and don't dare to fall asleep before I have finished my prayer.' On such an occasion I saw this naked boy with a long beard playing beside him. Remembering my father's words, I sat

down slowly on the felt mat and watched him and the boy. For some reason I did not feel any fear. It seemed to me that the reciting of the prayer took a very long time; my body started to ache and my eyes were dropping. I was woken by an excruciating pain: father had hit me on the top of my head. He was standing in front of me and addressed me angrily:
'You will not become a second Kuyruchuk! Everything is over, you will live an ordinary life.' He struck my head and left."

36. My Road Leads Me Far From Here, I Won't Be Back

Despite his advanced years, Kuyruchuk did not lose his strength and courage. His mind was as sharp as ever and he could saddle up his horse like a young man, without any effort. His speech retained its simplicity. Throughout his life he never lost his insight and good qualities.

He foresaw his approaching death even though he was not ill or bedridden. On the day of his death Kuyruchuk got up earlier than usual, mounted his horse, and set off around the village. One of his neighbors saw him and asked:
—Hey, Kuke, where are you going at the crack of dawn?
—I'm starting on a distant journey, he answered, far from here.
—Far from here? Are you perhaps leaving for Moscow?
—No, my road leads me further than Moscow, I won't be back.
That day he visited all his neighbors, relatives, and the village elders, people who enjoyed his respect. They welcomed him and he joked a lot as usual. Taking his leave, he said:
—Goodbye! I have called on you to say goodbye. I'm going away . . . .
—Where are you going? his friends asked.
—My road leads me further away than Moscow, I won't come back.
Having visited all his friends, Kuyruchuk returned home in the evening. It was time for the evening prayer. He asked his wife to fetch him the prayer rug. He started his prayer, but then fell on the rug and never stood up again.

This page is intentionally left blank.

Oral Tradition, 26/1 (2011): 125-144

A Case Study in Byzantine Dragon-Slaying: Digenes and the Serpent

Christopher Livanos

Digenes Akritas, called Akrites in our earliest sources, is the hero of several texts from the medieval and early modern periods and of several Modern Greek folk songs. Six Greek and one Slavic version of the epic survive. The earliest manuscript, named after the monastery at Grottaferrata, has been dated to approximately 1300. It has been argued that the long narratives are attempts to form a single cohesive story out of loosely connected songs about a hero who may have lived in the ninth century, during the reign of Basil I.[1] The songs and epics of Digenes have been mined for historical information more often than they have been studied as works of verbal art.

Scholarship on the epic tends to favor a date of origin in the twelfth century based on societal structures portrayed in the text, but a date closer to that of the Grottaferrata manuscript's production circa 1300 is possible.[2] The epic is thoroughly nostalgic, celebrating the frontier spirit that protected the Empire before it lost its vast Asian territories, and an author attempting to celebrate a lost age might inadvertently reproduce the way of life of a more recent, more familiar past. Elizabeth Jeffreys argues that parallel verses found in Grottaferrata and in twelfth-century texts demonstrate that "a version of the *Digenis* poem resembling G" was in existence in the twelfth century (Jeffreys 1998:xlvii). The similarities may, however, result from a common store of traditional oral formulae.

The texts of *Digenes Akrites* that we have tell us little or nothing of value about the time of Basil I, but they do attest to the nostalgia with which later Byzantines thought of the time before the loss of the Empire's eastern territories. Digenes is a warrior of superhuman power who lives in the Empire's far eastern regions. The name Akrites means "frontiersman." Though he exists at the borders between Christendom and Islamic lands, there is not the slightest suggestion of religiously motivated war. Digenes' own father is an Arab emir, and the hero's epithet literally means "born of two races." His Christian name, Basil, evokes both Basil I and Basil II, the great

---

[1] See Dyck 1983, 1987, 1993, and espec. Jeffreys 1998:xxx-xli for a discussion of the historicist readings of *Digenes Akrites* and historical references in the texts. I am indebted to Elizabeth Jeffreys for first encouraging me to pursue my interpretation of *Digenes Akrites* and to John Duffy and Eustratios Papaioannou for organizing the 2007 colloquium at Dumbarton Oaks in which I had the opportunity to present some of this material. Completion of this article was made possible by a grant from the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation.

[2] See Jeffreys 1998:xv-xviii, Magdalino 1989, Laiou 1993, and Galatariotou 1996.

military leader who ruled from 976-1025, in what later generations would recall as the last glorious period in their civilization's history before the defeat at Manzikert in 1071 and the ensuing loss of the Anatolian hinterland to the Turks. The hero's name thus has a cultural significance similar to that of the Spanish warrior commonly known as El Cid, who shares the name Rodrigo with the last Visigothic king. In *Digenes Akrites*, the emir voluntarily converts to Christianity out of love for Digenes' future mother, but there is never any hint of forced conversion. The characters never fight over religion, and many of the hero's enemies are Christian bandits. The very circumstances of the emir's conversion seem to tell us that the Christian poet, for all the violence of his subject matter, would have his religion spread through love or not spread at all. A climate of religious coexistence is one of several traits shared by the Spanish and Byzantine frontier epics. Parallels with Iranian traditions, which I hope to demonstrate in this article, indicate that *Digenes Akrites* came out of a milieu of cultural exchange as lively as the one inhabited by its characters.

We will never know whether the Akritic songs predated the epic versions of *Digenes Akrites* or vice versa. It is probably more productive simply to view both, as well as the modern Akritic songs, as part of a dynamic and vibrant tradition in which oral performances and written texts long coexisted. The battle with death is one noteworthy scene that has many parallels in Greek folklore. Folk songs tell of the hero's battle on a marble threshing floor with death, named Charos after the ferryman Charon.[3] Another common folkloric motif that appears in Grottaferrata, treated with great nuance by the poet, is the dragon-slaying episode at the beginning of book six.

This essay discusses the decapitation of the dragon as a symbolic genital mutilation performed out of guilt for the rape committed at the end of book five. Calvert Watkins' 1995 study of the dragon-slaying motif in Indo-European literature is used as an approach to the topic in Byzantine Literature. I argue that the hero's apparent triumph can be read more accurately as a self-defeat. Parallels with Western literature, particularly *Beowulf*, as well as the dragon-slaying motif in Persian literature, will be addressed. No variant of Watkins' formula, "The hero slew the serpent," is ever used with reference either to Digenes or to Beowulf. Though Watkins has discussed the formula in *Beowulf*, it is noteworthy that his only example is a reference to Sigemund that occurs in an embedded narrative. I believe it is significant that the Grottaferrata poet, like the *Beowulf* poet, refrains from applying the Indo-European dragon-slaying formula to his hero.

Book five of the Grottaferrata version of *Digenes Akrites* ends with sexual guilt, and book six begins with the decapitation of a serpent. Symbolic implications seem readily apparent, but it is curious that nobody has written of the dragon as a phallic symbol. M. Alison Frantz noted that decapitation is not a common manner of slaying a dragon in Byzantine literature and art.[4] The two most famous dragon-slaying saints, Theodore and George, are depicted piercing the

---

[3] Guy Saunier (1993) argues that the designation of the songs as "Akritic" is misleading since only "seven or eight" themes truly pertain to the epic hero Digenes Akrites. He is right to point out that nationalistic critics have exaggerated certain similarities in order to emphasize national unity and historical continuity. Nonetheless, the number of parallels, which even Saunier concedes, is indicative of an enduring and widespread oral tradition.

[4] Frantz 1941:9-13. Figures 1 and 2, showing a dragon punctured by arrows, are both reproduced from this source.

serpents with spears, and I believe that the strangeness of Digenes' way of killing the serpent is best explained through a psychoanalytic reading.

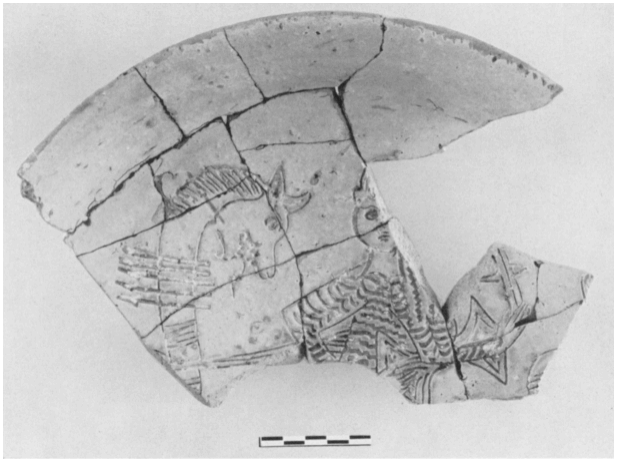


Fig. 1. "Digenes and the dragon" from the Athenian agora excavations (late twelfth or early thirteenth century).

Fig. 2. Digenes and the dragon, reconstructed by J. Travlos based on fragments from Corinth and Athens.

Henry Maguire has discussed an image on ceramic (fig. 3) of a naked dragon slayer whose prominent genitalia invite a comparison between the hero and the serpent similar to that which we find in the Grottaferrata version of *Digenes Akrites*.[5] The Grottaferrata poet's placement of the dragon as would-be rapist immediately after the scene in which Digenes commits rape is one quality among many that mark the Grottaferrata text as a work of literature in its own right deserving to be read as such. The insistence of some Byzantinists on bringing all texts and variants into every discussion of *Digenes Akrites* is no more productive than would be an insistence on bringing Saxo Grammaticus into every discussion of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. A criticism I received for an earlier presentation of the thesis advanced here is that the Grottaferrata text's "monastic" audience would not have understood phallic imagery. There is no clear evidence regarding the text's intended audience, and if it were indeed a monastic community, it would be odd to assume that monks could not have grasped straightforward symbols of sexual temptation and remorse. Phallic images in medieval texts such as the Exeter Book and the *Táin Bó Cuailnge* have long been as obvious to Western medievalists as they were to the monks who produced them.[6]

---

[5] Maguire 1999; also 2010:327, 333 n. 36. The illustration is taken from Papanikola-Bakirtze 1999, image no. 50 (reproduced with permission of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Tourism-Archaeological Receipts Fund). Jan Ziolkowski has directed my attention to an image on an Etruscan vase (fig. 4) of a dragon-slaying hero sometimes thought to be Herakles. The image can be found in Schmidt 1907:9. Phallic qualities of the hero's scabbard thrusting into the serpent's mouth are unmistakable. See Ziolkowski 2007:73-75 for a discussion of ancient Greek dragon-slaying legends.

[6] See Kinsella 1969:103 for the story of Fergus "losing his sword." While "key" is the witty answer to riddle 42 of the Exeter Book, it is surely not the first answer that would have occurred to a reader of any era. I owe many thanks to Dan M. Wiley for reading my work and sharing his knowledge of Old Irish literature.

Fig. 3. Naked dragon slayer (twelfth century), excavated at Thebes.

The most comprehensive analysis of Grottaferrata books five and six to date is that of Andrew R. Dyck, whose primary concern is to argue for an ur-epic upon which all retellings of the Digenes Akrites story were supposedly based and which was in turn, according to Dyck, based upon popular songs.[7] Dyck reprimands "the G-redactor" for narrative crimes such as the killing of the Amazon Maximou (despite the hero's stated policy of sparing the lives of women) and a supposedly awkward, even nonsensical, handling of the dragon episode in an attempt to "cobble together" a plot from existing songs. I hope to show that the dragon is a scapegoat who shares important qualities with the hero. Maximou is also a scapegoat. She and Digenes are both sexually unrestrained, and her status as a female warrior makes her a hybrid perhaps more monstrous than the Arab/Greek hero.

When Digenes kills Maximou, he shows himself as a textbook example of what Aristotle calls the "consistently inconsistent" hero (*Poetics* 1454a). After having adulterous relations with the warrior woman, the problematic hero hunts her down and kills her in a fit of remorse. Digenes is always marked by extreme emotional volatility. Awareness that he is a danger even to those he protects motivates his decision to spend his life with a minimum of social contact. I likewise disagree with Dyck's assessment of the dragon episode, which he accounts for as follows (1987:356):

> It [the paradise-like setting] evokes specifically the Garden of Eden. Hence Digenes should be absent when the δράκων appears; his wife, like Eve, must be put to the test alone. However, the G-redactor could think of no other means of getting Digenes out of the way than by having him sleep, as in the lion incident. Once again a good idea is spoiled by the G-redactor's poverty of invention.

Rather than chastise the author, it is more productive to make sense of the narrative within its own internal logic. The dream vision, ambiguously connected to the waking world and often occurring within an Edenic setting, is common in many medieval literatures. Especially relevant here is Angus Fletcher's discussion of the garden as "cut off from the world of waking reality" (1964:348). In such a setting, it is misguided to expect the distinctions between the reality of dreams and that of wakefulness to function as they do in more mundane environments.

---

[7] Dyck 1983, 1987, and 1993. While the earlier essays tended to take a dim view of the "redactor's" literary skills, in the 1993 article Dyck gives a nuanced reading of the hero's interaction with the Emperor.

The poet could have chosen many devices to remove Digenes from the initial action, and the choice of having him fall asleep most likely indicates a connection between the internal world of the hero's dreams and the external world in which he relates to his wife with a guilty conscience. Dyck argues that book five is a haphazard insertion into the epic, but I believe that the juxtaposition of the rape in book five with the attempted rape in book six indicates a methodically structured narrative. In contrast to Dyck's argument that the Grottaferrata text is a slapdash assembly of pre-existent narratives, Catia Galatariotou (1987) has argued that the text is built upon a complex series of narrative oppositions. Juxtaposition of the themes of sexual guilt and remorse at the ending of book five and the beginning of book six seems to corroborate this argument. While Galatariotou has brought a great deal of insight to our understanding of the text, I believe she interprets the portrayal of Digenes' character too positively. For instance, she discusses the slaying of Maximou as essentially a celebration of the reestablishment of male martial supremacy over the threateningly androgynous Amazon temptress. I am less inclined to take the projection of Digenes' guilt onto Maximou at face value. The episode, at the end of book six, shows not only that Digenes is still an adulterer, as he was shown to be at the end of book five, but that he is now a murderer as well.

Most of the scholarship on *Digenes Akrites* has focused on historical rather than literary questions. Studies of the poem's language have been concerned mostly with its complicated and ambiguous linguistic register. John Mavrogordato, Henri Grégoire, and Elizabeth Jeffreys have provided especially valuable examinations of the Grottaferrata poet's effort to write in a language suited to a protagonist who, we are told, surpasses the greatest heroes of antiquity. The general scholarly consensus is that the author was not wholly successful in the attempt to produce elevated diction, though opinions vary from the basically favorable assessments of Jeffreys to Marc D. Lauxtermann's scathing criticism of the poet's language (1999:22-24). While many critics during the twentieth century shed light on important questions regarding the type of Greek the poet used, few close readings of specific textual passages have been undertaken. This article will examine how the word choice and symbolism related to the dragon in the Grottaferrata text establish a link between the conquering hero and the vanquished monster.

To examine the language of dragon-slaying in a broad context, we may gain many valuable insights from Calvert Watkins' comparative philological work. Byzantine literature is one Indo-European tradition not discussed in Watkins' major study of the dragon-slaying motif, *How to Kill a Dragon: Aspects of Indo-European Poetics* (1995), yet study of Indo-European serpent lore may still deepen the Byzantinist's appreciation of the dragon episode in *Digenes Akrites*. Apart from the relative obscurity of Byzantine literature, another likely reason for Watkins' omission of *Digenes* is the absence of what he has identified as the standard and remarkably static Indo-European formula, "The hero slew the serpent" (1995:301).[8] Watkins builds a formidable case for the tenacity of Indo-European languages in holding onto conservative linguistic constructions when it comes to the killing of dragons, as in the English preservation of the archaic verb "to slay," now reserved almost exclusively for the killing of

[8] Watkins emphasizes the phonetic repetition in formulae such as Vedic *áhann áhim* ("he slew the serpent"). The Greek cognate would be πέφνε ὄφιν. Similar repetition would occur in the Proto-Indo-European formula reconstructed by Watkins using the roots *$g^{w}hen$- (kill) and *$og^{w}hi$- (serpent).

fantastic monsters. Four chapters of *How to Kill a Dragon* (36-39) are devoted to Greek dragon-slaying tales, and Watkins demonstrates that the verb *phenô*, or a derivative, is the norm when what is being slain is some sort of serpentine monster (*ibid*.:358). Later in Byzantine literature, the hero of *Callimachos and Chrysorrhoe* earns the formulaic epithet *ho phoneutês tou drakontos* (Cupane 1995:206), but by the time of the text's composition *drakôn* no longer referred to a serpentine dragon but to a humanoid ogre, such as those found in the Greek wonder tales.[9]

The dragon in *Digenes Akrites* that first appears as a handsome youth and then transforms into a three-headed serpent is akin to many creatures in Indo-European literature. The human/serpent shapeshifter is at least as old as the *naga* of Indian legend (Vogel 1926). Grégoire has referenced the dragon's Indo-Iranian pedigree (1942:168).[10] While contextualizing the serpent in Indo-Iranian mythology is valuable, particularly in a text with such predominantly Eastern settings, humans and serpents switch forms in Ancient Greek literature as well. A famous example is Cadmus, and Pausanias narrates that the hero Cychreus appeared in serpent form.[11] Unlike these classical texts in which a human appears as a serpent, our Byzantine poet depicts instead a serpent appearing as a human. The *naga*, neither truly a human nor a snake but a supernatural being, is a comparable creature. The Byzantine poet makes the creature demonic and hideous to suit the poem's Christian worldview. Another Greek parallel may be the serpent on the shield of Agamemnon, which, like the dragon killed by Digenes, has three heads.[12]

Among non-Greek sources, the three-headed serpent most likely to be a direct influence on the Byzantine epic is the Iranian dragon Azhi Dahaka. In Ferdowsi's *Shahname* (c. 1000), the handsome ruler Zahhak (a later form of Azhi Dahaka) sprouts two serpentine heads after being kissed by Eblis (the devil) (Davis 2006:9). The transformation clearly has its parallels with the epic of *Digenes Akrites*. In both the Persian and the Byzantine epics, a character appears first as a handsome youth and then as a monstrous three-headed figure.[13] That Ferdowsi constantly refers to Zahhak as an "Arabian" is not in itself conclusive, but the reader of *Digenes Akrites* cannot help but recall Digenes' own Arab ancestry. In all versions of the Iranian story, from the Avestan sources through Ferdowsi's retelling, Azhi Dahaka/Zahhak is defeated but not killed. He is bound and imprisoned, to await Judgment Day in the Avesta and to suffer a hell-like punishment in Ferdowsi.[14] The Grottaferrata text's castration imagery, evoked through Digenes' use of the sword rather than the mace, becomes clearer still when we consider that the mace is Digenes' weapon of choice in the Akritic songs as well as the weapon used by Fereydun to defeat Zahhak.

---

[9] For more on the dragon/ogre in Greek folklore, see Alexiades 1982.

[10] See also Mavrogordato 1956:xlvii.

[11] Pausanias I.35-36.

[12] *Iliad* 11.39-40.

[13] I thank Martin Schwartz for sharing his opinion that the dragon's three-headedness makes an Iranian origin likely. The case for Iranian antecedents was made by Grégoire, while Mavrogordato (1956:xlviii) argued that the serpent in the Garden of Eden was sufficient precedent.

[14] For discussion of Azhi Dahaka, beginning with the serpent's Indo-European origins and extending through later folkloric material, see the entries by Prods Oktor Skjærvø, D.J. Khaleghi-Motlagh, Mahmoud Omidsalar, and James R. Russell under the heading AŽDAHĀ in Yarshater 1989:191-205.

It is likely that another Iranian influence on Digenes Akrites is the hero Rostam, who like Digenes is a dragon slayer noted for childhood feats of beast combat. The "Iranian Herakles," Rostam undergoes seven trials, the first three of which are killing a lion, finding a spring of water, and beheading a dragon. These three acts all parallel episodes at the beginning of book six of the Grottaferrata text, in which the hero kills a dragon and a lion near a spring that he had found (Davis 2006:152-55). The finding of the spring, in particular, suggests that the Byzantine poet was influenced by Persian material in addition to the more obvious influence of the labors of Herakles, the first two of which are slaying the Nemean lion and the Lernean Hydra. The Persian influence may come not necessarily from Ferdowsi but from the body of folklore upon which Ferdowsi drew and to which he contributed. Greeks were familiar with tales of Persian heroes since at least the time of Herodotus, and the Eastern settings of *Digenes Akrites* make Persian influence especially likely.[15]

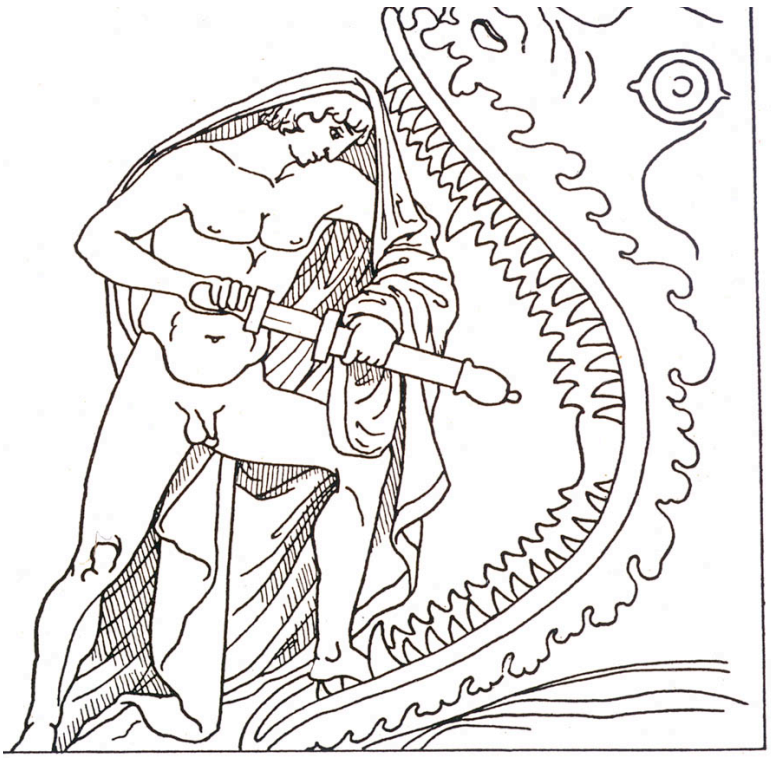


Fig. 4. Hero (Herakles?) slaying a serpent, from an Etruscan vase at Perugia.

Although the defeated monster is not slain, the Iranian hero Thraetona/Fereydun is unambiguously triumphant. I find Digenes' triumph less clear-cut. A Western text we may compare is *Beowulf*, in which it is quite evident that the hero does not really triumph over the dragon. The two destroy each other. Watkins discusses *Beowulf* at length, but it is significant that the only occurrence of the formula *wyrm âcwealde* does not refer to Beowulf. Rather, it occurs in an embedded narrative much earlier in the text, telling the story of Sigemund.[16] Though it would seem upon a superficial reading that Digenes triumphs over the dragon, I believe that Digenes' slaying of the dragon is symbolic of the hero's self-destructive tendencies. To frame the analysis in classic Freudian terminology, one would say that Digenes' death instinct turns both inward towards the id (the dragon), and outward towards the object

[15] For a discussion of Ferdowsi's sources as well as the Shahname's *nachleben*, see Clinton 1987:xv-xix.

[16] For discussion of the formula in Anglo-Saxon literature, see Watkins 1995:414-28. Note, however, that the formula identified by Watkins is used only of Sigemund and never of Beowulf himself.

(Maximou), in a regression from the genital to the anal-sadistic stage.[17] If we read the dragon-slaying episodes in both the Old English and the Byzantine epic, we observe that neither Beowulf nor Digenes is ever quite said to have slain the dragon.[18] *âcwellan* and *phoneuô*, which Watkins identifies as the proper verbs for the slaying of serpents in their respective languages, are absent when the poets describe the dragon-slaying scenes in the English as well as the Byzantine epic. Watkins' basic formula, "the hero slew the serpent," is never used in either episode. Indeed, all words meaning "to kill," formulaic or otherwise, are avoided with reference to the dragons faced by the protagonists in both epics. In *Beowulf*, this omission places greater emphasis on Beowulf's death in contrast to his triumph. In *Digenes Akrites*, though the passage is narrated in the first person by a boastful young hero, he does not sing his own praises using the ancient formula, but says (Jeffreys 1998:156-57):[19]

> εἰς ὕψος ὅλῳ τῷ θυμῷ τὸ σπαθὶν ἀνατείνας
> εἰς κεφαλὰς κατήγαγον θηρὸς τοῦ δεινοτάτου
> καὶ ἁπάσας αἴρω ὁμοῦ
>
> I . . . stretched my sword up . . . high with all my might
> and brought it down on the ferocious beast's heads,
> and cut them all off at once . . . . [*Grottaferrata* 6.74-76]

Digenes' boasts occur at a point in the poem where the hero had just been expressing remorse after the rape of a young woman, abandoned by her lover in the desert, whom Digenes had rescued from raiders before succumbing to his own adulterous and violent lust. The mood shifts strikingly from his penitence over the rape, which occurs at the end of book five, to his exultation as he recounts his combat with the dragon that threatens his wife at the beginning of book six. As much as the passages differ in mood, they are thematically similar. In both, a

---

[17] Freud 1990:39, 55. The fourth essay chapter, devoted to "The Two Classes of Instincts" (*Eros* and *Thanatos*), is particularly applicable to Digenes and Maximou. I use "self-destructive" here in a more general sense than it has in Freud's writings. Since Digenes is obsessive rather than melancholic, and is never suicidal, Freud would probably not have called him "self-destructive;" but I find no better term in contemporary English for a character who vexes himself as Digenes does. Galatariotou (1989) has written on how the interplay of *Eros* and *Thanatos* is represented elsewhere in Byzantine literature. Galatariotou's excellent study does not engage with psychoanalysis, but her frequent references to "unconscious" motivation indicate the inevitability of applying psychoanalytic concepts and terms to the material she discusses.

[18] It could be argued that Beowulf's insistence on fighting the dragon one-on-one with no help from his men (lines 2529-37) stems from a self-destructive hubris, but after considering the generous feedback of John D. Niles, I am inclined to see Beowulf's behavior as motivated by an altruistic wish to spare his people from harm, as the king believes, incorrectly, that the dragon was sent as punishment because the king himself had broken a divine law (lines 2327-31). Beowulf's childlessness may typologically suggest Christian chastity.

[19] In the Escorial version, omission of Digenes' rape of the young woman prior to his encounter with the dragon diminishes the episode's psychological impact, and thus I do not wish to dwell on the Escorial version. I am grateful to Tomislav Longinovic for reading my manuscript and sharing his knowledge of psychoanalytic criticism. Longinovic is surely correct in his observation that the reference to "stretching my sword on high" is also very phallic. This is only one possible avenue for future psychoanalytic studies of *Digenes Akrites*. Others might include the similarities between Digenes and his father (which have been noted though never studied psychoanalytically), and the juxtaposition of the vaginal imagery of the water source with the phallic imagery of the dragon.

handsome young man is driven by lust to sexually assault a young woman. An orthodox Freudian reading would interpret the hero as the ego and the dragon as the id, which the ego attacks after being tormented by the super-ego at the end of book five.[20] The dragon is punished for attempting the very crime that Digenes has just committed. Decapitation of the serpent is a symbolic genital mutilation, and the dragon functions as a phallic symbol and a scapegoat onto which Digenes casts his own sense of guilt.[21] Words of death and killing are studiously avoided throughout the dragon episode in *Digenes Akrites*, in contrast to the death of the lion immediately thereafter, in which the narrative states bluntly, ἔθανε παραχρῆμα, "it died on the spot" (Jeffreys 1998:159, 6.97). The unique importance of the dragon's decapitation is here underscored as the hero kills the lion with a club, apparently having misplaced his sword shortly after using it to deprive the serpent of its heads.

The lion is purely part of the natural order, while the dragon is a force of supernatural evil. The lion in Christian tradition can be a Satanic image, as in 1 Pet 5:8, but it can also be simply an animal, used to illustrate a saint's taming of nature as in the legend of St. Jerome, or, in examples familiar to the Byzantines, the Acts of Paul and Thecla and the biblical story of Daniel. If the lion were a supernatural being, a saint would have exorcised the demon. If it were a natural creature, a saint would have soothed the beast. Digenes is no saint, and the lion-slaying episode belongs to the genre of heroic beast combat rather than to any hagiographic tradition.

Demons in Byzantine literature are never slain, but rather cast out. The Persian dragons that I believe are an important source of the dragon in *Digenes Akrites* are associated with Angra Mainyu, the Zoroastrian evil spirit, just as infernal dragons are a common feature of Christian demonology.[22] In addition to the likelihood of direct Persian influence, there is also considerable indirect influence. Zoroastrian serpent demons are the cousins of Greek monsters such as the hydra, and they are also ancestors of the infernal dragon in Revelation and other Christian sources from which the Grottaferrata poet clearly drew.[23] While describing the supernatural dragon, unlike the lion, which belongs to the natural order, the narrative contains words of cutting, not killing. My point is not to deny that Digenes physically kills the dragon, but I do wish to suggest some implications of the poet's word choice: first, that the verb *apotemnô* (8.87), literally "to cut off," as opposed to *pephnô* or *kteinô*, reinforces the phallic symbolism. *Apotemnô* is the verb Digenes uses when, preparing to die, he recounts his life's deeds to his wife. In the same scene, *thanatoô* (8.94), literally "to make dead," is said of the hero's lion-slaying. While *apotemnô* literally refers to what Digenes did to the dragon's heads, it can also refer to the

---

[20] Freud 1990:55: "The ego defends itself vainly, alike against the instigations of the murderous id and against the reproaches of the punishing conscience. It succeeds in holding in check at least the most brutal actions of both sides; the first outcome is interminable self-torment, and eventually there follows a systematic torturing of the object, in so far as it is within reach."

[21] For more on theoretical readings of monsters as embodiments of disowned or shameful human qualities, see especially Gilmore 2003:16: "Indeed, since Freud's time, we have come to know the monster of the imagination as . . . a projection of some repressed part of the self."

[22] See Watkins 1995:300 for the author's own view and a summary of scholarly opinions.

[23] The influence of Zoroastrianism on other monotheistic faiths is widely documented; see, for instance, Boyce 2001.

cutting off of his own young life and his bloodline. The poet's avoidance of stating directly that the dragon was killed also heightens the sense of the dragon's demonic qualities. Though Digenes succeeds in rescuing his wife, his triumph over his inner demons is ambiguous at best. As a symbol of the unbridled, even demonic sexual energy that the hero wishes to excise from his own character, the dragon fittingly has three heads. Eros is sometimes portrayed with three faces in Byzantine art and literature (Jeffreys 1998:323),[24] and multiplication of genital images may, as Freud has observed, represent an attempt to ward off castration.[25] The three-headed serpentine demon is familiar from Persian mythology, and in a Christian context the image may evoke a Dantesque perverse trinity.

Another observation of Freud's that helps elucidate the dragon-slaying episode in *Digenes Akrites* is that the appearance of a double may act in the symbolism of literature and dreams as a portent of death (2003:142). The dragon is certainly a double to Digenes. Like the epic's problematic hero, the dragon is a rapist (or at least he tries to be); and similarities between the monster and the hero are heightened by the dragon's initial appearance in human form. In punishing the dragon, Digenes punishes himself. The encounter with the serpent occurs after guilt has driven him to abandon his former home (Jeffreys 1998:150-51, 5.281-89):

> Καὶ μετ' ὀλίγον καὶ αὐτὸς ἦλθον εἰς τὴν καλήν μου
> τοῦ 'Απριλίου τρέχοντος πρὸς μεσότητα ἤδη,
> τὸ συνειδὸς κατήγορον φέρων τῆς ἁμαρτίας
> καὶ ταλανίζων ἑμαυτὸν ἐν τῇ ἀθέσμῳ πράξει
> ὁπηνίκα τὸν ἥλιον, τὴν ἐμὴν ψυχὴν εἶδον,
> ὡς αἰσχυνόμενος αὐτὴν μεγάλως ἀδικήσας,
> μετ' ὀλίγον γὰρ ἔδοξα μετοίκησιν ποιῆσαι
> (διὰ τὸ γνῶναι καὶ αὐτὴ τὴν παράνομον μίξιν),
> ἣν δὴ καὶ πεποιήκαμεν ἀπάραντες ἐκεῖθεν.
>
> And while I myself returned to my lovely girl,
> as April was already hastening toward its mid-point,
> having a guilty conscience of my sin
> and castigating myself for my illicit deed.
> When I saw my sun, my soul,
> since I was ashamed of having greatly wronged her,
> after a while I decided to move our home
> (because she too knew of my unlawful intercourse),
> which we did, removing ourselves from there.

---

[24] See Beaton 1996:155-158 for a discussion of the romance *Libistros and Rhodamne*, in which King Eros is described as *trimorphoprosopos*, "three-form-faced." The most reliable critical edition of the text is Agapitos 2006.

[25] "If one of the ordinary symbols for a penis occurs in a dream doubled or multiplied, it is to be regarded as a warding-off of castration" (Freud 1953:357).

Jeffreys has noted that the the epic's third-person narration suggests no widespread knowledge of Digenes' crimes. In this passage, Digenes is largely imagining others censuring him as he censures himself (Jeffreys 1998:151).

The opening of book six combines classical and biblical images to form a complex symbolic system. Parallels with the temptation of Eve have rightly been noted (*ibid*.:153). If we look at only biblical allusions, Digenes emerges as a Christ figure who defeats the serpent, and his wife as a second Eve who has withstood her adversary's assaults, but such an interpretation has its problems, as the passage emphasizes the temptation not of the woman but of the serpent. Insofar as he is motivated by desire to consummate his own lust rather than to corrupt others and expel them from Paradise, the dragon has more in common with Hades abducting Persephone than with Satan tempting Eve. The scene of a young girl in an idyllic natural setting with a spring and, most importantly, narcissus flowers alludes to Pausanias' passage on the abduction of Persephone (IX.31). A curious feature of Pausanias is his digression insisting that the narcissus was in fact the flower that Hades used as bait to lure Persephone. In *Digenes Akrites*, where the dragon and not the girl is being tempted, the girl's face is likened to the narcissus flower: ναρκίσσου γὰρ τὸ πρόσωπον τὴν χροίαν ἐμιμεῖτο, "Her face mimed the color of the narcissus" (Jeffreys 1998:154, 6.31; trans. mine). In this scene where Digenes, still narrating in the first person, projects all evil onto the serpent and sees only purity and good in his wife, the serpent is Hades, tempted by a beautiful woman near a spring, and he is also Persephone, tempted by a lovely narcissus. Digenes' narrative alters both the story of Eve and the serpent as well as the story of Hades and Persephone to show his wife's virtue and his own heroism.

Yet we cannot take Digenes' account of his own redemption at face value. His encounter with the warrior woman Maximou shows that Digenes is unchanged. As much as he may wish that the dragon represented only the vanquished Satan, or a Hades who failed to abduct Kore, the reader knows that the dragon also represents the uncontrolled, self-destructive sexual energy of Digenes. His decapitation of the serpent functions as a self-castration, foreshadowing his untimely and childless death. He belongs to the group of medieval heroes, including Beowulf and Cúchulainn, whose superhuman stature makes them indispensable defenders of their communities but renders them incapable of leaving heirs lest the world should be populated with a superhuman race. Such heroes are often hybrid in some way, such as the racially mixed Byzantine hero, or Cúchulainn, who has births in the animal, human, and spirit worlds. The idea of hybrid supermen whose population God must regulate has biblical origins:

> οἱ δὲ γίγαντες ἦσαν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις καὶ μετ' ἐκεῖνο, ὡς ἂν εἰσεπορεύοντο οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸς τὰς θυγατέρας τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ ἐγεννῶσαν ἑαυτοῖς· ἐκεῖνοι ἦσαν οἱ γίγαντες οἱ ἀπ' αἰῶνος, οἱ ἄνθρωποι οἱ ὀνομαστοί. [Gen 6.4, Septuagint]
>
> The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went in to the daughters of humans, who bore children to them. These were the heroes that were of old,

> warriors of renown. [Genesis 6.4, NRSV. The NRSV is here identical in meaning to the Septuagint except for "warriors" instead of "men."][26]

As Digenes' refusal to serve among regular soldiers in Constantinople and his decision to remove himself to the far borders of the Empire demonstrate, he knows he is unfit to mix with the society of normal men. Failure to procreate finalizes the necessary separation between Digenes and the rest of imperial society.

A Western epic that has been compared to *Digenes Akrites* is *El Poema de Mio Cid* (Hook 1993:73-85). The common characteristic of being situated on the frontier between Islamic lands and Christendom invites comparison, though the two heroes themselves are opposite in important ways. The defining epithet of El Cid is *mesurado*, attested in the opening verses of the surviving manuscript (Michael 1976:75), while any sense of measure is quite antithetical to the character of Digenes. El Cid's virtue and moderation enable him to reintegrate fully into Spanish society and marry his daughters to royalty, insuring that his own bloodline will live on in the rulers of Spain. *El Poema de Mio Cid* is a triumphalist epic in celebration of an expanding community. *Digenes Akrites* is a lament for an empire that has declined after the loss of its hero. El Cid is a frontiersman who moves from the margin to the center and acts as the key figure in an expanding state. The Castilian hero is not only a protector but a unifier, bringing the different faiths and geographical regions of Spain into political unity under his king. In contrast, Digenes begins on the frontier and moves ever further from the center of the empire, aware that his violence and strength pose a potential danger even to those he protects, until he dies childless to live on in nothing but song after the loss of the lands he defended.

El Cid displays his characteristic moderation in the epic's obligatory, though greatly moderated, beast-fighting episode. Though the *Poema de Mio Cid* epic has very little of the fantastical or supernatural about it, the motif of the hero displaying his power over nature by defeating a fierce animal is still present. When the hero is ruling in Valencia, after having married his daughters to the nefarious Infants of Carrión, his palace lion escapes from its cage. His cowardly, high-born aristocratic sons-in-law run and hide, while the brave frontier warrior of relatively humble origins shames the lion and marches it back to its cage (Michael 1976:ii. 2278-2310). Different as this episode in *El Poema de Mio Cid* is from Digenes' battles with the serpent and the lion, the beast-combat episodes in both epics occur at times of domestic

---

[26] The idea that God will not permit superhuman beings to thrive in his world is perhaps most clearly expressed in medieval literature by Dante in the *Inferno*: "Natura certo; quando lasciò l'arte / di sì fatti animali, assai fé bene / per tòrre tali essecutori a Marte. / E s'ella d'elefanti e di balene / non si pente, chi guarda sottilmente, / più giusta e più discreta la ne tene; / ché dove l'argomento de la mente / s'aggiugne al mal volere e la possa, nessun riparo vi può far la gente." (Leonardi 1991:31, 49-57; 922-23). "Nature, when she cast away the mold / for shaping beasts like these, without a doubt / did well, depriving Mars of more such agents. / And if she never did repent of whales and elephants, we must consider her, / on sober thought, all the more just and wary: / for when the faculty of intellect / is joined with brute force and with evil will, / no man can win against such an alliance." (trans. Musa 1995:170). Cúchulainn, one of the most out-of-control and monstrous, yet at the same time most heroic, figures of medieval literature is forced to kill his own son in defense of the honor of Ulster (Kinsella 1969:39-45). For Cúchulainn's three births, see *ibid.*:21-25. The idea that elimination of the Nephilim was one of God's purposes in sending the Flood is first made explicit in the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, such as *Jub.* 7:21-25 (Charlesworth 1985:70).

adjustment for their respective heroes. Digenes has just been wedded and El Cid has just married his two daughters when these scenes occur.

Jungian psychoanalyst Joseph L. Henderson has remarked of a patient's dragon-slaying dreams (1964:125): "He had to find a means of freeing the psychic energy attached to the mother-son relationship, in order to achieve a more adult relation to women—and, indeed, to adult society as a whole. The hero-dragon battle was the symbolic expression of this process of 'growing up'."[27] This citation occurs in a passage discussing, among other mythological references, Theseus' rescue of Ariadne from the Minotaur, so the point is not so much about dragons in particular, but about beast combat as a symbol of marital transition. The Infants of Carrión fail to tame their own nature as well as to rescue their brides. The girls must be rescued by their father, as they are still essentially maidens waiting to be married off to suitable young men. El Cid triumphs. Digenes seems to triumph as well, but in defeating the dragon he shows himself so much like the dragon that we are left to conclude that he has defeated himself. He has a vexed transition into married life, the stage when the parent is most fully replaced by the spouse as an object of libido and by the super-ego as a voice of admonition. He will not be a faithful husband, and both he and his wife will die prematurely. A symbolic castration need not coincide with a literal one. In the case of Digenes, it clearly does not, as his later sexual adventures show. As a symbol, however, decapitation of the serpent reveals that Digenes' sexuality, for all its exuberance, is fundamentally deficient in that it does not conform to the standards of Christian marriage.

The dragon's association with life force, albeit a destructively unbridled life force, marks it as part of an Eastern tradition. Dragons in Germanic tradition, such as the serpent in *Beowulf* and Fafnir in *The Saga of the Volsungs*, seldom leave their hoards. They act as treasure guardians unassociated with sexual energy. To pursue the comparison further in psychoanalytic terms, the hoarding of wealth, for Freud, is connected with the anal character, an earlier stage than the phallic (1989).[28] Northern dragons share many traits with actual snakes: hiding away, coiled up,

---

[27] Henderson's case study is applying a point made by Jung (1962:374), namely that dragon-slaying represents attainment of maturity and liberation from parental influence. Jung's interest in lion-dragon combat extended to Mithraic symbolism where the god Aion is depicted as a lion-headed man doing combat with a snake. He discusses similar imagery from ancient Egypt and medieval Europe. According to Jung, "the legend of Samson is a parallel of the Mithraic sacrifice" (*ibid*.:280). It is possible that the lion's appearance in *Digenes* immediately after the beheading of the serpent is related to the lion-serpent combat motif, particularly since Digenes has by that point been so strongly identified with the dragon. The classic Jungian interpretation of animal and monster imagery in dreams is that instinct has been disassociated from the Self, which may help us further understand the poet's need to have Digenes fall asleep before the appearance of the dragon and again before that of the lion. Jung remarks, in his analysis of beast imagery in dreams, on the need "to capture and regulate the animal instincts so as to exorcise the danger of falling into unconsciousness" (1974:224).

[28] Jung (1916:397), basing his observations on primarily on Wagner, sees the cave dragon such as Fafnir as the "terrible mother" guarding the treasure of the son's libido. Phallic and Oedipal implications make the story of Fafnir ripe for reexamination by psychoanalytic critics, as the formerly human character turned into a serpent because he had killed his own father, thus forfeiting his humanity. Further study of this topic is, however, outside the scope of the present article.

and woe to anyone who steps too near them.[29] Dragons in Greek mythology share with their Persian and Indic counterparts an association with water and hence with life-giving force (Watkins 1995:460-63). Like his Eastern Indo-European and classical relatives, the Serpent in *Digenes Akrites* appears near a source of water. An ancient Greek monster similar to Digenes' dragon is the hydra, another multi-headed water serpent, and Cychreus in Pausanias' *Description of Greece* is spotted in the sea as an omen.

Another of Pausanias' tales is of interest to the reader of *Digenes* for its emphasis on the ambiguous relation between the hero and the monster. Pausanias tells of a sailor in Odysseus' crew stoned to death by the inhabitants of Temesa for violating a young woman and later returning as a *daimôn*, killing the inhabitants of the land indiscriminately until they decide to propitiate him annually by sacrificing their most beautiful maiden. The hero Euthymos eventually happens upon Temesa when one of the sacrifices takes place and vanquishes the *daimôn*, who flees into the depths of the sea. The name of the malicious sea spirit defeated by Euthymos is simply Hero. Pausanias' narrative reminds us that there is often very little to separate the hero from the monster.[30]

Although *Digenes Akrites* is a pacifist text, pleading for all races to unite voluntarily through the loving bonds of Christian faith, the hero's own life and character underscore the tensions that arise between different groups of people. Love for a Christian woman leads Digenes' father, the emir, along with his entire household, to become Christian, yet the offspring of the union is one of the most internally conflicted characters in medieval literature. Digenes cannot fit into any community. Despite his parents' fervent Christianity, he is ultimately too violent and lustful to lead an exemplary Christian life or even accommodate to Christian society. The hybridity that ought to lead to union of all people under the Gospel really leads to a monstrous otherness.

None of this discussion of Digenes' monstrosity is meant to undermine his heroism. He is a great hero, but one of that class who share many monstrous qualities. A final point of Watkins' study relevant to Digenes involves how the hero takes on the role of the monster in accounts of the hero's death. Symbolic self-castration accounts for why Digenes' progeny have not populated the world with supermen, but the poet still faces the problem at the epic's end of how such an invincible warrior can die an early death. A case of tetanus contracted in the bathtub is not a worthy adversary, and must be viewed as the tool rather than the agent of Digenes' destruction. The true answer to the question: Ἆρα τίς τὸν ἀήττητον ἴσχυσεν ὑποτάξαι; "Who had the strength to conquer the unvanquished one?" (Jeffreys 1998:232, 8.267), is the trio of Death, Charon, and Hades (8.268-70), the last of which was prefigured in the dragon. Death is here the triumphant warrior and Digenes the defeated monster/hero in a formulaic inversion of the sort

[29] For the insight of the Nordic dragon's similarity to an actual snake, I am indebted to Thomas Dubois. I thank John D. Niles for sharing his insight that the Beowulf dragon has no demonic powers and can be seen as a part of the natural order rather than as a creature of supernatural evil.

[30] Pausanias VI.6. For discussion of the hero/monster ambiguity, see Watkins 1995:398-407.

Watkins discusses in Greek and other Indo-European traditions, particularly in his chapter "*Nektar* and the Adversary Death" (1995:391-97).[31]

The goals of this article have been to discuss the dragon's Indo-European antecedents and parallels and to work towards an understanding of the episode's erotic symbolism. Digenes is a psychologically vexed individual, and comparison with other ambiguous heroes such as Cúchulainn may help in the important work that has already been done comparing Digenes with El Cid, who shares the Byzantine hero's proximity to Islam and peaceful relations with many Muslim neighbors, but does not share his rash disposition. Cúchulainn's three births may also be a point of comparison in future research on the "twice-born" border lord.[32]

Since no psychoanalytic reading of *Digenes Akrites* has yet been undertaken, I have deemed it appropriate to concentrate on early forms of psychoanalysis. We should establish what a Freudian or Jungian reading would be before applying the theories of later psychoanalytic schools. I have concentrated on the most plausible interpretation of what I regard as obvious phallic symbolism, but other ways of reading the phallus are possible. The phallic struggle between sword and heads could be construed as one in which Digenes battles with and symbolically replaces the phallus of his father, a character who had abducted the hero's mother but was later domesticated by her and moved through love to adopt her Christian faith. Such a reading would seem to complement rather than contradict the interpretation I have proposed here. It could also plausibly be argued that the symbolic genital mutilation is not a self-defeat but a victory over the passions: "If your eye causes you to sin . . ." (Mark 9:47). According to this more optimistic reading, the dragon-slaying would seem to mark a successful passage through the Oedipal phase, as the hero steps into the paternal role after overcoming not only his own bestial nature but also the phallus of the father. At the ending of book six, after the hero "shamefully" (*athliôs*) murders Maximou, he then relocates to the banks of the Euphrates, thus moving ever further from the center of imperial society. In book seven, verse 105, we learn that the hero builds a church in honor of St. Theodore. This development may mean that the hero's triumph over his own lust is depicted as he grows into an icon of the great dragon-slaying military saint. This interpretation seems too neat because the Maximou episode, in which the hero commits adultery and murder, comes between the dragon-slaying and the building of the house with its shrine to St. Theodore near the Euphrates. The hero's premature and childless death likewise reinforces his failure to step into the role of father and husband. In line nine of book seven, we are told that the source of the Euphrates is "paradise itself," suggesting that the hero's sins have been washed away as he is restored to a prelapsarian state of grace, and events leading to this episode demonstrate that whatever divine pardon Digenes receives is granted

---

[31] *Pephn-* does not appear in the hero's death scenes in either the Grottaferrata or the Escorial text, although *ktein-* occurs frequently in both. For more on ancient parallels, see Watkins 1995:493-98.

[32] This story, and that of Cúchulainn's slaying of his only son Connla, do not occur in the *Táin Bó Cuailnge* proper, but are from other sections of the Ulster cycle that Kinsella (1969) includes for clarity. For discussion of possible Persian antecedents to the theme of the "twice-born," see Grégoire 1942:170. Like Cúchulainn, Rostam is also famous for killing his own son in combat.

purely through grace, in spite of his many sins. Digenes is a heroic character, but one who is flawed and self-destructive from the epic's beginning to its end.

University of Wisconsin, Madison

References

Agapitos 2006 — Panagiotis A. Agapitos, ed. *Aphegesis Libistrou kai Rhodamnes: Kritike ekdose tes diaskeues a*. Athens: Cultural Foundation of the National Bank.

Alexiades 1982 — Menas A. Alexiades. *Hoi Helle nikes parallages gia ton drakontoktono he ro a (Aarne-Thompson 300, 301A kai 301B): paramythologike melete* . Ioannina: M. A. Alexiades.

Beaton 1996 — Roderick Beaton. *The Medieval Greek Romance*. 2nd rev. ed. London and New York: Routledge.

Boyce 2001 — Mary Boyce. *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*. London and New York: Routledge.

Charlesworth 1985 — James H. Charlesworth, ed. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. Vol. 2. New York: Doubleday.

Clinton 1987 — Jerome W. Clinton, ed and trans. *The Tragedy of Sohrab and Rostam: From the Persian National Epic, the Shahname of Abol-Qasem Ferdowsi*. Publications on the Near East, 3. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Cupane 1995 — Carolina Cupane, ed. *Romanzi Cavallereschi Bizantini*. Torino: Unione Tipografica Editrice Torinese.

Davis 2006 — Dick Davis, trans. *Shahname*. By Abol-Qasem Ferdowsi. New York: Viking.

Dyck 1983 — Andrew R. Dyck. "On *Digenis Akritis* Grottaferrata Version Book 5." *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies,* 24:185-92.

Dyck 1987 — _____. "On *Digenes Akrites* Grottaferrata Version, Book 6." *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies,* 28:349-69.

Dyck 1993 — _____. "The Taming of Digenes: The Plan of Digenes Akrites, Grottaferrata Version, Book IV." *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*, 35.3:293-308.

Fletcher 1964 — Angus Fletcher. *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Frantz 1941 — M. Alison Frantz. "Akritas and the Dragons." *Hesperia*, 10.1:9-13.

Freud 1953 — Sigmund Freud. *On the Interpretation of Dreams: The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Translated under the Editorship of James Strachey*. London: Norton.

Freud 1989 — _____. "Character and Anal Erotism." In *The Freud Reader*. Ed. and trans. by Peter Gay. New York: Penguin. pp. 293-96.

Freud 1990 — _____. *The Ego and the Id: The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Translated under the Editorship of James Strachey*. New York: Norton.

Freud 2003 — _____. *The Uncanny*. Trans. by David McLintock. New York: Penguin.

Galatariotou 1987 — Catia Galatariotou. "Structural Oppositions in the Grottaferrata *Digenes Akrites*." *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 11:29-68.

Galatariotou 1989 — _____. "*Eros* and *Thanatos*: A Byzantine Hermit's Conception of Sexuality." *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 13:95-138.

Galatariotou 1996 — _____. "Open Space/Closed Space: The Perceived Worlds of Kekaumenos and Digenes Akrites." In *Alexios I Komnenos, 1: Papers*. Ed. by Margaret Mullett and Dion Smythe. Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Enterprises. pp. 303-28.

Gilmore 2003 — David D. Gilmore. *Monsters: Evil Beings, Mythical Beasts, and All Manner of Imaginary Terrors*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Grégoire 1942 — Henri Grégoire. *Ho Digenēs Akritas, hē vyzantinē epoiïa stēn historia kai stēn poiēsē*. New York: The National Herald.

Henderson 1964 — Joseph L. Henderson. "Ancient Myths and Modern Man." In Jung, Henderson, et al. 1964:95-156.

Hook 1993 — David Hook. "*Digenes Akrites* and the Old Spanish Epics." In *Digenes Akrites: New Approaches to Byzantine Heroic Poetry*. Ed. by Roderick Beaton and David Ricks. London: Variorum. pp. 73-85.

Jeffreys 1998 — Elizabeth Jeffreys, ed. and trans. *Digenis Akritis: The Grottaferrata and Escorial Versions*. Cambridge Medieval Classics, 7. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jung 1916 — Carl Jung. *Psychology of the Unconscious: A Study of the Transformations and Symbolism of the Libido*. Trans. by Beatrice M. Hinkle. New York: Moffat, Yard, and Co.

Jung 1962 — _____. *Symbols of Transformation: An Analysis of the Prelude to a Case of Schizophrenia*.Trans. by R. F. C. Hull. New York: Harper.

Jung 1974 — _____. *Dreams*. Trans. by R. F. C. Hull. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Jung, Henderson, et al. 1964 — Carl Jung, Joseph L. Henderson, Marie-Louise von Franz, Aniele Jaffé, and Jolande Jacobi. *Man and His Symbols*. Ed. by Carl Jung and Marie-Louise von Franz. New York: Dell.

Kinsella 1969 — Thomas Kinsella, trans. *The Táin, from the Irish Epic Táin Bó Cuailnge*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Laiou 1993 — Angeliki Laiou. "Sex, Consent, and Coercion in Byzantium." In *Consent and Coercion to Sex and Marriage in Ancient and Medieval Societies*. Ed. by Angeliki Laiou. Washington, D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection. pp. 109-221.

Lauxtermann 1999 — Marc D Lauxtermann. *The Spring of Rhythm: An Essay on the Political Verse and Other Byzantine Metres*. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.

Leonardi 1991 — Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi, ed. *Commedia*. By Dante Alighieri. Milan: Mondadori.

Magdalino 1989 — Paul Magdalino. "Honour Among the Romaioi: The Framework of Social Values in the World of *Digenes Akrites* and *Kekaumenos*." *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 13:183-218.

Maguire 1999 — Henry Maguire. "The Profane Aesthetic in Byzantine Art and Literature." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 53:189-205.

Maguire 2010 — _____. "Unofficial Art and the Resistance to Orthodoxy." In *The Byzantine World*. Ed. by Paul Stephenson. London and New York: Routledge. pp. 320-33.

Mavrogordato 1956 — John Mavrogordato. *Digenes Akrites*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Michael 1976 — Ian Michael, ed. *El Cantar de Mio Cid*. Madrid: Castalia.

Mitchell and Robinson 1998 — Bruce Mitchell and Fred C. Robinson, eds. *Beowulf: An Edition with Relevant Shorter Texts*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Musa 1995 — *The Portable Dante.* Ed. and trans. by Mark Musa. New York: Penguin.

NRSV 1991 — *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: With Apocrypha*. New Revised Standard Version. Ed. by Bruce M. Metzger and Roland E. Murphy. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Papanikola-Bakirtze 1999 — Dimitra Papanikola-Bakirtze. *Byzantine Glazed Ceramics: The Art of Sgraffito*. Athens: The Archaeological Receipts Fund, 1999.

Saunier 1993 — Guy Saunier. "Is There Such a Thing as an 'Acritic Song'? Problems in the Classification of Modern Greek Narrative Songs." In *Digenes Akrites: New Approaches to Byzantine Heroic Poetry.* Ed. by Roderick Beaton and David Ricks. London: Variorum. pp. 139-49.

Schmidt 1907 — Hans Schmidt. *Jona: Eine Untersuchung zur vergleichenden Religions-geschichte*. Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments, 9. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht.

Septuagint 2006 — *Septuaginta*. Editio Altera. Ed. by Alfred Rahlfs and Robert Hanhart. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.

Vogel 1926 — Jean Philippe Vogel. *Indian Serpent Lore: The Nagas in Hindu Legend and Art*. London: Arthur Probsthain.

Watkins 1995 — Calvert Watkins. *How to Kill a Dragon: Aspects of Indo-European Poetics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Yarshater 1989 — Ehsan Yarshater, ed. *Encyclopedia Iranica*. Vol 3. New York: Routledge.

Ziolkowski 2007 — Jan Ziolkowski. *Fairy Tales from Before Fairy Tales: The Medieval Latin Past of Wonderful Lies*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

This page is intentionally left blank.

Oral Tradition, 26/1 (2011): 145-158

The Forgotten Text of Nikolai Golovin: New Light on the Igor Tale

Robert Mann

Background

Sometime around 1792, a collector of antiquities in the service of Catherine the Great discovered a compendium of ancient texts, including a unique secular tale (*Slovo o polku Igoreve—The Tale of Igor's Campaign*, or simply the Igor Tale) that was rooted in events of the twelfth century. It was a splendid epic poem about the defeat of Igor Sviatoslavich, Prince of Novgorod-Seversk, at the hands of the Polovtsy, a steppe people who were later displaced and assimilated by the Mongol hordes. The text of the Igor Tale was published in 1800, twelve years before the manuscript itself was destroyed during the Napoleonic occupation of Moscow.

As decades passed, scholars began to find textual parallels to passages in the Igor Tale—especially in a group of literary tales about Moscow's first great victory over the Mongols on Kulikovo Field in 1380. This group of tales is customarily referred to as the Kulikovo Cycle. It includes two distinct chronical accounts of the Kulikovo Battle, five more or less complete versions of a "poetic" tale about the battle (*Zadonshchina*, or *The Battle Beyond the Don*), and a much longer, more sober tale extolling the Russian Church and the victorious Russian armies (*Skazanie o Mamaevom poboishche*, or *Tale of the Battle against Mamai*). The *Skazanie* has numerous redactions and has survived in over 100 manuscript copies. It is clearly the work of lettered authors who appear to have inserted occasional passages from the more poetic and dynamic *Zadonshchina* into their comparatively dry narrative.[1]

Nearly all specialists in early Russian history and literature have viewed the *Zadonshchina* as a literary imitation, or stylization, of the older Igor Tale. The *Zadonshchina* mirrors the Igor Tale in style and structure as well as in its phrasing. Because the Igor Tale is the only work of its kind to reach us from the early Kievan period, the tale must be studied in conjunction with the works of the Kulikovo Cycle—the tales that are most closely connected with it.

---

[1] The *Skazanie* texts are found in manuscript copies made as early as the first decades of the sixteenth century and as late as the nineteenth century. There is one text from a fifteenth-century manuscript, according to Nikolai Golovin, who published the text in 1835 (see Mann 2010). The oldest *Zadonshchina* manuscript dates from the end of the fifteenth century; the others date from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For texts of the *Zadonshchina*, see Likhachev and Dmitriev 1960:533-56. For English translations of two of the *Zadonshchina* texts, see Mann 2005:75-90 and 2011:4-81.

For 200 years it has been customary to approach the textological puzzles of the Igor Tale and the Kulikovo Cycle in the context of a manuscript tradition. Variant readings in the five surviving copies of the *Zadonshchina* and in the many texts of the *Skazanie o Mamaevom poboishche* ordinarily have been attributed to copyists and editors who altered texts along the lines of other written sources that they have read. After comparing similarities and differences in phrasing and organization, scholars construct hypotheses about the lost source texts from which the Kulikovo tales derive. This speculation is almost invariably limited to hypothetical prototypes of the written variety. Lev Dmitriev, the leading expert on the *Skazanie* during Soviet times, spoke of "the immense popularity of the *Zadonshchina* among readers in the Middle Ages" (1966:423), while Roman Jakobson and Dean Worth hypothesized that manuscripts of the *Slovo* and the *Zadonshchina* circulated together as a diptych (1963:18). Dmitrii Likhachev argued that the *Slovo* is the work of an ingenious twelfth-century poet whose writing was familiar to the authors of the later *Zadonshchina* and *Skazanie* tales (1967). All these scholars have been united in their belief that the Igor Tale and the *Zadonshchina* were first composed by a writer.

Only a few scholars have contended that the *Slovo* is the text of an oral epic song. I. I. Sreznevskii (1858) asserted that it was an oral tale, but he presented almost no evidence in support of this hypothesis.[2] A. I. Nikiforov wrote a lengthy dissertation in support of Sreznevskii's idea, but there was little that was truly new in the voluminous material that he compiled—nothing that would shake traditional assumptions that shaped all discourse and predetermined scholars' conclusions (Nikiforov 1941). The musicologist L. V. Kulakovskii theorized that the *Slovo* was composed as a song, but his arguments seem to have left no lasting impression on most scholars' thinking (1977).

Early Russian sources allude explicitly to singers in the service of Russian princes. Yet it is assumed that the epic songs of this court tradition must have been different from the Igor Tale, which might, however, be a stylization of an oral epic. So the argument goes. The *Zadonshchina*, in turn, is interpreted as an imitative literary adaptation of the *Slovo*—an imitation of a stylization! Extremely little attention has been paid to the likelihood that both the *Slovo* and the *Zadonshchina* arose and evolved on the background of oral tales about the battles they portray.

If the tradition that generated the *Slovo o polku Igoreve* and the *Zadonshchina* tales could be proven to be primarily a written one, then the customary approach would be vindicated. However, evidence that the Igor Tale was first composed in writing is exceedingly slim—far outweighed by the abundant evidence for an oral mode of composition and transmission (Mann 1989 and 2005). Among the evidence is a myriad of formulaic textual links to songs, tales, laments, proverbs, and folk prayers in Slavic oral tradition. The *Slovo* focuses on the same elemental, natural world that is the focus of oral epics. (For example: "It is not a storm that carries the falcons across the broad plains. Flocks of daws flee toward the Don!") It has the swift-moving dynamism of an oral epic. Its diction is largely folkloric and almost exclusively paratactic—the abstractions and hypotaxis of the written tradition are conspicuously absent. The narrator refers to his work as a "song" and invokes a legendary predecessor, the epic singer

[2] Viacheslav Rzhiga (1952) maintained in a brief argument that oral transmission is the only feasible explanation for the peculiar relationships of the Kulikovo tales and the *Slovo*. Volodymyr Peretts (1926) voiced a similar view, although with little argumentation.

Boyan. Lines that he attributes to Boyan are stylistically identical to his own. The *Slovo* seems to incorporate an array of elusive rhythmic patterns that make it by far the most rhythmic of all early Russian tales. All these features suggest that the "song" was truly a song intended for oral delivery. Moreover, the tale contains no stylistic lapses or other clues to show that it is a transitional work composed by a literate man who was closely familiar with the tradition of composing epic songs. And it has been proven that the Igor Tale is the product of a *tradition* of composition, not the spontaneous production of a writer who is creating a new literary genre (see Mann 2005:157-67).

The Overlooked Parallels in Golovin's *Skazanie*

A unique version of the *Skazanie o Mamaevom poboishche* (Mann 2010) now provides new evidence for oral composition in both the Igor Tale and the *Zadonshchina* tales. Actually, the "new" evidence was first published by Nikolai Golovin nearly two centuries ago in 1835, but his 32-page booklet was ignored or overlooked—even though his text of the *Skazanie* appears to be from the tale's missing first redaction. Golovin identified his manuscript as a fifteenth-century text. This would make it the oldest known text of the *Skazanie*, which has survived in approximately 200 copies dating from the sixteenth century or later.

The redaction represented by Golovin's text ("redaction G") shares at least five significant readings with the *Slovo o polku Igoreve* that are not found in other texts of the *Skazanie*. In the *Slovo*, foxes bark at the Russian shields as Igor leads his army toward the Don:

> Игорь къ Дону вои ведетъ: уже бо бѣды его пасетъ птиць; подобію влъци грозу въ срожать, по яругамъ; орли клектомъ на кости звѣри зовутъ, **лисици брешутъ на чръленыя щиты.** О руская земле! уже за Шеломянемъ еси.
>
> Igor leads his warriors toward the Don. Already the birds up under the clouds prey on his misfortunes. Wolves in the ravines trumpet the storm. Eagles with their squalling call the beasts to the bones. **Foxes bark at the crimson shields.** O, Russian land, now you are beyond the hill!

Golovin's *Skazanie* has the same formula, only with the verb placed after *shchity* ("shields"):

> По малѣхъ же днѣхъ приступиша къ Дону; мнози же волцы пріидоша на то мѣсто по вся нощи воютъ непрестанно: гроза бо велика есть слышати, храбрымъ полкомъ сердца утверждаетъ, и ворони собрашеся, необычно, неумолкающе граютъ, галицы же своею рѣчью говорятъ и орли отъ устъ Дону приспѣша, **лисицы на червленные щиты брещутъ**, ждучи дни грознаго, въ онь же имать пастися множество трупа человѣческаго и кровопролитія, аки морскимъ водамъ; отъ такого страха и отъ великія грозы дерева преклоняются и трава постилается.
>
> After a few days they approached the Don. Many wolves come to that place and howl each night without ceasing: for a great storm can be heard. It fortifies the brave regiments' hearts.

> And ravens gathered in rare fashion, they caw without ceasing, while the daws speak in their own tongue and the eagles arrived from the mouth of the Don. **Foxes bark at the crimson shields**, awaiting the fateful day when many bodies of men are to fall and the bloodshed [will be] like the waters of the sea. From such danger and from the great storm the trees bend down and the grass is flattened.

Other redactions of the *Skazanie* have the foxes barking at armor or bones, not at crimson shields (червленные щиты). Golovin's text is the only one that mirrors the *Slovo* so closely.

Another unique parallel is the formulation подъ кликомъ поганыхъ ("beneath the cries of the heathen"). The *Slovo* alludes to the Dvina as it is muddied "beneath the cries of the heathen":

> Уже бо Сула не течетъ сребреными струями къ граду Переяславлю, и Двина болотомъ течетъ онымъ грознымъ Полочаномъ **подъ кликомъ поганыхъ**.
>
> For the Sula no longer flows in silvery streams toward Pereiaslavl' town, and the Dvina flows as a bog to those fierce men of Polotsk **beneath the cries of the heathen.**

Golovin's text resurrects the same formulation (подъ кликомъ поганыхъ), again in association with the churning of bodies of water:

> Вострепеташа озера и рѣки: поле же Куликово перегибающеся **подъ** хоругвями сыновъ Русскихъ и **кликомъ поганыхъ**.
>
> The lakes and rivers grew turbid: Kulikovo Field bends **beneath** the banners of Russian sons and **the cries of the heathen.**

No other known work of the Kulikovo Cycle preserves this feature of Kievan epic tradition.

Like other redactions of the *Skazanie*, Golovin's text alludes to the Russian warriors as буявіи сынове Рустіи and буеи сынове Рустіи ("fierce Russian sons"). Especially interesting is a negative simile in Golovin's copy: Не турове возрѣвѣша, возрѣвѣша буеи сынове Рустіи! ("It was not aurochses that began to bellow; it was the fierce Russian sons!"). The metaphorical link between aurochses and "fierce Russian sons" suggests that this formulation goes back to the "fierce aurochs" (буи туръ), which is used repeatedly in the *Slovo*. The negative simile, a traditional device in Russian oral epics, suggests that this imagery might have been inspired by an oral tale about the Kulikovo battle. In another passage in Golovin's text, we find the formula буйный туръ ("fierce aurochs") itself. As he contemplates the prospect of doing battle with the Russian armies, Mamai's ally, Iagailo, is depicted as a hungry wolf that eyes a herd of "fierce aurochses" (буйныхъ туровъ):

> Ягайло же Литовскій пріиде къ Одоеву и увѣда, яко Олгъ убояся идти противу Великаго Князя, пребысть ту не подвизаяся, аки гладный волкъ видя стадо **буйныхъ туровъ**.

> Iagailo of Lithuania came to Odoev and learned that Oleg had grown afraid of marching against the Grand Prince and he stayed there without advancing—like a hungry wolf that sees a herd of **fierce aurochses**.

The fierce aurochses are the Russian warriors. This is the first attested usage of the formula in any Russian work other than the *Slovo*.

The most significant new parallels that are provided by Golovin's text come at the end of the tale. In the *Slovo*, maidens sing on the Danube, and their voices drift across the sea to Kiev. Towns and nations rejoice as they sing praise:

> Дѣвици поютъ на Дунаи. Вьются голоси чрезъ море **до Кіева.** Игорь ѣдетъ по Боричеву къ Святѣй Богородици Пирогощей. **Страны ради, гради весели**, пѣвше пѣснь старымъ Княземъ, а по томъ молодымъ. Пѣти слава Игорю Святъславлича. Буй туру Всеволодѣ, Владиміру Игоревичу. Здрави Князи и дружина, побарая за христьяны на поганыя плъки. Княземъ слава, а дружинѣ Аминь.[3]

> Maidens sing on the Danube. Their voices weave across the sea **to Kiev**. Igor rides up the Borichev Way to the Holy Mother of the Tower. **The lands are happy, the towns are merry**, having sung a song to the old princes and then to the young. Let us sing: Praise to Igor Sviatoslavich, to fierce aurochs Vsevolod, to Vladimir Igorevich! May the princes and their retinue be healthy, fighting for Christians against the heathen regiments. Praise to the princes and to their retinue—amen!

Compare the ending of Golovin's *Skazanie* (G):

> И возвеселишеся удальцы Русскіе въ Татарскихъ узорочьяхъ, везучи въ землю свою уюсьи и насачи, бугай, кони, и волы и верблюды, меды и вина!—И превознесеся слава земли Русской: ревутъ рози Великаго Князя по всѣмъ **странамъ**. Пойде вѣсть по всѣмъ **градомъ**: **къ Кіеву**, ко Львову, къ Судаку, къ Кафѣ, къ Желѣзнымъ вратамъ и Царюграду: *Русь поганыи одолѣша на полѣ Куликовѣ, на рѣцѣ Непрядвѣ*.—Воздадимъ хвалу Русской земли!—Вси **страны и гради возносятъ имя Господне**. Прославимъ милость Его во вѣки вѣковъ! Аминь.

> And the Russian heroes made merry among the Tatar brocades, carrying jewelry, chain mail armor, bulls, steeds and oxen and camels, meads and wines away to their land! And praise for the Russian land rose up high: the horns of the Grand Prince bellow throughout all the lands. The news went out through all the cities: **to Kiev**, to Lvov, to Sudak, to Kafa, to the Iron Gates and Constantinople: the Rus' have overcome the heathen on the Kulikovo Field, on the River Nepriadva. Let us give praise to the Russian land! **All the lands and towns** praise the name of the Lord. Let us praise His mercy forever and ever! Amen.

---

[3] The *Slovo* is cited here precisely as it reads in the 1800 edition.

The Russians rejoice and songs of praise resound throughout the lands. Превознесеся слава ("praise rose up high") and ревутъ рози ("horns bellow") imply that the praise throughout this passage is musical. The praise crosses ethnic boundaries, as in the *Slovo*, where it weaves its way across the sea. "Lands and towns praise the Lord's name" (страны и гради возносят имя Господне), echoing the *Slovo*, where "the lands are happy, the towns are merry, having sung to the old princes and then to the young" (Страны ради, гради весели, пѣвше пѣснь старымъ княземъ, а по томъ молодымъ). In both the *Slovo* and G, lands and towns sing praise. In both texts, the praise reaches Kiev. Golovin's text is the only version of the *Skazanie* that alludes to Kiev at this point. In the *Slovo* the praise is for the warriors, while in G it is addressed to God. In each case, the singing of praise is followed by an invocation to the audience: Пѣти: слава Игорю Святославлича ("Let us sing: glory to Igor Sviatoslavich") and Прославимъ милость Его во вѣки вѣковъ! ("Let us praise His mercy for ever and ever!") In the *Slovo* the warriors are praised for fighting the *heathen* (побарая за христьяны на поганыя плъки! ["fighting for Christians against the heathen regiments!"]); in G the substance of the praise songs that resound in many lands is that "the Russians have defeated the *heathen*" (Русь поганыи одолѣша). The coalescence of motifs in the two texts might all be dismissed as fortuitous if it were not for the lexical parallel страны / гради ("lands / cities"), which makes it clear that the two texts are genetically related, and the allusion to Kiev, which surely echoes Kievan epic convention.

The formula **лисицы на червленные щиты брещутъ** ("foxes bark at the crimson shields") in G is almost identical in form and context with the corresponding formula in the *Slovo*. The close similarity can be reasonably attributed to direct borrowing from the Igor Tale or to borrowing from an epic tale about the Kulikovo Battle, such as the oral epic tales that served as the primary sources for the written *Zadonshchina* texts. The formula буйный туръ ("fierce aurochs") might conceivably have come directly from the Igor Tale, but in this case it would likely be used in specific reference to Peresvet, Dmitrii Ivanovich, or Vladimir Andreevich, following the *Slovo*, where it is used to portray an individual hero as a fierce and powerful warrior. The authors of G refer instead to the Russian army as a whole herd of fierce aurochses. These contextual differences suggest that the formula might have come from tales about the Kulikovo Battle or from a familiarity with the formulaic lore of many oral epics. The formula подъ кликомъ поганыхъ ("beneath the cries of the heathen") in G pertains directly to the quaking ground, although it comes immediately after churning bodies of water are mentioned. The context is close to that of the same formula in the Igor Tale, but the contextual differences are great enough to suggest that it more likely goes back to oral tales about the Kulikovo Battle. The ending of G echoes that of the Igor Tale, but the differences that separate them—combined with close similarities to the portrayal of post-victory jubilation in the *Zadonshchina*—suggest once again that the immediate model for the conclusion of G is the ending of an oral tale about the Kulikovo battle.

Thus, direct borrowing from the Igor Tale is conceivable for the formula with foxes barking at crimson shields, but this sort of direct relationship of texts appears unlikely for the other unique parallels presented by G. Significantly, none of the five "new" parallels in G is found in any of the *Zadonshchina* texts. It follows that *oral tales* differing from the extant *Zadonshchina* texts and containing these unique parallels must have circulated at the time G was written. This was surely the same body of oral tales about the Kulikovo battle that served as the

basis for the written texts that we know as the *Zadonshchina*. The formula with crimson shields most likely entered G by the same route that produced the other four unique parallels. That is, in all likelihood, the foxes' barking at crimson shields came not from the Igor Tale but from oral tales about the Kulikovo victory.

One might insist that another redaction of a written *Zadonshchina*, now lost, could have contained all five parallels—and that the authors of G drew upon this written redaction. A corollary of this argument would have to be that the lost *Zadonshchina* redaction incorporated an ending that was like the conclusion of the *Slovo* and that in all likelihood it contained no account of Mamai's final demise. Such a hypothesis may someday prove to be correct, but the variation that we find between "foxes bark at crimson shields" in G and "foxes bark at gilded armor" in later redactions appears to be the type of variation that is typical of oral epics. The replacement of one formulation by the other in the different redactions of the *Skazanie* likely reflects variations that were found in oral tales about Dmitrii Donskoi's victory.

Golovin's overlooked version of the *Skazanie* adds to the evidence for a body of formulaic text underlying the written Kulikovo tales—text that closely resembled the *Slovo* but also differed from it. The best hypothesis to account for all the haphazard coalescences between the *Slovo*, the *Zadonshchina,* and the *Skazanie* is that oral tales about the Kulikovo battle served as the primary source for the *Zadonshchina* and that these oral tales were direct descendants of the Kievan tradition that generated the Igor Tale. The evidence points to an oral epic tradition that continued through the period of Tatar domination at least until the era of Dmitrii Donskoi. Studies of the Kulikovo tales have generally failed to acknowledge this likelihood. After all, the reasoning goes, if the *Slovo* is only a stylization of a Kievan epic song—not the actual text of an oral epic—then it follows that the *Zadonshchina*, too, is a mere stylization, not anything close to an actual oral song. One mistaken assumption has led to another, and the notion of oral transmission has been largely eclipsed from scholars' view.[4]

Oral Composition in the Igor Tale

Much of the Igor Tale can be shown to be composed of traditional formulaic lexical units.[5] Close to thirty percent of the *Slovo* consists of formulae in the broad sense: word combinations that are repeated within the tale and combinations that are used in traditional Russian folklore.

---

[4] For a more detailed discussion of the relationship among the Igor tales, the *Zadonshchina,* and the *Skazanie,* see Mann 1989, 2005, and 2010.

[5] Milman Parry's concept of a "formula" is of limited relevance here because it pertains to a combination of words appearing in a single rhythmic environment, while the Igor Tale narrative does not appear to follow a regular meter. Instead, it appears to incorporate imagery and motifs from traditional songs and incantations with various different rhythmic patterns. On the other hand, even though early Russian written texts are often highly formulaic, their formulaic density rarely approaches that of the Igor Tale. More importantly, the formulae of the written tradition nearly always differ qualitatively (stylistically) from those of folklore and the Igor Tale. Their textual origins are usually plain to see.

The interlaced metaphors of the *Slovo* provide further evidence of formulaic composition. Throughout the tale, battles and death are portrayed in colorful imagery inspired by the Slavic wedding ritual. When Prince Iziaslav Vasil'kovich dies at the hands of the Lithuanians, "voices grow weary and merriment wanes, while the trumpets sound in Goroden" (lines 476-94):

> Единъ же Изяславъ сынъ Васильковъ позвони своими острыми мечи о шеломы Литовскія; притрепа славу дѣду своему Всеславу, а самъ подъ чрълеными щиты на кровавѣ травѣ притрепанъ Литовскыми мечи. И схоти ю на кровать, и рекъ: дружину твою, Княже, птиць крилы пріодѣ, а звѣри кровь полизаша. Не бысь ту брата Брячяслава, ни другаго Всеволода; единъ же изрони жемчюжну душу изъ храбра тѣла, чресъ злато ожереліе. **Унылы голоси, пониче веселіе**. Трубы трубятъ Городеньскіи.
>
> Alone Izyaslav, son of Vasilko, rang his sharp swords against the Lithuanian helmets, caressed the glory of his grandfather Vseslav, and under crimson shields on the bloody grass was himself caressed by Lithuanian swords. And with his beloved on a bed . . . and said: "Your retinue, Prince, birds have covered with their wings, and beasts have licked their blood." His brother Bryachislav was not there, nor the other, Vsevolod. Alone he spilled his pearly soul from his valiant body through his golden necklace. *Voices grow weary, merriment wanes.* Trumpets trumpet in Goroden.

The "voices" in this imagery are those of the maiden singers at a wedding celebration. A variation on the same metaphor concludes an earlier motif in which foreign nations, following the praise-reproach ritual of wedding celebrations, sing praise to Grand Prince Sviatoslav and sing reproach to Igor (lines 308-14):

> рѣкы Половецкія, Рускаго злата насыпаша. Ту Игорь Князь высѣдѣ изъ сѣдла злата, а въ сѣдло Кощіево; **уныша бо градомъ забралы, а веселіе пониче.**
>
> The Polovtsian rivers they filled with Russian gold. Now Igor the Prince gets down from his golden saddle and into the saddle of a slave. **The city walls grow weary and merriment wanes.**

Here the words "city ramparts" have simply been substituted for "voices" to create this metaphor. In the two variants ("city ramparts grow weary" and, later, "voices grow weary"), the referent that appears to have inspired them—voices—is explicitly mentioned only in the variant that comes later in the tale. The first variant ("city ramparts grow weary") is more highly metaphorical. It departs from the logical norms of everyday language. It is a further adaptation of the second, less metaphorical variant ("voices grow weary"). This correspondence means that the composer of the tale already knew the second variant when he included the first variant in his narrative. In other words, certainly the second variant and probably both variants are part of a repertoire of ready-made poetic formulae that the composer already knew. This formulaic method of spinning a tale is typical of oral traditions and helps to show that the Igor Tale was first composed as an oral narrative before it was later committed to writing.

As Igor enters Kiev at the end of the tale, maidens sing and nations rejoice once again (lines 664-71):

> Дѣвици поютъ на Дунаи. Вьются голоси чрезъ море до Кіева. Игорь ѣдетъ по Боричеву къ Святѣй Богородици Пирогощей. Страны ради, гради весели, пѣвше пѣснь старымъ Княземъ, а по томъ молодымъ.
>
> Maidens sing on the Danube. Their voices weave across the sea to Kiev. Igor rides up the Borichev Way to the Blessed Virgin of the Tower. The lands are happy, the towns are gay, having sung a song to the old princes and then to the young.

The "weaving" of the maidens' voices across the water appears to have been inspired by ancient folk rituals such as that of Trinity Sunday, when each maiden would weave a wreath and toss it onto the water. According to popular belief, the boy or man who found her wreath was destined to be her husband. The first two lines in this passage (*Devitsi poiut na Dunai. V'iutsia golosi*) correspond to the beginning of Yaroslavna's lament (lines 547-48):

> **копіа поютъ на Дунаи**. Ярославнинъ гласъ слышитъ.
> **Lances sing on the Danube**. Yaroslavna's voice is heard.

"Maidens sing on the Danube" follows the ordinary contextual patterns of prosaic language. However, "Lances sing on the Danube" is more highly metaphorical. It was formed by taking the contextually "neutral" statement "Maidens sing on the Danube" and substituting the subject "lances" for the contextually normal subject "maidens." The resulting imagery—"lances sing"—violates the ordinary contextual patterns of the language and, therefore, immediately attracts the listener's attention. "Lances sing on the Danube" is a metaphorical adaptation of the formula "Maidens sing on the Danube." The composer of the tale already knew the second formula by heart (with "maidens") when he included the first variant (with "lances") earlier in his narrative. These formulae are not the handiwork of an ingenious poet who sat down and spontaneously wrote a tale. An entire tradition lies behind them. They must certainly be the customary formulae of an oral narrative tradition.

And, as if all these indicators were not enough to convince open-minded scholars that the Igor Tale was most likely an oral epic, the narrator tells us at the outset that he has begun his tale "in the old words of the heroic tales about the campaign of Igor:"[6]

> Не лѣполи ны бяшетъ, братіе, начяти старыми словесы трудныхъ повѣстій о пълку Игоревѣ, Игоря Святъславлича![7]
>
> Was it not fitting, brothers, to begin in the old words of the heroic tales about the campaign of Igor, Igor Sviatoslavich?

---

[6] The original Old Russian text reads: *starymi slovesy trudnykh' povestii o p'lku Igoreve*. It is uncertain whether *trudnykh' povestii* means "sad tales" or "heroic tales" in this passage.

[7] The Igor Tale is cited here as it reads in the first edition of 1800. An introductory passage appears to be missing at the start of the text, as indicated by the words "*Ne lepo li ny biashet"* ("Was it not fitting brothers, to begin…"). See further Mann 2005:96-97.

He states quite explicitly that tales about Igor's defeat already exist—and their words are already old. The logical conclusion we should draw is that the *Slovo* is the text of an oral tale that follows other familiar oral tales about Igor's defeat. Because the words of those tales are already "old," it follows that they have been circulating for several decades by the time the singer commences his narration. This interpretation is in accord with a half-dozen details in the *Slovo* suggesting that the surviving text of the tale was not written down before the early 1200s—probably not before around 1220 (Mann 2005:98-112). However, assuming from the outset that we are dealing with a poem that was first composed in writing, scholars have misinterpreted and obfuscated this simple, straightforward passage. "How could it possibly mean what it seems to mean?" they reason. After all, the poet is *writing* the Igor Tale himself. The tale is flowing from beneath his pen. How could he possibly be alluding to other tales about Igor's campaign when he is the one who is writing it? With this mindset, they proceed to argue that the narrator means he is beginning "in old words the tales about the campaign of Igor." Then they are left with two puzzling anomalies. Why is *povestii* ("tales") in the genitive case if it is simply a direct object (and not a modifier of "old words") and why does the narrator refer to the tale about Igor with the plural form *povestii* (‘"tales")—when, after all, it is only one tale, and he himself refers to his tale with the singular (*povest'*) a few lines later? (*Pochnem zhe, bratie, povest' siiu*. ["Let us, brothers, begin this tale."]) The leading specialists on the Igor Tale have resorted to all sorts of contortionist gymnastics to explain away these difficulties, and they have been successful in weaving their spell over the entire field of Old Russian studies, tiny as it is.[8]

If the *Slovo* is the text of an oral epic, then it probably assumed different forms and variations as it was performed down through the generations. This would explain why the various accounts of the 1185 campaign—those in the Laurentian and Hypatian chronicles, Tatishchev's version (compiled in the 1700's from a chronicle that is now lost), and the version we find in the *Slovo* itself—differ in focus and detail. If the Igor Tale circulated in oral form for two centuries until 1380, then the connections between tales about the Kulikovo battle and our single transcript of the Igor Tale could be expected to be piecemeal and incomplete. There might be some extensive word-for-word parallels, but the fluid, malleable quality of an oral text would lead us to expect very few. Instead of long, sustained parallels that could be expected from author-compilers and copyists who are prone to copy an extended passage verbatim, we should anticipate only short, partial parallels replete with discrepancies. The differences would come

[8] See Jakobson 1948:64-66. The only scholar who has interpreted the opening lines as they read at face value is Lidiia Sokolova, who, however, proceeds to argue that the "tales about Igor's campaign" are the two accounts of the 1185 battle found in the Hypatian and Laurentian chronicles. With this interpretation once again, we remain inside the box of the written literary tradition, not venturing into the lesser known realm of the oral epic—the realm that really produced the Igor Tale. See further Sokolova 1987:210-15.

from the oral models used by fourteenth-century weavers of tales—versions of the Igor Tale that were different from the one that reached us.[9]

Moreover, if oral Igor tales—and oral tales about the Kulikovo battle that were patterned in part after the Igor tales—lie behind the written, literary works of the Kulikovo Cycle, then one would expect parallel readings to occur in a somewhat chaotic, haphazard fashion. Familiar oral tales are forever looming in the background as potential sources upon which writers and copyists might draw. Each scribe and editor needs no library or manuscript to introduce additional imagery from the oral tales. For this reason one might expect each redaction—and even individual copies within a single redaction—to present additional, unique parallels to the formulations of the *Slovo* in a seemingly random fashion.

Indeed, these are precisely the kinds of parallels to the *Slovo* that we find in the works of the Kulikovo Cycle. Few are extensive word-for-word parallels stretching over more than a few words. Some of the passages that seem to derive from the Igor Tale are contaminated with folkloric formulations that depart from the phrasing of the *Slovo*. Both the brevity of the word-for-word parallels and the admixture of additional folkloric features can best be ascribed to the variation that is typical of an oral tradition—to the constant state of flux and formulaic variation that characterized the Igor tales and the oral Kulikovo tales upon which writers and copyists drew. The sum total of the evidence suggests that the *Zadonshchina* texts present a transcription or paraphrasing of an oral epic about the Kulikovo Battle with some additional information added from written sources. The *Skazanie o Mamaevom poboishche*, on the other hand, is the work of writers who embellished their more "literary" tale with a comparatively small amount of imagery from the oral tales that celebrated the Russian victory of 1380. To what extent the authors of the *Skazanie* drew from the written *Zadonshchina* tale or directly from the oral tales remains an open question. However, the "new" evidence provided by the overlooked Golovin redaction of the *Skazanie* helps to show that an oral epic tradition rooted in Kievan times continued to be productive until at least the fifteenth century.

Independent Scholar

---

[9] Identical passages consisting of more than three consecutive words in the Igor Tale and *Zadonshchina* are extremely few in number. Consider, for example, these parallel passages, which contain one of the most extensive sequences of word parallels:

> Igor Tale: Oleg's brave nest slumbers in the field. Far has it flown! It was born to be disgraced by neither falcon nor hawk, nor by you, black raven, pagan Polovtsian!
>
> *Zadonshchina*: 'Brothers and Russian princes! We have been the nest of Grand Prince Vladimir of Kiev. By birth we were in disgrace before neither the falcon nor the hawk, nor the black raven, nor this pagan Mamai!' (from Copy U: Likhachev and Dmitriev 1960:536).

References

Dmitriev 1966 — L. A. Dmitriev. "Vstavki iz 'Zadonshchiny' v 'Skazanii o Mamaevom poboishche'." In *"Slovo o polku Igoreve" i pamiatniki Kulikovskogo tsikla. K voprosu o vremeni napisaniia "Slova."* Moscow and Leningrad: Nauka. pp. 385-439.

Jakobson 1948 — Henri Grégoire, Roman Jakobson, Marc Szeftel, and J. A. Joffe. "'La geste du Prince Igor': Épopée russe du douzième siècle." *Annuaire de l'Institut de philologie et d'histoire orientales et slaves*, 8.

Jakobson and Worth 1963 — Roman Jakobson and Dean Worth. *Sofonija's Tale of the Russian-Tatar Battle on Kulikovo Field*. The Hague: Mouton.

Kulakovskii 1977 — L. Kulakovskii. *Pesn' o polku Igoreve: Opyt vossozdaniia modeli drevnego melosa*. Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor.

Likhachev 1967 — D. S. Likhachev. "Slovo o pokhode Igoria Sviatoslavicha." In *Slovo o polku Igoreve*. Ed. by L. A. Dmitriev, D. S. Likhachev. Moscow and Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia Literatura. pp. 5-39.

Likhachev and Dmitriev 1960 — D. S. Likhachev and L. A. Dmitriev, eds. *Slovo o polku Igoreve i pamiatniki Kulikovskogo tsikla*. Moscow and Leningrad: Nauka.

Mann 1989 — Robert Mann. *Lances Sing: A Study of the Igor Tale*. Columbus, OH: Slavica.

Mann 2005 — _____. *The Igor Tales and Their Folkloric Background*. Karacharovo: The Birchbark Press of Karacharovo.

Mann 2010 — _____. *Skazanie o Mamaevom poboishche: Zabytyi spisok Nikolaia Golovina.* Monuments of Early Russian Literature, 7. Berkeley: Berkeley Slavic Specialties.

Mann 2011 — _____. *The Song of Prince Igor: An Epic Tale From the Twelfth Century*. Karacharovo: The Birchbark Press of Karacharovo.

Nikiforov 1941 — A. I. Nikiforov. "*Slovo o polku Igoreve"—Bylina XII veka*. Archived at the Institute of Russian Literature and Art, Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg.

Peretts 1926 — V. N. Peretts. *Slovo o polku Ihorevim: Pam'iatka feodal'noï Ukraïny-Rusy XII viku*. Kiev: Ukrain'ska Akademiia Nauk.

Rzhiga 1952 — V. F. Rzhiga. “Neskol’ko myslei po povodu voprosa ob avtore ‘Slova o polku Igoreve’.” *Izvestiia Akademii Nauk SSSR*, Otdelenie literatury i iazyka, 11, vypusk 5:428-38.

Sokolova 1987 — L. V. Sokolova. “Dve pervye frazy ‘Slova o polku Igoreve’.” In *Issledovaniia po drevnei i novoi literature*. Ed. by M. B. Khrapchenko, L. A. Dmitriev, and D. S. Likhachev. Institut russkoi literatury Akademii Nauk SSSR. pp. 210-15.

Sreznevskii 1858 — I. I. Sreznevskii. “‘Zadonshchina’ velikogo kniazia gospodina Dmitriia Ivanovicha i brata ego Volodimira Ondreevicha.” *Izvestiia po russkomu iazyku i slovesnosti Akademii Nauk*, 5, vypusk 6:337-62.

This page is intentionally left blank.

Oral Tradition, 26/1 (2011): 159-174

Collecting South Slavic Oral Epic in 1864: Luka Marjanović's Earliest Account

Aaron Phillip Tate

What follows is a translation of Luka Marjanović's preface to a collection of oral epic and lyric songs that he transcribed by hand from singers in northwestern Bosnia and published as a songbook in 1864. Albert Lord described Marjanović as "one of the finest of the Croatian collectors of oral-traditional epic at the end of the last century,"[1] though Lord and others have criticized Marjanović's editorial methods. Marjanović is a significant figure in the history of oral epic studies for the reason that he collected an enormous amount of epic songs from singers in northwestern Bosnia during a decade of fieldwork in the 1880s. The collection comprises, in fact, the first major corpus of Bosnian oral-dictated epic manuscripts that we have, and predates Parry's recordings by many decades. Today Marjanović's manuscript collection is kept in the Academy of Arts and Sciences in Zagreb, Croatia.[2] The manuscripts were used by editors at the end of the nineteenth century to furnish material for the anthology known as *Hrvatske narodne pjesme* (*Croatian Folk Songs*), the seminal Croatian folklore anthology published in Zagreb from the late nineteenth to the first decades of the twentieth century.[3] Volumes three and four of that anthology were devoted to Bosnian oral epic, known as "Mohammedan" epic at the time, and were based on the Marjanović collection, though it cannot be said that the two volumes present even a fraction of the material contained within the manuscript corpus itself.

---

[1] Lord's critique of Marjanović can be found at Lord 1991:125 and 1995:16-18, 202, note 41, 223, 225. Branislav Krstić (1956) made a thorough study of Marjanović's editorial interventions, as did Djurđica Mučibabić (1981).

[2] I would like to thank Tanja Perić-Polonijo for her expertise and assistance with the manuscript collection. I would also like to thank the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research in Zagreb and its director, Ivan Lozica, as well as the Fulbright Foundation, for supporting my research on the Marjanović manuscripts during the academic year 1999-2000. It was in the Institute's library that I found the songbook published by Marjanović in 1864, the preface to which I am translating here.

[3] The multi-volume anthology was published from 1896 until 1942 in Zagreb and remains a fundamental point of reference for Croatian folklore studies (especially the manuscripts that provide the basis for the anthology's selections).

Until Marjanović's work in the 1880s, the Bosnian Moslem tradition had never been systematically collected.[4] Kosta Hörmann, an Austrian administrator working in Austrian-occupied Sarajevo in the early 1880s, did indeed publish in 1888-89 the Bosnian songs that he had collected, though the amount gathered by him (and his transcribers) cannot be said to equal Marjanović's contribution.[5] As for Marjanović, in the period of his work for the *Hrvatske narodne pjesme* collection project, it is worth pointing out the number of verses that his team did manage to write down. The results were staggering, by any standards: he and his amanuenses transcribed over 255,000 lines of oral epic between 1880 and 1888. The Marjanović cohort also accomplished a feat that the Parry team[6] did not attempt, namely, the transcription of the entire repertoires of two of the best Bosnian singers of the day, Mehmed Kolak-Kolaković and Salko Vojniković-Pezić. Each of the two singers performed more than sixty epics for Marjanović and his assistants,[7] and both were mentioned by other singers belonging to the next generation interviewed in the same locale of Bihać and the surrounding area by Parry in 1934.[8]

Marjanović's collecting activities for the *Hrvatske narodne pjesme* anthology were organized and subsidized by the Croatian cultural organization Matica Hrvatska, an institution founded in the 1830s by Ljudevit Gaj during the heyday of South Slavic nationalism. At the time

---

[4] Of the numerous orally transmitted Balkan Slavic genres that have been to date textualized and studied, Bosnian oral epic is important for many reasons, one of them being the unprecedented length (in Europe, anyway) of the songs, as is now recognized in the English-speaking world primarily on the basis of Milman Parry and Albert Lord's publications (but see also Murko 1951:259). For this reason, Bosnian epic tradition has been thought by many to offer the closest comparison to Homeric material of any available European singing tradition ancient or modern. Foley 1988 is the *locus classicus* for an account of the emergence of comparative study of oral traditions from the work of Parry and Lord. His book pays particular attention to the role played by Homeric philology, discusses in detail the many traditions and language areas influenced by Lord's *The Singer of Tales* (1960), and makes important methodological contributions of its own (for example, introduces the parameters of tradition-dependence, genre-dependence, and text-dependence into the philology of orally transcribed texts).

[5] For the collection itself, see Hörmann 1933 and Buturović 1992. Hörmann's collection is valuable from the point of view of folklore philology for the reason that Buturović made an exhaustive study (1976) of the discrepancies between the final published poems and the original oral-dictated manuscripts available to her. Thanks to her painstaking research, one can now trace the phoneme-by-phoneme and grapheme-by-grapheme changes that were made in the process of transforming the oral-dictated manuscripts into the published edition (which of course appeared in the standard orthography of the day).

[6] Foley has begun in recent years to refer to the fieldwork accomplished by Parry and Lord as "the research *team* of Milman Parry, Albert Lord, *and* Nikola Vujnović" (my emphasis; see Foley 2005). The inclusion of Vujnović as a member of the "team" signals an important development in Foley's thinking on the Parry-Lord material, because it raises important issues in the philology of transcribed texts, for which see Foley's chapter entitled "Nikola Vujnović's Resinging" (2004:145-91). For further information on Parry and Lord's field methods when collecting in Croatia in 1934, see Tate 2010.

[7] *HNP* 1896-1942, iii:xi-xxiv.

[8] It is not widely known that Parry and Lord's singers from the Bihać region commented on the same singers that we have in Marjanović's manuscript collection, though David E. Bynum mentions it in his introduction to *SCHS* 1953-, xiv:5-14.

of the Matica's founding, the pan-Slavic movement in Croatia was known as "Illyrianism,"[9] a movement that strove, in response to Vuk Karadžić's work as well as to political aspirations ascendant at the time, to build unity among speakers of all of the South Slavic languages. Marjanović accompanied the third and fourth volumes of the ten-volume anthology with an informative and colorful introduction that discusses, among other things, the laborious process of oral dictation and the obstacles facing the collection of such voluminous material. His introduction remains one of the best accounts that we have of collecting and transcribing oral epics in nineteenth-century Bosnia, and it is an unfortunate fact that the document has never been translated into any language. Matija Murko praised Marjanović's introduction, first at a meeting in Berlin in 1908 and later in his outstanding *Tragom srpsko-hrvatske narodne epike: Putovanja u godinama 1930-32* (*On the Track of Serbo-Croatian Folk Epic: Travels During the Years 1930-32*)[10] for the attention to detail paid by Marjanović to describing the collection process as well as for his insistence on undermining romantic notions of oral epic production and transmission.

What the reader will find in my translation presented below, however, is a report written by Marjanović describing his earliest attempt to collect oral epics in Bosnia during the years 1862-64, fully two decades before the famous Matica-funded *Hrvatske narodne pjesme* (*Croatian Folk Songs*) collection project. He published the results of this first attempt at epic collecting in the form of a small songbook (1864). The preface translated here is therefore the first in a series of reports on the then-thriving Moslem oral epics of Bosnia written by their first systematic collector, and as such belongs to a tradition of South Slavic oral epic research that includes the writings of Vuk Karadžić, Matija Murko, Milman Parry, Albert Lord, John Foley, and others.[11] The preface is brief, dense, and written in a compact style—one might even call its Serbo-Croatian stylistically quaint and colloquial at times—but filled with intriguing revelations and valuable information concerning the singing techniques that Marjanović was witnessing for the first time.[12] For these and other reasons, the preface merits translation on its own but will require further contextualization and commentary from the perspective of modern folkloristics and historical linguistics, which I supply in what follows. Marjanović's preface can also be

---

[9] For an account of the founding of the Croatian literary organization and similar organizations throughout the Balkans, see Kimball 1973. For the Croatian Matica in particular, Kimball covers the years of 1842-74, exactly the period when Marjanović wrote the preface translated here. See espec. 1973:39-49, but also Lencek's review (1975) of Kimball's book.

[10] Davor Dukić (1995:51-52) discusses Murko's debt to Marjanović, where he refers the reader to Murko 1909 (the text of the 1908 Berlin meeting), 1919:276-77, and 1951:9. Also essential for grasping his field methods and recording practices are Murko 1912, 1913, 1915a, and 1915b. For further discussion of Murko's methods, see Žele 2003, Čubelić 1961, Buturović 1992:105-48, and Stangl 2000:53-64.

[11] In addition to Parry and Lord's contribution, Foley 1988 discusses the work of Vuk Karadžić, Matija Murko, Alois Schmaus, and Gerhard Gesemann, among others.

[12] See Wilson 1970:91-94 for an English translation of Karadžić's preface. Wilson provides context and commentary in the paragraphs immediately preceding and following the translation. Voigt 1994 discusses Karadžić's subsequent influence on collectors throughout Europe.

compared to the preface written by Vuk Karadžić to accompany his own song collection of 1814, since both documents show similarities in style, content, and language.

The Preface: Commentary and Context

In the 1864 preface, the reader will encounter Marjanović's frank comments on the difficulties involved in writing down the songs by hand. The necessity of working in a region well known to the collector is mentioned next, albeit briefly. To read this statement from a nineteenth-century collector newly acquainted with fieldwork is not surprising, since even today, in the twenty-first century, the heterogeneity of traditions and the remote locations of performers in various regions of Croatia and Bosnia (to speak only of regions where the present author has had fieldwork experience)[13] will cause great difficulties for anyone not intimately familiar with the region. Marjanović devotes the first introductory section of his 1864 preface to this theme.

He next explains that he has decided to transcribe and publish songs that have already been published, for the reason that readers "will learn something" from the variants. Recent work on folklore variation, particularly in Finnish folkloristics, has promoted the study of traditional items in all of their phenomenological diversity, of which minor (and sometimes major) variation is very much a part of the living folklore system;[14] and through this lens we are able to look back at Marjanović's growing awareness of it, too. For understanding the historical context, it is worth mentioning that the songbook and preface were published during the last year of Vuk Karadžić's life. Later in the piece, Marjanović makes clear his dependence on Karadžić's methods for publishing genre divisions and metrical structure. Marjanović also includes a noteworthy comment when he writes that whoever transcribes the words of the song differently than sung will "harm" the song, and will thereby produce a transcription that will no longer be a "true" folk song. In this connection, his statements are slightly curious, since he himself altered verses, word order, and even entire groups of verses before publishing them—though he would continue to repeat the dictum advocating faithful transcription in subsequent publications two decades later. Branislav Krstić, Djurđica Mučibabić, and Albert Lord have criticized Marjanović on this point.[15]

In the second section Marjanović explains why some readers will find the orthography of the poems unusual. His explanation is that he wrote down the songs exactly as he heard them, and that he did so "worthily and faithfully" (*valjano i vijerno*), and that for this reason he sometimes wrote down verses that revealed a mixture of dialects rarely if ever heard in daily speech—though such admixtures, he says (and we know today) were typical of the oral epic singing register in these regions, then and now. These passages will be of interest to Homeric

[13] I would like to extend my warmest thanks to ethnomusicologist Joško Ćaleta for taking me into the field, in Croatia and Bosnia, in order to record singers and conduct interviews during 1999-2000.

[14] See Honko 1998 for extended analyses of variation and its role in the textualizing of the Siri epic songs, as well as Honko 2000 for a call to foreground performance variation in future work on living oral genres of performance and poetic transmission.

[15] See Lord 1995:16-18, but also 1995:202-05 and 1991:125; Krstić 1956; and Mučibabić 1981.

scholars, presumably, and they may be of interest to South Slavic linguists and dialectologists as well. It is interesting to observe Marjanović's description of the dialectal admixtures that occur both in the unmarked speech of the regions and in the language of songs. When he comes to discuss the mixing of dialect forms in the songs themselves, he provides a description of the linguistico-metrical phenomenon that Homeric Greek scholars will recognize as a traditionally transmitted *Kunstsprache*.

One of the most prominent differences in the dialects of Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian is the outcome of Common Slavic *jat*. The *jat*, or ě, as it is represented in Old Church Slavonic (and in reconstructed Common Slavic), directly continues Indo-European ē, evidence for which is plentiful and easily seen by comparing Latin *sēmen*, Old High German *sāmo*, and OCS *sěmen* (for which we can uncontroversially reconstruct PIE *seh$_1$). The various outcomes of *jat* in the Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian languages (BCS hereafter) comprise one of the major criteria for dialect classification.[16] One variant of BCS is known as *ekavski*, because the reflex of *jat* appears as the monosyllabic *e* vowel, whereas the reflex in *ijekavski* is the disyllabic or diphthongal *ije*. Within *ijekavski*, the outcome under certain specifiable conditions was monosyllabic *je*. (On occasion the term *jekavski* is used by scholars in order to refer to the same dialects as *ijekavski*, or even as a synonym for *ijekavski*—a confusing state of affairs for non-specialists but not one that will affect the discussion below.) Finally, in the *ikavski* dialect, the reflex was raised to a monosyllabic *i*. To take an example of this division, the *ekavski* variant for "beautiful" is *lêpo* (two syllables), the *ijekavski* variant is *lijepo* (three syllables), and the *ikavski* variant is *lipo* (two syllables). The three variants comprise a sub-classification of the *štokavski* dialect, the dialect in which the interrogative pronoun for "what" is *što* or *šta*. (In BCS there are two more dialects classified according to the interrogative pronoun, known as *čakavski* and *kajkavski*, where *ča* and *kaj*, respectively, comprise dialectally distinctive equivalents of *što*, "what.") Before the conflicts of the 1990s, *ekavski-štokavski* was primarily spoken in eastern Bosnia-Hercegovina and Serbia, while *ijekavski-štokavski* was typical of much of Bosnia-Hercegovina, Croatia, southern Dalmatia, and Montenegro (having been promoted by Karadžić and Gaj to a standard form of the Serbo-Croatian language). *Ikavksi-štokavski* was typical of parts of northern Dalmatia, western Bosnia, Lika, Slavonia, and certain islands north of Pelješac (for example, Hvar, Lastovo). It is important to note that all of these dialects are further divided into numerous sub-dialects throughout these regions, and that they are further mixed in numerous, and often extremely complex, combinations.[17]

The essential point for oral epic studies is that words sung in *ijekavski* offer an additional syllable in place of words sung in *ekavski* or *ikavski*.[18] This is useful for composing epic in this tradition, since the primary prosodic requirement is a ten-syllable verse: metrical bi-forms allow flexibility between one- and two-syllable options for the same word. Hence the listener or reader

[16] For a discussion of the role of reflexes of *jat* in Bosnian women's songs, see Vidan 2003:63-65.

[17] See Jahić 2000:16 for further details.

[18] Foley (1995:85-106, 158-200, and 1999:74-87) describes the phenomenon and its consequences for versification in detail. For an analysis of *jat* and its reflexes as they appear in the famous Erlangen manuscript, now dated approximately to the years 1716-33 on the basis of watermarks, consult the analysis given by Josip Matesić (1959:56-63).

frequently finds dialectally differentiated bi-forms in the same song, and not infrequently in the same verse, on account of the tradition's necessity of filling the obligatory ten-syllable line (*deseterac*), though *not* on account of the singer being imprisoned by one particular dialect or region (the crucial point). Analysis of this phenomenon can become quite complex when examining the audio transcription of a particular singer,[19] but what is so interesting about Marjanović's preface is that he goes to some length to describe the phenomenon already in 1864, at a time when very few researchers were concerned with questions of the kind. In relation to this phenomenon of dialect admixtures, the reader of his preface will encounter an old canard from Homeric studies, namely, the suggestion that chronologically and geographically differentiated populations living in the same region were the cause of the multiple dialect forms in the song. Though still debated among Homerists, very few would accept that a theory of migration alone could adequately account for the mixed dialects found in early Greek epic.[20] An additional cause motivating dialect switching, writes Marjanović, and one that I have not seen mentioned before in print, is that the actual *volume* of the word as it was sung produced dialectally different bi-forms—surely an unusual addition to the inventory of performance variations familiar to fieldworkers and researchers of oral epic.

There next follows a discussion of phonological segments that were lost, elided, and compensated for in both the spoken speech and the singing in the region where Marjanović collected. Again, this will interest Homerists and living oral epic specialists. Marjanović also explains in the same passage his discovery of a phenomenon called "synizesis" used by some of his singers, in particular the blind ones, who were, incidentally, he writes, the best singers he knew at the time. Synizesis has long been recognized as a feature essential to the proper scansion of Homeric poetry, and Marjanović seems pleased to have been able to point out its occurrence in the verse-making of his own singers. He also discusses rare words that appear in the poems, noting occasions where particular variants of spoken forms, as well as archaic words, *appear only in the songs, but never in spoken speech*.[21] He then adds comments on genre boundaries and "women's songs"[22]: to arrange the songs in his collection according to a single classificatory criterion, in isolation from other contextual considerations (including the occasion of performance, the gender of the performer, and the semantic content of the song), is not only incorrect but impossible, he notes, because the performance traditions were simply too complex and the boundaries too fluid to allow for such divisions.[23] One of Marjanović's most interesting

---

[19] See Foley 2004:77-191 for an extended treatment of the matter.

[20] Peters 1986 is the most definitive treatment (from the point of view of historical linguistics) that has been written to date against a so-called "Achaean" phase; Horrocks 1999 argues against an "Aeolic" phase.

[21] It should be pointed out that Vuk Karadžić discusses the persistence of archaisms in oral poetry in his 1818 dictionary.

[22] See Coote 1977 on the classification according to "women's songs" in Vuk's and other folk epic collections.

[23] No one has treated the question of classification of South Slavic folk lyric better than Tanja Perić-Polonijo, who takes into account both theoretical and folkloristic methods and problems in her erudite analyses (1989, 1993, 1995, 1996a, and 1996b).

observations, especially from the point of view of the tendency of oral epics to conserve archaic language, is that many of the customs described in the poems had already been lost by the time of their singing for Marjanović, and so it was often impossible, he explains, to determine what customs were being reflected in the songs.

Preface (*Predgovor*)[24]

Thinking that no one had collected songs in the upper *krajina* [or "region," a word commonly used and for that reason left untranslated—tr.] in the surroundings of Turkish Croatia, or if they had, that they surely had not collected many, I set out to gather the literary wealth [*književno blago*] myself there and to publish it, as much as might be possible one day. I began this work last year. I barely mustered the courage to do so, since I knew how much effort and what kind of sacrifice it would cost; but I berated myself, saying that there was no sense in fearing the effort, or even more difficult work of its kind, since I was born and raised in this region of our nation, which I know well.

This work is extremely difficult for the person who was not born among the common people, who was not raised among them and who does not live with them.

Maybe it will seem to some that it is easy to write down what he hears among the people, but I can say that it is not. It is extremely difficult to find the strength for that work and difficult to reach every corner where there is national wealth [*narodno blago*], and it is particularly difficult to find and convince someone to recite what they know [*da kazuje što zna*], and even then the most difficult thing is to write down everything correctly and faithfully [*valjano i vierno bilježiti*]; I can say this because I have attempted it all myself.

Many songs have already been collected; but there are still many that we do not know, and indeed only God himself knows how many of them still live among the people!

II

Here in this book are folk songs (*narodne pjesme*) that have been collected by one hand only. If among them are songs that have already been published, it will not do any harm to publish them again, since a song always changes in some way, which can then teach us something again [*jer pjesma se je u čem god promienila, što nas opet more koješta naučiti*].

---

[24] Note on my translation: the parentheses in the translation are those of Marjanović, exactly as they occur in the original, while square brackets enclose my own comments. Footnotes, unless otherwise noted, are those exactly as given by Marjanović in the original text. I would like to thank E. Wayles Browne for valuable comments on the translation as well as for sage advice concerning Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian linguistic matters. The title page appears as follows:

> *Hrvatske Narodne Pjesme,*
> *što se pjevaju u Gornjoj hrvatskoj krajini i u Turskoj Hrvatskoj,*
> Sabrao Luka Marjanović.
> Svezak I.
> U Zagrebu 1864.
> Troškom i tiskom A. Jakića.

I attempted to write down the songs as faithfully as possible, without changing a thing, exactly as I heard them from the singers; had I wished to change something, to add something or to leave something out, I would have harmed the song, such that it would have no longer been a folk song [*da već nebi narodna bila*].

Whoever reads the songs but does not read the lines in this introduction will notice immediately a great inconsistency in the orthography, for which he will not be able to discover the proper explanation.

For this reason it is necessary to mention something about the orthography. In the surroundings from which all of these songs came, the *štokavski* dialect is spoken, with *ikavski* and *jekavski* speech mixed together. The situation is like this in the Bihać valley, and in the village of Zavalje, which is near Bihać but on the Croatian side of the border. About the dialects further south in Bosnia I am unable to say a thing with certainty, but on the Croatian side of the border, in places near Bihać and Zavalje, the spoken language is either pure *ikavski* or pure *jekavski*. But in Bihać and in Zavalje one hears: *biel* (*bio*), *bieliti*, *pobielio* [what today would be called *ijekavski* forms—tr.] alongside *bililica*, *bililja* [*ikavski* forms; the entire list that follows illustrates the mixture of *ijekavski* and *ikavski* in the speech of the region—tr.]; *bježati* alongside *pobići* and *pobignuti*; *diete* (in Bihać even *ђete*) and *djeca* alongside *dica*; *sreća, srećan* alongside *nesrićan*; *šljeme* alongside *slime*; *sjediti*, *sjesti* alongside *posilo*; *ćerati* (normally *tjerati*), *poćerati* alongside *potirati* and *potira*; *vjera* alongside *vira* and *neviran*. All of this is spoken one alongside the other, although there is much more of the *ikavski*.

Given that this mixture is the case in everyday speech, it must therefore be the same way consistently in the songs sung in these regions. In a song one hears the same word now with *i*, now with *ije*, or *je*. One might try to explain that perhaps the songs were originally *jekavski* but passed into *ikavski* and when doing so some *jekavski* forms remained; however, this is disproved by what has just been said above. In fact, there are words in these poems that in everyday speech are always *jekavski* but in the songs *ikavski* (for example, in everyday speech *djiete* but in songs *dite*), and the reverse (in everyday speech *diver*, *divojka*, but in poems *djever*, дјевер, *djevojka*, дјевојка). Concerning the word *djevojka* I should say that in everyday speech and in songs it is always *ikavski,* but when it is sung loudly one hears the *jekavski* form *djevojka* instead of the *ikavski* form *divojka*. For this reason, then, there is heterogeneity in the book regarding the orthography with *i* and *ije* or *je*. I have mentioned this only so that it will be clear; the research will be for others.

I also heard spoken *ćiti*[25] instead of *htjeti*, *ćerati* instead of *tjerati*, *šećati* instead of *šetati*, *mećati* instead of *metati*, so that I also wrote in the same way just what came to me. I wrote *dje* (ђе) instead of *gdje*, since it is spoken that way; and in the same way I wrote *ći* and *ćerca* instead of *kći* and *kćerca*.

I heard written “h” nowhere in these localities; but in this case it is written where it should be, so that no one will stumble while reading such words. And when “h” is omitted between two vowels, speakers leave a hiatus or else they compensate for it by means of a written

[25] Along with this warning, the following words were shortened according to the same principle: not *nehti*, *htio*, *kćerca*, *gdje* but *neći*, *ćerca*, *dje*. And in the same way not *prihvatio*, *uhvatiše*, and *hvatiose* but *prifatio*, *ufatiše*, *fatiose*, which was just how I heard them from the singer.

"v" or sometimes "j." One hears then: *graa* instead of *graha*, *snaa* instead of *snaha*, *oraa* instead of *oraha*, *plaovit* instead of *plahovit*, *straovit* instead of *strahavit* [*sic*], *maati* instead of *mahati*, *jati* instead of *jahati*; also: *juva* instead of *juha*, *suva kruva* instead of *suha kruha*, *kuvati* instead of *kuhati*; and then: *dijati* instead of *dihati*, *tijo* instead of *tiho*, *proja* instead of *prova* or *proha*. But this is so mixed up that it is impossible to decide which word cancels the hiatus with a "v" and which with "j." I heard in one village *graa*, *grava*, and *graja* instead of *graha*. And apart from some one-syllable words that end in "h," in which this "h" either changes places with a "v" or is completely unpronounced (for example *suv* or *su*, *gluv* or *glu*, *kruv* or *kru*), I nowhere heard "h," nor was it compensated for with anything. Only *lad* instead of *hlad* is spoken, as well as *lak* for *lahk*, *um* for *hum*, *ikat* for *hukati*; *dodjo* for *dodjoh*, *leg* for *legoh*, and so forth. At least in Turkish Croatia one hears "h" between two vowels and in front of word-initial vowels; but when in word-final position, or when in front of vowels, nowhere do speakers pronounce this "h." One hears then *kruha*, *proha*, *čoha*, *hoću*, *hoda*, *hadžija*, although this is not so regular either.

What no one has been able to find in folk poems until now is found in these, namely, *synizesis* [emphasis appears in the original, spelled *synicesis* by Marjanović—tr.], a joining of two vowels between two words in one verse where the first word concludes and the second begins with a vowel, so that in reading the verse the two vowels are pronounced as one, and in which case, if one would not do this, the *deseterac* would have an extra syllable. And if someone thinks that such a thing is not to be found in folk songs, or that it should not be there, then it is helpful to testify to it here with examples so that it will be seen that this happens frequently and that it does not disturb the verse as much as may be thought. Furthermore, there is something else, something other than synizesis. There are verses that have eleven syllables but in which there is no synizesis. These verses are pronounced, just as the reader has it here, so that the first, second, and third syllable seem to be one foot (*jedna stopa*), and the first two count as one long. In poem LIII there are two such verses [verse 4: *Odagnaše ti Turci b'jele ovce* and verse 9: *Ojanjit' će mi ovna razbludnika*; interestingly, however, the song is not an epic in the strict sense, since it has only 12 verses; also, it is printed in the section entitled "women's songs."—tr.], and in song II again there are two verses of this kind [verse 133*: Daleko će te ugledati Mile* and verse 222: *Ovo ću ponit' ujni za milošću*]; apart from these there are no others like this in the book. Such verses I received from the same blind singers, who were the best of the folk singers I heard; and if they cause any trouble (luckily there are not many of them), it is necessary to know about them. And when there is one, which spoils the poem and verse (*što pjesmu i stih kvari)*, why should there not be synizesis that does not spoil the verse? That this is not recommended everywhere—the proof for it is this: it is not found everywhere, everywhere where it could be; rather the vowel in question is more often elided. In the first book of Vuk's collection there is in song 700 one verse with seven syllables [*sedmerac*]: *Kravu i tele da prodam* [in speech the "i" merges with the "u," making it a single syllable—tr.] This again, even if it is the only such verse in the collection of our celebrated Vuk Karadžić, offers proof that perhaps this sort of freedom exists in folk singing.

There are all sorts of good and useful things in a folk song [*narodna pjesma*] that would be valuable for us to bring out and learn, but there are also bad things that we do not need to follow. The attentive reader who is skilled in our language will immediately find what is good and what is bad.

Folk songs also contain words that a person would seek in vain to find in everyday speech. I will mention only a few in this book. About the bird by the name *noj* ["ostrich," an animal not found in Croatia—tr.], at least in the places from which these songs came, no one knows; in song IV, verse 15, they *krčiti* ["to clear a forest," according to Vuk's dictionary—tr.] with wine and with brandy [Verse 15: *Koja krči vinom i rakijom*—tr.]. What is more, I heard the verb *turiti* ["to push, shove"] only in song, and in everyday speech one hears the use of *turkati* ["to push, shove"] instead of *turati*, *turnuti* ["push, shove," perfective in verbal aspect] instead of *turiti*. In the same way in song one hears only *razporiti* ["to cut open," perfective aspect, Vuk's dictionary gives Latin *diffendo*—tr.] while in everyday speech it is *razparati* ["to cut open," imperfective aspect]; in song one hears *hititi* while in everyday speech only *baciti*.

I have divided the songs into heroic and women's songs [*Pjesme sam razdielio u junačke i u ženske*]. The reason that I did not classify women's songs according to the occasions in which they are sung is that apart from two or three that were listed according to Vuk's classification, there are no poems in this entire book that would be sung only on one particular occasion. Since these so-called women's songs for the most part have amorous themes, they are sung often and on any appropriate occasion. It is simply not possible to decide, according to content alone, to which group any one of these poems would belong. In these localities many of the customs mentioned in these folk songs have been lost, so that if the memory of a certain custom is preserved by the poem it is difficult to determine which custom.

These poems are all from one place, but from several people who had lived differing numbers of years in Turkish Croatia and who brought these poems here with them; again, some people learned these songs directly from people in Turkish Croatia. All of these singers are illiterate, they know neither how to read nor how to write, and they are differentiated only by age. My singers were three older men, two older women, one younger woman, one young man, and four young girls.

Some of the women's songs transcribed here are a bit different than the songs in the first volume of Vuk's collection.

Now that I have mentioned all that I think necessary in order to better understand the poems, I must say that I did not have to think for a long time in order to decide what the title of the book should be [*Hrvatske narodne pjesme*, *što se pjevaju u gornjoj hrvatskoj krajini i u turskoj Hrvatskoj* "Croatian Folk Songs, Which Are Sung in the Upper Croatian Krajina and in Turkish Croatia" is what the title became in the end—tr.]. Concerning the inhabitants of Turkish Croatia I do not know, actually, what they are, since they do not say that they are Serbian or Croatian but say that they are Hungarians and Bosnians; and they speak the Bosnian language. Here on our side of the border people have lost the name "Croatian" (I say this regarding the ordinary population); but all without exception speak and write Croatian, nothing else. This seems like a strange thing; but I am not able or allowed to hide the truth.

The erudite Mr. Franjo Petračić persuaded me to collect useful things throughout the land; I listened to him and the work bore fruit. After him, the erudite Mr. Vatroslav Jagić took an interest in my work, and in spite of all of his own obligations helped in both word and deed to get the collection properly printed. For the kindness of both gentlemen, from whom our book can expect much, I cannot express enough gratitude.

I think and intend, if God grants it, to give the world more such little books filled with national treasures, so that all will finally know their literary riches better.

I did not know how to prepare my first collection, nor would it have happened without the good offices of A. Jakić, who took over the printing of this book at his own expense. So that the poems would be well printed, he chose a format and suggested an orthography that seem the most advantageous to me; and I took the one that had been applied in the best collections of folk songs up until now. For his efforts and endeavors he has my warmest thanks. L. M.

Cornell University

References

Buturović 1976 — Djenana Buturović. *Studija o Hörmannovoj zbirci muslimanskih narodnih pjesama*. Sarajevo: Svjetlost.

Buturović 1992 — _____. *Bosanskomuslimanska usmena epika*. Sarajevo: Institut za Književnost i Svjetlost.

Coote 1977 — Mary Coote. "Women's Songs in Serbo-Croatian." *Journal of American Folklore,* 90:331-38.

Čubelić 1961 — Tvrtko Čubelić. "Matija Murko kao proučavač srpskohrvatskih narodnih epskih pjesama." *Slovenski etnograf,* 14:171-81.

Dukić 1995 — Davor Dukić. "Razotkrivanje epskoga života: Murkov pristup južnoslavenskoj narodnoj epici." In *Razvoj slovenske etnologije od Š treklja in Murka do sodobnih etnoloških prizadevanj*. Ljubljana: Slovensko Etnološko Društvo. pp. 51-58.

Foley 1988 — John Miles Foley. *The Theory of Oral Composition: History and Methodology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. Rpt. 1992.

Foley 1990 — _____. *Traditional Oral Epic: The* Odyssey, Beowulf, *and the Serbo-Croatian Return Song*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. Rpt. 1993.

Foley 1991 — _____. *Immanent Art*: *From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Foley 1995 — _____. *The Singer of Tales in Performance*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Foley 1999 _____. *Homer's Traditional Art*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Foley 2004 _____. *The Wedding of Mustaybey's Son Bećirbey as Performed by Halil Bajgorić*. Folklore Fellows Communications, 283. Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica. eEdition at http://oraltradition.org/zbm

Foley 2005 _____. "From Oral Performance to Paper-Text to Cyber-Edition." *Oral Tradition*, 20:233-63. http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/20ii/foley

HNP 1896-1942 *Hrvatske narodne pjesme*. Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska.

Honko 1998 Lauri Honko. *Textualising the Siri Epic*. Folklore Fellows Communications, 264. Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica.

Honko 2000 _____. "Thick Corpus and Organic Variation: An Introduction." In *Thick Corpus, Organic Variation and Textuality in Oral Tradition.* Ed. By Lauri Honko. Studia Fennica, Folkoristica 7. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society. pp. 3-28.

Hörmann 1933 Kosta Hörmann. *Narodne pjesme muslimana u Bosni i Hercegovini*, vols. 1-2. Sarajevo: J. Kusan. Orig. publ. as *Narodne pjesme muhamedovaca u Bosni i Hercegovini.* Sarajevo: Zemaljska Štamparija, 1888-89.

Horrocks 1999 Geoffrey Horrocks. "Homer's Dialect." In *A New Companion to Homer*. Ed. by Barry Powell and Ian Morris. Leiden: Brill. pp. 193-217.

Jahić 2000 Dževad Jahić. *Bošnjački narod i njegov jezik.* Zenica: Biblioteka Linguos.

Karadžić 1814 Vuk Karadžić. *Sabrana dela Vuka Karadžića*. Izdanje o stogodišnjici smrti Vuka Stefanovića Karadžića 1864-1964. vol. 1: *Mala prostonarodna slaveno-serbska pjesnarica* (1814, Vienna); *Narodna srpska pjesnarica* (1815, Vienna). Ed. Vladan Nedić. Belgrade: Prosveta. 1965.

Kimball 1973 Stanley Kimball. *The Austro-Slav Revival: A Study of Nineteenth Century Literary Foundations*. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society.

Krstić 1956 Branislav Krstić. "Luka Marjanović i Nikola Andrić kao izdavači narodnih pesama." *Prilozi za književnost, jezik, istoriju i folklor*, 20, iii-iv:241-53.

Lencek 1975 Rado Lencek. Review of Kimball 1973, in the *Slavic and East European Journal*, 19:481-83.

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

Lord 1986 — _____. "The Merging of Two Worlds." In *Oral Tradition in Literature: Interpretation in Context*. Ed. by John Miles Foley. Columbia: University of Missouri Press. pp. 19-64.

Lord 1991 — _____. *Epic Singers and Oral Tradition*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Lord 1995 — _____. *The Singer Resumes the Tale*. Ed. by Mary Louise Lord. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Marjanović 1864 — Luka Marjanović. *Hrvatske narodne pjesme, što se pjevaju u gornjoj hrvatskoj krajini i u turskoj hrvatskoj*. Coll. and ed. by Luka Marjanović. Svezak I. Zagreb: Jakić.

Marjanović 1898 — _____. "Predgovor." In his *Junačke pjesme muhamedovske*. Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska. vol. 3:vii-lvi.

Matesić 1959 — Josip Matesić. *Die Erlanger serbokroatische Liederhandschrift: Sprachliche Untersuchung*. Erlangen: Inaugural Dissertation der Philosophischen Fakultät der Friedrich-Alexander-Universität zu Erlangen.

Mučibabić 1981 — Djurđica Mučibabić. "Redaktorski postupak Luke Marjanovića na primjeru pjesme 'Dvostruka ženidba Sokolović Ibre'." In *Poseban otisak iz godišnjaka X odjeljenja za književnost Instituta za jezik i književnost u Sarajevu*. pp. 159-70.

Murko 1909 — Matija Murko. "Die Volksepik der bosnischen Mohammedaner." *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Volkskunde in Berlin*, 19:13-30.

Murko 1912 — _____. "Bericht über phonographische Aufnahmen epischer, meist mohammedanischer Volkslieder im nordwestlichen Bosnien im Sommer 1912." *Berichte der Phonogramm-Archivs-Kommision der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaft in Wien*, 30:1-17.

Murko 1913 — _____. "Bericht über eine Bereisung von Nordwestbosnien und der angrenzenden Gebiete von Kroatien und Dalmatien behufs Erforschung der Volksepik der bosnischen Mohammedaner." *Sitzungsberichte der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse*, 173, Abhandlung 3:1-25.

Murko 1915a — _____. "Bericht über eine Reise zum Studium der Volksepik in Bosnien und Herzegowina im Jahre 1913." *Sitzungsberichte der Kaiserlichen Akademie der*

Wissenschaften in Wien, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, 176, Abhandlung 2:1-50.

Murko 1915b _____. "Bericht über phonografische Aufnahmen epischer Volkslieder im mittleren Bosnien und in der Herzegowina im Sommer 1913." *Sitzungsberichte der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien*, *Philosophisch-Historische Klasse,* 176, Abhandlung 2:1-23.

Murko 1919 _____. "Neues über südslavische Volksepik." *Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum Geschicte und Deutsche Literatur*, 22. Herausgegeben: Johannes Ilberg. pp. 273-96.

Murko 1951 _____. *Tragom srpsko-hrvatske narodne epike: Putovanja u godinama 1930-32.* 2 vols. Djela Jugoslavenske Akademije Znanosti i Umjetnosti, 41-42. Zagreb: Jugoslavenska Akademija Znanosti i Umjetnosti.

Parry 1987 Milman Parry. *The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Orig. publ. 1971.

Perić-Polonijo 1989 Tanya Perić-Polonijo. "Književnoteorisjski problem klasifikacije usmenih lirskih pjesama: Pristup s obzirom na zapis i izvedbu pjesama." Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku, MS 1348.

Perić-Polonijo 1993 _____. "The Functions of Oral Lyrical Poems: A Contribution to the Classification." *Narodna Umjetnost,* 30:303-25.

Perić-Polonijo 1995 _____. "The Levels of Classification." *Narodna Umjetnost,* 32:55-67.

Perić-Polonijo 1996a _____. "Synchretic Performance: Concerning the Relationship Between Words and Tunes in Performance of Oral Lyric Poems." *Narodna Umjetnost,* 33:171-90.

Perić-Polonijo 1996b _____. "Oral Poems in the Context of Customs and Rituals." *Narodna Umjetnost,* 33:381-99.

Peters 1986 Martin Peters. "Zur Frage einer 'achäischen' Phase des griechischen Epos." In *O-o-p-ro-si Festschrift für Ernst Risch zum 75 Geburtstag*. Ed. by Annemarie Etter. Berlin: de Gruyter. pp. 303-19.

SCHS 1953- *Serbo-Croatian Heroic Songs (Srpskohrvatske junačke pjesme)*. Coll., ed., and trans. by Milman Parry, Albert B. Lord, and David E. Bynum. Vols. 1-4, 6, 8, 14. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press/Center for the Study of Oral Literature. (Vols. 1-2 co-published with the Serbian Academy of Sciences.)

Stangl 2000 — Burkhard Stangl. *Ethnologie im Ohr: Die Wirkungsgeschichte des Phonographen*. Vienna: WUV Universitätsverlag.

Tate 2010 — Aaron P. Tate. "'There Were Two Foreigners and One of Ours': Parry and Lord in Kijevo, Croatia, 24 September 1934." *Folklore*, 121:311-20.

Vidan 2003 — Aida Vidan. *Embroidered with Gold, Strung with Pearls: The Traditional Ballads of Bosnian Women*. Publications of the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature, 1. Cambridge, MA: Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature.

Voigt 1994 — Vilmos Voigt. "*Primus inter pares*: Why was Vuk Karadžić the Most Influential Folklore Scholar in South-Eastern Europe in the Nineteenth Century?" In *The Uses of Tradition*. Ed. by Michael Branch and Celia Hawkesworth. London and Helsinki: School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London, and Finnish Literature Society.

Wilson 1970 — Duncan Wilson. *The Life and Times of Vuk Stefanović Karadžić 1784-1864: Literacy, Literature, and National Independence in Serbia*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Žele 2003 — Andreja Žele. "Murko's Lexicology as a Synthesis of Linguistics and Ethnology." *Slovenski jezik/Slovene Linguistic Studies,* 4:3-11.

This page is intentionally left blank.

Oral Tradition, 26/1 (2011): 175-190

Possibilities of Reality, Variety of Versions: The Historical Consciousness of Ainu Folktales

Minako Sakata

Introduction

The Ainu, the indigenous people in Japan, have historically had their own language, the Ainu language, and a rich repertoire of oral literature. However, as a result of assimilation policy since the late nineteenth century, most of the Ainu in contemporary Japan are Japanese speakers and do not use their ancestral language.[1] Thus Ainu oral literature now exists in the form of written texts or audio recordings. Most of these texts have been recorded by Japanese scholars or Ainu practitioners since the early twentieth century.[2] They are fixed as texts but still show us many different versions of the same tales, told by many different informants until recently in real oral tradition.

In this article, I illustrate how a variety of versions of Ainu oral literature can be read, and what the relationships are between one version and the others. To consider these topics, the idea of traditional referentiality that John Miles Foley (1991) has proposed is quite helpful: each story or performance has an immanent context, which storytellers and audiences share. Traditional phraseology, motifs, or narrative patterns ubiquitous in a tradition summon other stories or performances, and in doing so these cues help the audience to access the implicit whole, "ever-immanent tradition." On the other hand, the strategies of reference are diverse, depending on the culture. In Ainu oral tradition, for instance, genre-dependency remains an open question, as will be discussed later.

To read the Ainu oral tradition in the context of its traditional referentiality, and among many themes appearing in Ainu oral literature, I focus on *uymam,* the trade between the Ainu and the *Wajin*, ethnic Japanese. Although Ainu oral tradition does not indicate the exact era of what

---

[1] In recent years, the proportion of the Ainu who learn Ainu as their second language is increasing. This trend is more a part of a revival movement of Ainu culture by the Ainu themselves than the result of a change of official education policy.

[2] Recording of the Ainu tradition was actually started by scholars as an activity that was not inconsistent with assimilation policy. It was thought that since the Ainu would be soon assimilated, Ainu language or traditions should be recorded before they became extinct. However, the motivation of Ainu practitioners seemed to be different. While they chose to be Japanese speakers for practical reasons, they wrote down their repertoires by themselves or told stories for scholars in order to transmit their tradition to future audiences. In this sense it might be said that textualizing activity was chosen by the Ainu as a new mode for their tradition.

happens in tales, according to historical discourse it is said that trade between the Ainu and the *Wajin* continued from the fourteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century. Most of the stories mentioned in this article were recorded in the twentieth century, when the public language of the Ainu had converted to Japanese and trade was not conducted in everyday life. Therefore, in the time of textualizing, Ainu oral literature was a sort of medium through which the modern Ainu got to know what the past was like. In short, it was their history (Sakata 2005). So at the end of this article I will mention their historical consciousness, which can be seen in their oral literature. This consciousness is different from history as modern scholarship, however. It amounts to their mode of configuring and transmitting the past.

Traditional territories of the Ainu. Redrawn from the map in Ainu Minzoku Hakubutsukan (1999:3).

The Ainu oral literature discussed in this article consists of the traditions of the Hokkaido Ainu. While they used to live in the region consisting of present-day southern Sakhalin, the Kuril Islands, Hokkaido, and Aomori prefecture (northern Honshu) (see the map above), they now live mostly in Hokkaido as a result of an intricate historical process.[3] These Ainu in the four areas above had different dialects, cultures, customs, and histories. However, records of traditions we can access today are chiefly attributed to the Hokkaido Ainu and the Sakhalin Ainu.

Genres of Ainu Oral Literature

Although Ainu oral tradition includes all aspects of verbal art and activity in Ainu life and culture in the days before they were annexed to Japan in the late nineteenth century, prominent genres include the epic (*yukar* or *sakorpe*), the myth (*kamuy yukar*), and the folktale (*uwepeker* or *tuytak*). These categories are distinguished mainly by their form. Both the epic and the myth consist of verse sung to melodies, distinguished by the latter having refrains constantly repeated before every verse. On the other hand, the folktale is prose. It is thought that these modes of performance correlate more or less in terms of their contents. The epic consists of stories of heroes who are human beings but also have supernatural power, and the focus is war against enemies. The myth consists of tales of gods (*kamuy*). In Ainu cosmology, *kamuy* are non-

[3] It is said that the Honshu Ainu had been assimilated gradually during the mid-eighteenth through the early nineteenth century (Namikawa 1992). The Kuril Ainu, after being forced to move to Shikotan Island near Hokkaido in 1884, saw its population rapidly decreased (Malgorzata 2009). The Sakhalin Ainu migrated to Hokkaido or other areas of Japan after the Second World War (Tamura 2008).

human species, including natural phenomena, living creatures, plants, and so on that surround and affect in many ways the life experiences of the Ainu. Folktales are stories about humans, and were accepted among the Ainu in the past as more realistic than other genres (Okuda 1996, Nakagawa 1997, Sakata 2005).

Genre-dependence or correlation between content and form, has been stressed especially in discussions over the historicity of the Ainu tradition (Nakagawa 1989, Okuda 1996, Kojima 2010a and b). Scholars have concentrated on the typology of genres and have made efforts to define the nature, functions, or specific motifs or narrative patterns of each type.[4] However, in my estimation what was revealed in these discussions was the fact that narratives cannot be classified into genres so smoothly because of recurrent motifs or story-patterns shared among genres. And this fact should be emphasized more. In addition, definition of genres has itself been problematic in Ainu oral literature (Okuda 2002) and does not seem to be established enough to confirm genre-dependence. There are, for example, numerous exceptions that are not applicable to the present definitions given above. There are stories of humans sung in the mode of *kamuy yukar* or gods' stories in prose. Yoichi Otani (1996) points out that some narratives are recognized as different genres depending on the informant. Hisakazu Fujimura (1980:137) suggests that in Ainu elders' typology there are only two categories of traditions: narratives and the other.

For these reasons above, I focus on narrative patterns or recurrent motifs shared among stories beyond genres, or the relation of inter-genre referentiality. We shall find that these clues might make it possible to deepen our understanding of what the Ainu oral literature tells us. For the purpose of this article, I refer to stories connected by similar motifs from four genres. For convenience, I label these types as E (epic), M (myth), F (folktale), and L (lullaby).

Types of Trade Theme Stories

Trade with the *Wajin* is one of the major motifs ubiquitous in Ainu oral literature regardless of genre. Most generally, it appears in the expression that introduces a chieftain as a main character. The traditional meaning of conducting or having the capability to trade is that the person is a chieftain or a rich person of a village or a candidate for a chieftain. If an annual trade expedition to the *Wajin* town appears in a description about a man's daily life, he should be understood as a rich man or a chieftain without any specific notation concerning his wealth or position. Because the products that the Ainu exchange with the *Wajin* stem from hunting or

[4] Nakagawa (1989) suggests that there might be a range of contents, themes, or narrative patterns depending on the genre. Since the folktale is based on poetic justice, it cannot depict incidents such as the Ainus' defeat against the *Wajin,* which is not appropriate to Ainu ethics—rewarding good, punishing evil. On the other hand, it can be said that a special emphasis on the Ainus' defeat is the very characteristic of Japanese historical documents but not of the Ainu oral tradition. We should take into account the ideological aspect of Japanese documents. In this sense, the fact that Ainu oral literature does not share this emphasis with historiography is significant. Kojima (2010a, 2010b) proposed a typology of representation of trade with the *Wajin* depending on the genre. In the epic it is heroic activity; in the myth it means to gain products necessary for religious ceremonies; in the folktale it is an activity that brings both wealth and possible danger. However, as the author admits, these three models are not exclusive to one genre but are seen also in other genres.

fishing, an ability to trade also means that he is a good hunter, which is one of the most important abilities for Ainu men in their pre-modern society.

Other than cases above, there are stories that feature trade with the *Wajin* as their setting. Generally there are two story-patterns in this case: (1) the trade-difficulty pattern: to encounter a difficulty in the *Wajin* town, but to solve it and become wealthy; and (2) the trade-murder pattern: to be slain in the *Wajin* town. Both of them refer to danger resulting from trade expeditions; the difference is whether the main characters can deal with that danger or not. In the former, problems are solved and the protagonists survive and succeed in winning a wealthy life. In the latter, some of main characters are slain, but there is one survivor who is expected to continue their ancestral line.

First of all, I consider the former pattern. There are three stories of this type as far as I can recognize: that is, Ashiriro Kannari's *Gin no yanagibayashi kin no yanagibayashi* ("Silver Forest, Golden Forest") (F1),[5] Turushino Kaizawa's *Kurogitsune no inaw* ("An Inaw of a Black Fox") (F2),[6] and Yoso Kimura's *Kori no ido* ("The Well of Ice") (F3).[7] These three folktales have similar plots, with differences in detail.

F1 seems to be the richest in its length and content of story as compared with the two others. The main character is a young man who was raised by himself and has no parents or family. There are six brothers who are the head of his village and have conducted annual trade with the *Wajin*. The young man asks them to take him to the *Wajin* land for trade. They agree at once but deceive him. He follows them by himself with his boat. On the way, there is an island where travelers stay one night in the middle of their journey. He also lands there, following the six brothers. He prays to the god of the cliff on the island, and the god tells him that his father was a chieftain in his village; but because his wealth became an object of envy to others, his parents went to the gods' land early when he was very small. The god gives him two small branches of willow as charms to ward off danger that he might suffer in the *Wajin* land. In the *Wajin* town he meets a samurai who knows and respects his father. They become good friends. Although the Samurai is not in an elevated position within the hierarchy, he promises to purchase all of young Ainu's products, and to be his client forever. However, one day, a lord who is a client of those six brothers sends an angry message that the Ainu young man is staying at the samurai's residence without any greetings or gifts to the lord. He offers a game to compare the value of their treasures; if the young Ainu man loses the game, he will be slain. The Ainu accepts the challenge, assuming that it might be the six brothers who prompted the lord. Thanks to the charms from the god of the cliff, the young Ainu man wins the game and gains a huge amount of compensation from the lord. The six brothers then confess that they are not from his village. They were banished from their home village Kusur because of their vice and came to his village and behaved as the head. The young man orders them to go home to their own village, and he becomes a chieftain as his father was. He maintains good relations with the samurai and conducts annual trade with him. Finally, he marries a beautiful Ainu woman and lives happily ever after.

---

[5] Dictated by Ashiriro Kannari, written down by Matsu Kannari in 1932 (Hokkaido Kyoikucho 2000).

[6] Performed by Turushino Kaizawa in 1965, translated into Japanese by Shigeru Kayano (1988:115-23).

[7] Performed by Yoso Kimura in 1961, translated into Japanese by Shigeru Kayano (1988:67-73).

F2 is a similar story in which a young Ainu man who does not have his parents and is deceived by evil villagers wins a game against a lord through the power of an *inaw*[8] that the black fox god gave him during his travel to the *Wajin* land. As a result, he becomes wealthy. This story lacks an episode explaining his parents' early death. After his return, bad people in the Ainu village are slain by the black fox god, and only young women and children are spared. He rehabilitates the village with them. This ending implies that he became the new chieftain in his village.

F3 is similar in plot but the main character has good parents—a difference from the two stories above. The young Ainu man and his parents "do not want anything to have or eat." This phraseology has the traditional idiomatic meaning that they are wealthy and satisfied with their lifestyle. Whether the main character is a lonely young man or not is an important element, since a boy without parents conventionally tends to have heroic character in Ainu oral literature. Therefore, this story is not a heroic narrative. Nor do people in his village take him on a trade expedition, although it does not mean that they are inimical toward the young man. He goes to the *Wajin* town to trade by himself and meets a good samurai who becomes his client. When he goes to see a festival at a shrine in the town, he makes an *inaw*. Notwithstanding the fact that it is a Japanese shrine, the god there is pleased with it and gives him a charm in case of difficulties he is supposed to suffer. Thanks to this charm, he goes through the test that a bad samurai poses to him. The friendly samurai says to the young Ainu that he should not to come to the *Wajin* town from now onward because it is dangerous. The lesson of this story, as told in the ending, is the importance of belief and the power of an *inaw*. The young Ainu man continues his uneventful lifestyle as before and never travels to the *Wajin* town from then onward. This outcome means that he is not of chieftain's lineage nor will he become a new chieftain.

There are critical differences between F1, F2, and F3. In the first two, the main figure is an orphan; in the latter he is not. Actually, this turns out to be an important factor because the parents' early death is also a ubiquitous and meaningful motif in Ainu oral literature.

The Hidden Theme: Parents' Death Motif

F1 and F2 include the theme of parents' death. In the former the young man's parents passed away because of other villagers' jealousy. In the latter the main character does not have parents, but the cause is not explained. There is a clue in the ending of this story, however. Bad villagers are wiped out by the black fox god, while the young man rehabilitates the village with survivors who have good spirit.

To gloss this lack of description and to make the referent clear, we can solicit help from other Ainu narratives. There is a story called *Umi ni ukabu yama o oyoide hippatta otasut-jin no hanashi* ("The story of Otasut-lad who pulled an island") (F4), for example, that is not a trade-difficulty narrative *per se* but includes an episode of trade.[9] A boy, the main character, is raised

[8] An *inaw* is a religious tool that is made of wood. It is thought of as a gift for gods or sometimes itself can be a god in Ainu cosmology.

[9] Performed by Kinarabuk Sugiura in 1966 (Ainu Mukei Bunka Densho Hozonkai 1982).

by an old woman. One day his uncle visits him to take him to trade with the *Wajin*. The old woman gives him a charm, a belt. The uncle leaves him on the island on the way. The boy gets angry, passes the belt around the mountain island, and pulls it; this action results in a big tsunami that overturns his uncle's boat and kills him. After the boy's return, the old woman explains that she is a goddess of water, that his uncle is not a real relative of his but the person who killed his parents. She says further that she must go back to the land of gods and gives him power to kill bad villagers and to heal his village. He does as she indicates, making a new village and living happily ever after. With reference to the larger tradition, the motif of wiping out bad villagers implies that the main character's parents are slain and their village was invaded; this incident legitimizes the god's liquidation of bad villagers.

Pon Otasutunkur to sono musuko o tasuketa okami no kami no monogatari ("The Story of a Wolf God Who Saved Pon Otasutunkur and His Son") (E1) is also an epic that links parents' death with a trade motif.[10] While in stories previously mentioned the episode of parents is merely a background for the main characters' activity or misfortunes they suffer, this story is mainly about the parents' generation, and therefore explains the relation between their death and trade. Pon Otastunkur is raised by an old man. When he grows up enough, the old man takes him to the *Wajin* town for trade. A daughter of the lord of the *Wajin* town falls in love with Pon Otasutunkur, marries him, and they go together back home to his village. Bad people from another village then attack him to steal the wealth that he gained by trade. He fights against many enemies by himself—typically as a hero in Ainu epic usually does. And his wife also helps in the battle, again as a female character in Ainu epic typically does. Nevertheless, they are slain and their son is likewise raised by an old man who is a wolf god. When the son grows up, an old man again takes him to the *Wajin* town for trade and shows him to the lord who is his grandfather. Promising that they will heal the village, the wolf god and boy leave from the *Wajin* town and succeed in their aim.

Although the Otasut lad and Pon Otastunkur are brought up by gods, the convention actually means that they are orphans. Main characters in F1 or F2 seem to be raised by themselves, but they survive through a god's indirect support. In F1, the god of the cliff told the young Ainu man that he had been able to make a living by himself through the god's protection (Hokkaido Kyoikucho 2000:65). Whether they are raised by gods or by themselves, the traditional meaning is the same: they are heroes who lost their parents quite early.

Actually, "parents' death" is a common theme in the epic. *Kotan Utunnai oma yukara* ("The Legend of Kotan Utunnai") (E2),[11] *Kyuryu gawa no onna ga jibun no tsukigami o shika ni shita* ("Chiwaspet un Mat Turned Her Guardian Spirit into a Deer") (E3),[12] "*Shika otoko no yusha, watashi o tasukeru* ("A Deer God Saved Me") (E4),[13] and *Yukar* 1 ("The Yukar Epic 1")

---

[10] Performed by Kuro Yae in 1949 (Hokkaido Kyoikucho 1994).

[11] Anonymous. Written down by John Batchelor in 1889 (Batchelor 1890).

[12] Written down by Matsu Kannari in 1929 (Hokkaido Kyoikucho 1988, 1989, 1990).

[13] Written down by Matsu Kannari in 1931 (Hokkaido Kyoikucho 1983, 1984).

(E5),[14] are only a few such examples. The hero is a young man whose name is Pon Yaunpe or Pon Otastunkur. He is raised not by his parents but by another such as a sister, a brother, an aunt, or an uncle, in many cases not directly related to him. His parents were slain when he was very small by foreigners (Karapt or Santa) on the way back home from a trade expedition to the *Wajin* town. This episode is inserted in the scene, so that the person who fostered him reveals his background. Afterward he goes to battle continuously against enemies for revenge; successive battles and many ways of fighting against a variety of opponents are the main spectacles of Ainu epic.

A parents' death motif can also be found in myth. *Komochigatana* ("A Sword Goddess with a Child") (M1)[15] is a story of Ainurakkur, a culture hero who is a demigod. It is said that it was he who gave the Ainu their way of living—hunting, fishery, gathering, woodworks, sewing, and every necessity in everyday life. Therefore, it is sometimes claimed that he is the ancestor of the Ainu. When Ainurakkur was a small child, he was always crying. One day in his dream, he goes up to a mountain. There is a big waterfall, in the basin of which a silver ladle and a silver bowl are whirling. He hears in the sound the words they scrape: "I want to drink what I used to drink. I want to eat what I used to eat." On the top of the mountain, he finds a big house seemingly vacant for a long time. Then a sword goddess with a baby on her back appears and tells him a story of his parents. His parents died because of the jealousy of bad gods and went back to the land of gods early. This house was theirs, and the ladle and bowl were used when they made drink for festivals. The goddess has a sword that was their treasure. She commands him to rehabilitate his parents' village. Waking up, he finds the sword and then succeeds as the goddess ordered.

The parents' death motif links the trade-difficulty stories to the genres of epic and myth. It summons epic heroes or the demigod of the Ainu culture. Thus, when an orphan embarks on trade it is understood as a heroic activity. F3 testifies to this built-in connotation in a different way. The young Ainu who has parents does not continue trade relations with the *Wajin*. Since he is not a heroic figure, his trade is nominal and not essential to his life. Thus, from that point onward he never travels to the *Wajin* land.

The parents' death motif is extremely widespread, regardless of genre. Thus it creates horizons of comparisons among stories including this motif, beyond difference of genres. We can assume an immanent story with a trade-difficulty pattern lying in the background. The implied chronological story of this pattern as a whole is as follows: (1) parents' trade, (2) parents' death, (3) hero's growing, (4) hero's trade, (5) difficulty, (6) retribution, (7) acquisition of treasures, and (8) village rehabilitation. Depending on the emphasis in each story, some components can be omitted or elaborated.

---

[14] Performed by Suteno Orita in 1985, written down by Osami Okuda in 1991 (Hokkaido Shizunai-cho Kyoiku Iinkai 1991).

[15] Dictated by Yuki Nabesawa, written down by Kyosuke Kindaichi in 1923 (Kindaichi 1993/1931:212-14).

Another Axis: Parents' Death-Village Recovery Pattern

As mentioned above, parents' death is a motif that appeared in all genres of Ainu oral narratives. Among stories integrated by this motif, we can find another shared motif: the theme of village recovery found in F1, F2, F4, E1, and M1. Among them M1 seemed to be the most suggestive for our consideration of this motif, not only because this is a story of the culture hero who gave birth to Ainu culture, but because rehabilitation of his parents' village is the main theme. M1 is a story in which small Ainurakkle, who lost his parents early, is awakened by a goddess' word that he should save his parents' village. It is a simple parents' death-village recovery story. We can also find this story-pattern in F1, F2, F4, and E1. F1 and F2 mix this story-pattern with the trade-difficulty pattern. F4 and E1 revise the explanation of the death as robbery by bad people instead of jealousy. Epics including the parents' death motif lack the village recovery motif because they are not interested in any theme other than battle. Besides, the motivation for the parents' death is trouble during a feast in foreign islands.

Robbery and jealousy can be thought of as having the same meaning in Ainu traditional thought. As previously mentioned, the traditional phrase "I do not want anything to have or eat" means that a character is both happy and wealthy. These notions are not necessarily segregated in Ainu traditional thought. Treasure in traditional Ainu society consisted of foreign products gained through trade with foreigners like the *Wajin*. The Ainu exchanged furs or dried fishes with them. To be good at hunting or fishing means that gods will protect and help an Ainu man as long as he is good-minded, as we already see in F1. Thus, in an ideal situation, the circle of the good mind-god's protection, hunting and fishing products, and treasure continues. Being happy materially presents no contradiction with ethics in Ainu traditional thought. Instead, material and spiritual goodness should coexist.

Focusing on the narrative pattern of parents' death-village recovery, we can find another correlation between this pattern and attribution to enemies. While in stories of this pattern the murderer tends to be an Ainu from another village on Hokkaido island (F1, F4, E1, M1), in stories lacking a village recovery motif (E2-5) the murderer is from other islands such as Karapt or Santa,[16] which are not trade partners. Therefore, it can be said that the difference in the motif is parallel to the difference in the enemy. A village recovery story group can be divided into two sub-groups, one with the difficulty motif (F1, F2) and one without it (F4, E1). In the former, inland affairs grow into troubles in the *Wajin* town; in the latter the problems are only domestic. The parents' death motif, accompanying or lacking the village recovery motif, shows a range of dangers incidental to trade activity, such as wars against foreigners, attacks from inland opponents, and troubles in the *Wajin* town.

On the other hand, there is a common message among them, namely that a trade partner cannot be an enemy. In difficulty pattern stories, enemies are usually a pair: a bad *Wajin* lord and a bad Ainu who antagonize the main figure. The hero also has another *Wajin* trade partner who supports him. Therefore this relation is not a simple ethnic opposition between the Ainu and the *Wajin*. According to F1 and F2, it was Ainu opponents who prompted a lord to commit the evil

[16] The names of Karapt and Santa remind us of the Japanese place-name Karafuto, present-day Sakhalin or Santan, which refers to peoples in Sakhalin or the lower Amur. However, it is uncertain whether the Ainu nouns Karapt and Santa can be concretized to a specific place or peoples as above.

plan, and they were the ones who invaded the hero's parents' village. So the trouble that the main characters suffer in this type of story is a kind of inland problem of the Ainu society involving the *Wajin* society. In other narratives without the pattern, opponents, whether Ainu or foreigners, are people or villages without any partnership in trade. In this way it can be said that trade activity indicates friendship in Ainu tradition, and, more remarkably, that ethnic division is no criterion for determining friend or foe in Ainu oral literature.

Trade-Murder Story

Now we turn to another story-pattern having a setting of trade with *Wajin*. *Ningen no musume no jijo* ("A Story of a Girl") (M2),[17] sung by Karepia Hirame, is a trade-murder pattern story. Two brothers and a sister embark to the *Wajin* town for trade. On the way, they find a flock of birds. A bird flying at the head is crying and says: "I went to trade, but I was killed by a bad *Wajin* interpreter with poisoned wine. Do not go. Go home. Go home." However, they go to the *Wajin* town and the two brothers are murdered with poisoned wine. The youngest sister is saved by a big bird, which takes her back to her village. One day when she is crying on the sea shore, a big bird comes to her. It is her brother. He instructs her to get married in order to continue their ancestral line.

Thus the protagonists go to trade and are killed without an apparent reason. It seems at first sight that this story is based on ethnic opposition. Donald L. Philippi (1979:247) and Brett L. Walker (2001:212), for example, read an ambiguous feeling of the Ainu about the *Wajin* into this poetry: anticipation of trade and fear. And the former feeling implies economic reliance of the Ainu on the *Wajin*. These interpretations are partially relevant; however, they seem to be based more on historical discourse than Ainu traditional logic itself. So we should again refer to other stories having the motif in common with M2 to avoid a hasty conclusion.

The clue this time is a bird that is an avatar of the spirit of a dead figure. Let us consider digests of two lullabies. In both of these songs, the narrator is a wife of a man who is slain in the *Wajin* town.

L1: *Karepia Hirame*[18]

> There came subpoenas many times from the *Wajin* town. Your father went out saying "they sent messages intending to kill me. If I am dead, blood rain will fall on the half of the land; the sun will shine over the other half of the land." In a few years, it happened as he said. When I was crying on the sea shore, a flock of birds flew from offshore. A bird at the head of the flock was crying and said "when I was about to be killed, my friend samurai asked for a pardon but it was not granted and I was killed. Do not mourn. Bring our child up and continue my ancestral line." You are too small to know this story yet, though; I tell you now because you are fretful and crying.

[17] Dictated by Karepia Hirame, written down by Itsuhiko Kubodera in 1936 (Kubodera 1977:412-16); English trans. in Philippi 1979:247-53.

[18] Dictated by Karepia Hirame, written down by Itsuhiko Kubodera in 1936 (Kubodera 1977:427).

L2: *Shimukani Shikada*[19]

> There came subpoenas many times from the *Wajin* town. One day your father had decided to embark, saying "if I do not come home, a flock of birds will fly in. If you find a bird without a head, it will be me. So please make a meal and pray to the gods for me. Then I will be able to live with the gods." Since then, I had been crying. One day, as your father said, a flock of birds appeared. Among them there was a bird without a head. I made many dishes and prayed. Your father might be with gods now, so stop crying.

The father left for the *Wajin* town in these lullabies, differently from M2, not for the purpose of trade but because of subpoenas from the *Wajin*. This motif brings us to another story, a folktale told by Haru Torao, *Tonosama no nandai* ("Difficulty from a Lord") (F5).[20] As the title indicates, this story has a pattern quite similar to the trade-difficulty pattern. The main character is a chieftain who is a good hunter and does not want anything more more than he has. He accepted a letter from a lord in the *Wajin* town many times. When the bad lord threatened him by saying that if he did not come he would start a war, the Ainu man left for the *Wajin* town. On the way, he stayed on an island and met a god. This god saved him when the *Wajin* lord offered a test involving a sword-cut and survival. Having won the game, the Ainu man received compensation from the lord and returned home. He taught his children a lesson: "do not go to the *Wajin* town since the trouble there is terrifying."

These stories focusing on an evil *Wajin* character seem to consist of simple ethnic opposition in contrast to trade motif stories. However, we should take into account that L1 mentions a "friend samurai" who tried to save the Ainu man's life, and that is what the structure of F5 indicates as well.

F5 is not a trade story, but it shares a similar trade-difficulty pattern. Thus it opens the way to a comparison with them, and we notice that there are also subpoena motifs in trade-difficulty narratives. In F1 and F2, a bad lord sends a message to the main figure staying at another samurai's residence in order to offer a game that is the beginning of the difficulty. L1 is also related to F1-3, in which there is always a good samurai friend. Thus the immanent whole of a difficulty-pattern story should be generalized as follows: (1) parents' trade, (2) parents' death, (3) hero's growing, (4) hero's trade, (5) subpoena, (6) difficulty, (7) retribution, (8) acquisition of treasures, and (9) village recovery.

Based on these examples, it might be thought that the subpoena motif is a specific expression to depict bad *Wajin* and their incomprehensible logic or cruelty. However, based on the whole story above, it is a question not of ethnic opposition but of alliance.[21] In M2, Ainu brothers travel by their choice for trade and are killed without a definite reason. This outcome

---

[19] Dictated by Shimukani Shikada, written down by Itsuhiko Kubodera in 1940 (Kubodera 1977:425).

[20] Performed by Haru Torao in 1983, written down by Setsuko Shiga in 2002 (Hokkaido Kyoikucho 2002).

[21] I have discussed this unit as a "survival unit"—the concept described by Gregory Bateson (1972, 1979)—of the Ainu epistemology. In Ainu trade narratives, a main figure overcomes difficulty by the power of alliance with *kamuy* (gods) and samurai. The trinity of *kamuy*, the Ainu, and *sisam* (ethnic Japanese or the *Wajin*) is also a motif often found in Ainu oral literature (Sakata 2008a).

means that they could not overcome the difficulty. That is the reason why this story cannot involve a difficulty story-pattern that stems from the heroic narrative. Thus, through the motif of a bird as a dead man's spirit, M2 relates itself to a subpoena story-pattern that explains the *Wajin*'s unreasonable cruelty. Besides obscuring the identity of an opponent, it ensures that a trade partner is always a friend, and in doing so ensures that trade activity remains forever heroic.

Historical Discourse of Ainu-*Wajin* Trade

This fact has significant meaning when we consider historical discourse about the Ainu-*Wajin* relations in the early modern period. Based on archives written by the Japanese, historians explain Japanese control over the Ainu society through ceremonial trade stemming from the seventeenth century. The Matsumae domain or Tokugawa shogunate called trade with the Ainu *omemie*, which means an audience with the Shogun or lords to confirm homage accompanying an exchange of gifts. On the other hand, it is also well known among historians that trade with the *Wajin* is referred to as *uymam,* meaning mere trade in the Ainu language. This asymmetry was explained as historical transition, in other words that although Ainu-*Wajin* trade began as friendship trade, their relations evolved to ruled and ruler. Accordingly, the terms followed suit: from *uymam* (trade) to *omemie* (political ceremony) (Inagaki 1985, Kikuchi 1991). It is also said that the long history of ceremonial trade through which the Ainu's political subordination and economic dependency toward the Japanese were enforced served as preparation for the conquest of Hokkaido by the Meiji government in the mid-nineteenth century without resistance by the Ainu.[22] However, these two attitudes toward trade relations are not a matter of transition but of epistemological difference (Sakata 2008b). As we have seen, *uymam* is represented in narratives told in the twentieth century as a heroic enterprise. This situation suggests that two definitions of trade relations coexisted.

The early modern international order in East Asia, which can be categorized as a tribute trade system, began in ancient China. China situated itself as the civilized center of the world, and other states sent envoys with gifts to the Chinese emperor. In return these emissaries could accept gifts. Trade was thus ceremonially organized with political implications based on Sinocentric international order, and tribute-bearing nations were regarded as subordinate countries to China.

However, what should be taken into account about this system is that it was not simply a unitary order, especially in the Ch'ing period. Korea, Japan, and Vietnam also harbored a "Sinocentric" world view in which each nation placed itself at the center (Hamashita 2008:15-21). In this way there were many "centers of self-consciousness" in early modern East Asia. Korea and Vietnam, for instance, provided tribute in their relation with the Ch'ing dynasty. At the same time, they also accepted tribute as a lesser civilized center of the world (Tashiro 1981, Furuta 1995). The Tokugawa shogunate built such relations with Korea, Rykyu (present

[22] Walker states that two centuries of trade with the Matsumae domain "had unravelled the social fabric of Ainu communities and undermined their ability, not to mention their will, to resist Japanese claims to what was once their homeland" (2001:233).

Okinawa prefecture), and Holland. Ceremonial trade with the Ainu is also thought to be of this kind (Toby 1984, Arano 1988).

Pluralism of self-conception and disparities in attitudes toward trade relations were characteristic of early modern East Asia (Masuda 1995). This disagreement did not become a problem; on the contrary, it maintained their relations peacefully. In eighteenth-century Siam-Chi'ng relations, Chinese viceroys and merchants who intermediated between countries tampered with official diplomatic letters to make them acceptable to both sides (*ibid.*). Korea and Japan offer another example. While they formally built equal relations, as was the custom under the Sinocentric world order in which only China was superior, they also recognized themselves as more civilized than, and therefore superior to, each other (Toby 1984, Arano 1988, Miyake 2006[1993], Jung 2006).

Thus in early modern East Asia, it was ceremonial relations that were significant in maintaining the world order, regardless of the individual understanding each state really had of itself. However, as far as the Ainu are concerned, the gap of meaning in terms of trade between the Ainu and the *Wajin* has been little discussed. Rather, the semantic gap between *uymam* and *omemie* was integrated into the historical transition in the same way as the assimilation policy of modern Japan operated upon Ainu language, life, and culture (Sakata 2004, 2008b).

Conclusion: Variants, Realities, Historical Consciousness

I first suggested two story-patterns of trade theme narratives that seem to have opposite attitudes toward trade and relations with the *Wajin*. However, now it can be said that there is a single immanent story and each narrative is its partial avatar. Focusing on some motifs in trade narratives, we encountered corpora integrated by a certain motif regardless of genre. This insight led us to horizons of comparison on an important issue that we as readers/audience should consider. Since stories refer to other stories through common motifs, readers/audience remember related stories linked to the present narrative. In this way, even when focusing on a narrow theme from a certain viewpoint, any story always implies other aspects that should be understood as opening pathways to other narratives.

Based on this approach, we can see that throughout trade narratives, regardless of genre or story-pattern, and even in cases in which evil *Wajin* appeared, stories adhere to the recognition that trade expedition to the *Wajin* town is a heroic activity and that a trade partner should thus be a friend. In this way, it can be said that Ainu trade narratives are based on the principle of reciprocity as a mode of amity-building (Mauss 1925), in contrast to the *Wajin*'s "Sinocentrism."

As concerns the meaning of Ainu-*Wajin* trade compared with historical discourse, what is significant in Ainu oral literature is that variants representing multiformity are not a matter of transition. Rather, their coexistence conjures the historical reality of the period when this trade was conducted. The fact that narratives cited in this article existed in the twentieth century is important. It indicates what trade had been or what it should have been like for the Ainu society. Trade was ever a heroic enterprise and a means of friendship-building with the neighboring *Wajin* (in the Ainu language the *Wajin* is called *sisam,* which means "neighbor"). Based on this idea, they could establish and continue the relation with the *Wajin*. Such built-in ambivalence

maintained peaceful relations, as in other cases in East Asia. Although trade was ceremonially organized, participation in its activities did not mean political defeat or subordination to the Ainu. Rather, serious epistemological damage to the Ainu occurred when ceremonial trade was banned by the Meiji government in the mid-nineteenth century, because it meant the cancellation of friendships they had maintained over centuries. Even so, by maintaining their tradition, the Ainu are safeguarding a historical consciousness that can never be assimilated.

University of Tokyo

References

Ainu Mukei Bunka Densho Hozonkai 1982 — Ainu Mukei Bunka Densho Hozonkai. *Eiyu no monogatari (Stories of Men)*. Sapporo: Ainu Mukei Bunka Densho Hozonkai.

Ainu Minzoku Hakubutsukan 1999 — Ainu Minzoku Hakubutsukan, ed. *Ainu no rekishi to bunka.* Shiraoi: Ainu Minzoku Hakubutsukan.

Arano 1988 — Yasunori Arano. *Kinsei nihon to higashi ajia*. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press.

Batchelor 1890 — John Batchelor. "Specimens of Ainu Folk-lore 8." *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, 18:25-86.

Bateson 1972 — Gregory Bateson. *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology*. San Francisco, CA: Chandler.

Bateson 1979 — _____. *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*. Toronto: Bantam.

Foley 1991 — John Miles Foley. *Immanent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Fujumura 1980 — Hisakazu Fujimura. "Ainu." *Kokubungaku: Kaishaku to Kansho*, 45.12:135-39.

Furuta 1995 — Motoo Furuta. *Betonamu no sekaishi: Chuka sekai kara tonan ajia sekai e (Vietnam in the Context of World History: From Chinese World Order to Joining Southeast Asia)*. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press.

Hamashita 2008 — Takeshi Hamashita. *China, East Asia and the Global Economy: Regional and Historical Perspectives*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Hokkaido Kyoikucho 1983 — Hokkaido Kyoikucho, ed. *Ainu minzoku bunkazai yukar sirizu*, 5. Sapporo: Hokkaido Kyoiku Iinkai.

Hokkaido Kyoikucho 1984 _____. *Ainu minzoku bunkazai yukar sirizu*, 6. Sapporo: Hokkaido Kyoiku Iinkai.

Hokkaido Kyoikucho 1988 _____. *Ainu minzoku bunkazai yukar sirizu*, 10. Sapporo: Hokkaido Kyoiku Iinkai.

Hokkaido Kyoikucho 1989 _____. *Ainu minzoku bunkazai yukar sirizu*, 11. Sapporo: Hokkaido Kyoiku Iinkai.

Hokkaido Kyoikucho 1990 _____. *Ainu minzoku bunkazai yukar sirizu*, 12. Sapporo: Hokkaido Kyoiku Iinkai.

Hokkaido Kyoikucho 1994 _____, ed. *Yae Kuro no densho (2)*. Ainu minzoku bunkazai kosho bungei sirizu, 12. Sapporo: Hokkaido Kyoiku Iinkai.

Hokkaido Kyoikucho 2000 _____. *Tuytak (Mukashigatari)*, 3. Sapporo: Hokkaido Bunkazai Hogo Kyokai.

Hokkaido Kyoikucho 2002 _____. *Tuytak (Mukashigatari)*, 4. Sapporo: Hokkaido Bunkazai Hogo Kyokai.

Hokkaido Shizunai-cho Kyoiku Iinkai 1991 Hokkaido Shizunai-cho Kyoiku Iinkai, ed. *Shizunai chiho no densho*, 1. Shizunai: Shizunaicho Kyodoshi Kenkyukai.

Inagaki 1985 Reiko Inagaki. “Kinsei ezochi ni okeru girei shihai no tokushitsu.” In *Minshu seikatsu to shinko, shiso*. Ed. by Minshushi Kenkyukai. Tokyo: Yuzankaku. pp. 111-30.

Jung 2006 Jang-Sik Jung. *Shikoroku ni miru chosentushinshi no nihon kan: edojidai no niccho kankei*. Tokyo: Akashi Shoten.

Kayano 1988 Shigeru Kayano. *Kamuy yukar to mukashi banashi*. Tokyo: Shogakkan.

Kikuchi 1991 Isao Kikuchi. *Hopposhi no nakano kinsei nihon*. Tokyo: Azekura Shobo.

Kindaichi 1993/1931 Kyosuke Kindaichi. “Yukar gaisetsu.” In *Kindaichi Kyosuke zenshu*, 8. Ed. by Kindaichi Kyosuke Zenshu Henshu Iinkai. Tokyo: Sanseido. pp. 7-336.

Kojima 2010a Kyoko Kojima. “Ainu kosho bungei kara miru koeki.” In *Densho kara saguru Ainu no rekishi*. Ed. by Yuko Honda. Sapporo: Sapporo Daigaku Fuzoku Sogo Kenkyujo. pp. 210-23.

Kojima 2010b _____. "Koeki o meguru Ainu kosho bungei to koeki no kotoba." In *Densho kara saguru Ainu no rekishi*. Ed. by Yuko Honda. Sapporo: Sapporo Daigaku Fuzoku Sogo Kenkyujo. pp. 224-96.

Kubodera 1977 Itsuhiko Kubodera. *Ainu jojishi shinyo seiden no kenkyu*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.

Malgorzata 2009 Zajac Malgorzata. *Chishima Ainu no kiseki*. Urayasu: Sofukan.

Masuda 1995 Erika Masuda. "Rama I no tai shin gaiko (Foreign Policy toward Ch'ing by Rama I)." *Tonan Asia: Rekishi to bunka*, 24:25-48.

Mauss 1925 Marcel Mauss. *Zoyoron (Essai sur le don: Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques)*. Trans. by Teigo Yoshida and Junichi Egawa. Tokyo: Chikuma Gakugei Bunko.

Miyake 2006/1993 Hidetoshi Miyake. *Kinsei no nihon to chosen*. Tokyo: Kodansha Gakujutsu Bunko.

Nakagawa 1989 Hiroshi Nakagawa. "Kosho bungei ni miru Ainu-jin to *Wajin* tono kankei." In *Minzoku sesshoku: Kita no shiten kara*. Ed. by Hoppo Gengo Bunka Kenkyukai. Tokyo: Rokko Shuppan. pp. 73-85.

Nakagawa 1997 _____. *Ainu no monogatari sekai*. Tokyo: Heibonsha.

Namikawa 1992 Kenji Namikawa. *Kinsei nihon to hoppo shakai*. Tokyo: Sanseido.

Okuda 1996 Osami Okuda. "Ainu Oral Literature as Materials for Historical Study." *Bulletin of the Hokkaido Ainu Culture Research Center*, 2:19-31.

Okuda 2002 _____. "Methods and Purpose of the Genre Classification in Ainu Oral Literature." *Kosho-Bungei Kenkyu*, 25:121-33.

Otani 1996 Yoichi Otani. "On the Subject of Onne Paskur." *Kosho-Bungei Kenkyu*, 19:102-13.

Philippi 1979 Donald L. Philippi. *Songs of Gods, Songs of Humans: The Epic Tradition of the Ainu*. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press.

Sakata 2004 Minako Sakata. "The Principal of Urespa in the Land of the Ainu People." *Journal of the History of Hokkaido and Tohokushi Regions of Japan*, 1:2-17.

Sakata 2005 _____. “Ainu Oral Tradition as a Representation of the Past: Uwepeker and Upaskuma.” *Komaba Journal of Area Studies*, 9:70-94.

Sakata 2008a _____. “Ainu kosho bungaku ni okeru seizon no yunitto: uwepeker ga teiki suru Ainu-*Wajin* kankei.” In *Koe to katachi no Ainu, Ryukyu shi*. Ed. by Naoki Yoshinari. Tokyo: Shinwasha. pp. 11-40.

Sakata 2008b _____. “Uymam to omemie ni miru futatsu no ninshikiron.” In *Hokuto ajia no nakano Ainu sekai*. Ed. by Susumu Emori, Masashi Oguchi, and Hirosato Sawato. Tokyo: Iwata Shoten. pp. 185-218.

Tamura 2008 Masato Tamura. “Karafuto Ainu no ‘hikiage’.” In *Nihon teikoku o meguru jinko ido no kokusai shakaigaku*. Ed. by Shinzo Ran. Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan. pp. 463-502.

Tashiro 1981 Kazui Tashiro. *Kinsei niccho tsukoboekishi no kenkyu (Studies on the History of the Diplomatic Relations and Trade between Japan and Korea in 17th and 18th Centuries)*. Tokyo: Sobunsha.

Toby 1984 Ronald Toby. *State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan: Asia in the Development of the Tokugawa Bakufu*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Walker 2001 Brett L. Walker. *The Conquest of Ainu Lands: Ecology and Culture in Japanese Expansion, 1590-1800*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Oral Tradition, 26/1 (2011): 191-220

Pir Sultan Abdal:
Encounters with Persona in Alevi Lyric Song

Paul Koerbin

Encounters in Text

In his 1997 Nobel Prize lecture, *Contra jogulatores obliquentes*, Italian dramatist Dario Fo makes an oblique reference to a famous medieval Ottoman "jester."[1] The "jester" is not mentioned by name but rather in the context of the murder of 35 artists and writers in July 1993 when religious bigots set alight the Madımak Hotel in the eastern Turkish city of Sivas.[2] Those killed were there to participate in the Pir Sultan Abdal *etkinlikleri* (festivities).[3] The "jester" Fo refers to is the eponymous identity in whose memory the festival is held, the Alevi dervish, poet, rebel, and martyr Pir Sultan Abdal. Fo's reference to the Sivas massacre was a significant statement about this incident in an international forum; but it also demonstrates the misunderstanding of the persona of Pir Sultan Abdal when refracted through time, language, and the chasm that beckons when peering askance into the opaqueness of an esoteric culture. Pir Sultan Abdal's persona, as perceived and expressed by contemporary intellectuals and artists, was fundamental to the Sivas events,[4] but Fo's commendable reference gives no sense of this potent and complex persona. Indeed it even distorts and trivializes it.

Pir Sultan Abdal dominates the Turkish Alevi-Bektaşi oral lyric tradition in his influence through text and persona and is counted as one of the seven great bards, the *yedi ulu ozan*, of

---

[1] Fo uses the term *giullare*, meaning a jester, buffoon, or more generally minstrel, but not poet or bard, which would be more accurate though less in keeping with the theme of his Nobel Prize speech. In the official English version of the lecture, "jester" is used (Fo 1997).

[2] The number of victims of the Sivas event is variously given as 33, 35, and 37. Alevis generally acknowledge the murder of 33 *canlar* or "Alevi souls" and also acknowledge two hotel employees who died in the Madımak Hotel. At the memorial erected in the village of Banaz, the 33 are named and the two employees are acknowledged but not named. The remaining two victims making up the 37 died outside the hotel.

[3] The Pir Sultan Abdal festival was first held in June 1979, shortly after the completion and erection of a large statue of Pir Sultan (by Cahit Koççoban) on the hill above the village of Banaz. After the second festival in 1980 and following the military coup in September of that year, the festival was abandoned until it was re-established in 1992. The 1993 festival, the fourth one, included events planned to be held in Sivas on July 2 and in Banaz on July 3 and 4. The festival has continued to be held annually in Banaz since its re-establishment.

[4] This persona was not specifically the catalyst for the riots, even though a newly erected statue of Pir Sultan was torn down in the riot.

Alevi-Bektaşi ritual tradition.[5] His *deyiş*,[6] along with those of Yunus Emre and Karacaoğlan,[7] are commonly regarded as the epitome of the genre and together form the most significant and influential canon of Turkish folk literature. While Yunus is the universal mystic, even humanist (Halman 1972) and Karacaoğlan the incorrigible wandering lover, Pir Sultan Abdal presents a complex persona encompassing the mystical expression of sixteenth-century[8] antinomianism together with a personal story of integrity and betrayal. This faceted persona has provided, in the texts attributed to him and identified as such by the self-naming device (*mahlas*), the substance for the production of interpretative works and discourse, especially in recent decades.

The significance of the figure of Pir Sultan Abdal can be understood from the number of *deyiş* attributed to him and, perhaps more importantly, from the influence that both his lyrical works and his persona maintain over Alevi-Bektaşi ritual and, especially, social and political culture from his home and heartland in Anatolia to the Balkans and beyond to the modern Alevi disapora in Europe and elsewhere. No other poet has quite the reach or engenders the continued engagement of scholars, writers, musicians, and social and cultural activists as does Pir Sultan Abdal. This profile makes him a figure of interest and fascination. The persona of Pir Sultan Abdal might be understood as perceived through a prism: from one perspective there is a focused, iconic persona; from other perspectives we may view the refracted strands of illumination that serve to build that persona. Such strands encompass the legendary personal story of steadfastness, betrayal, and martydom; the elusive historical identity; the historic milieu from which he emerged (being the formative period for modern Alevi-ism); the transmission and development over time of a large body of *deyiş* and of a poetic identity through the use of the self-naming convention (*mahlas*); and the appropriation of the persona for the service of identity politics and artistic creativity in modern times.

Pir Sultan Abdal emerged from the esoteric and guarded community of Alevi ritual and culture into a wider public scrutiny shortly after the establishment of the Turkish Republic in

---

[5] This bardic tradition is frequently referred to, but see for example Ulusoy n.d. and Clarke 1999:60. The other bards are Nesîmî (d. 1418), Hatayi (d. 1524), Fuzûlî (d. 1556), Yemînî (fl. early sixteenth century), Virânî (fl. early sixteenth century), and Kul Himmet (fl. late sixteenth century). Arguments can be made for the significance of other poets, notably Hatayi (Shah Ismail) in regard to his influence on Alevi-Bektaşi ritual (Gallagher 2004). Yet judged by popular and scholarly interest as demonstrated through book production, associations, recordings, and performance, Pir Sultan is clearly the most pervasive of these poets.

[6] *Deyiş* (plural: *deyişler*) is the general term for the esoteric lyric verse attributed to Alevi poets. Throughout I will use this term interchangeably with poem, song, verse, or lyric. I use the singular form rather than plural when referring to the class of lyric or body of works.

[7] The most scholarly editions of Yunus Emre's poetry in English are those of Grace Martin Smith (1993) and Talat Sait Halman (1972). Unlike Pir Sultan Abdal, Karacaoğlan has received the benefit of a small edition of versions in English (Karabaş and Yarnall 1996). A welcome addition to the very few English versions of Alevi-Bektaşi folk lyric is the small but usefully broad selection of translations by Jennifer Ferraro and Latif Bolat (2007).

[8] All dates refer to the Gregorian calendar Common Era (CE).

1923.[9] Besim Atalay included a number of texts among the *nefes*[10] published in his 1924 book *Bektaşilik ve edebiyat* (Atalay 1991), the earliest work on Alevi-Bektaşi-s published in republican Turkey. In 1928 Mehmet Fuad Köprülü published a short "life" of Pir Sultan Abdal in *Hayat mecmuası* (Köprülü 1991), followed in 1929 by Sadettin Nüzhet's publication of the first substantial collection of poems (Ergun 1929). The fact that such a collection[11] could be put together attests to the existence of a significant number of works attributable to Pir Sultan Abdal in oral tradition at the end of the Ottoman Empire. Much of the content of this and subsequent collections was obtained from *cönk* and *mecmua*, manuscript sources belonging to notable Alevi-Bektaşi-s that were maintained so as to record collections of texts of importance to them or their communities. Indeed, although these manuscript notebooks represent a written source, their purpose was primarily as a mnemonic to support the practice of ritual and the spiritual development and understanding of the compiler. They are best understood as forming part of the oral tradition from which the verses arise (Başgöz 1998:41; Avcı 2006:13).

Since the publication of Ergun's book, notable additions to the published collections of Pir Sultan *deyiş*—obtained particularly through fieldwork in the Sivas region[12]—have been made by Abdülbâki Gölpınarlı and Pertav Naili Boratav (1943), Cahit Öztelli (1971), and İbrahim Aslanoğlu (1984). The most complete collections of Pir Sultan Abdal lyrics now amount to more than 400 poems. Becuase we have no autograph or near-contemporary manuscript, it is not possible to verify the authenticity of the lyrics in regard to actual authorship. Some texts attributed to Pir Sultan Abdal clearly could not have been composed by him (for example, the lyrics describing his death and its aftermath). This is indeed one of the most important aspects of this tradition to understand: that the attribution of a lyric to Pir Sultan Abdal is not ultimately a matter of unambiguous authorship, but is rather a matter of Pir Sultan Abdal texts reflecting the perception of his persona by the community and individuals who have maintained, perpetuated, and made use of his songs. While the attribution of the texts to historic identities is a concern to many scholars, the ambiguities of the tradition do not necessarily trouble those working or living within the Alevi tradition. For example, Dertli Divani (an Alevi *dede*, a poet and recording artist)

---

[9] Since the late 1990s a small but wide-ranging number of publications concerning Alevis has appeared in English. Clarke 1999 provides the most accessible overview of history, beliefs, and issues and offers a good summation of Turkish views. Shankland 2003 brings an anthropological perspective and is particularly good on details of ritual. Collections edited by Tord Olsson et al. (1998), Paul J. White and Joost Jongerden (2003), and Hege White Markussen (2005) provide a broad coverage of issues, particularly in respect to the expression of Alevi identity. Sökefeld 2008 deals with Alevis in Germany and their relationship to movements asserting Alevi identity. The small publication by Ali Yaman and Aykan Erdemir (2006) is particularly valuable as a work written by Alevis associated with one of the most prominent Alevi organizations in Turkey. Şener 2009, although poorly translated, provides an additional Alevi perspective from a prominent writer on Alevi issues.

[10] *Nefes* is literally "breath." Here this may be understood as synonymous with *deyiş*; however, in certain contexts the term may have the more specific connotation of "devotional song." It is the preferred term among the urban and Balkan Bektaşi.

[11] Ergun's book includes 105 *deyiş* texts.

[12] This fieldwork includes collecting trips to Banaz, the village 45 kilometers north of Sivas where Pir Sultan is generally thought to have lived.

can say that if people admire Pir Sultan and use that *mahlas,* and Pir Sultan earned that person's love, and that person follows Pir Sultan, then the song can be accepted as Pir Sultan's.[13]

The earliest appearance of texts attributed to Pir Sultan can be found in the *Menâkıbu'l-Esrar Behcetü'l-Ahrâr*[14] composed by Bisâtî in the late sixteenth century (Bisâtî 2003).[15] Early manuscript copies of the *Menâkıb*, at least according to that consulted by Gölpınarlı (Gölpınarlı and Boratav 1943), appear to already include lyrics with different forms for the *mahlas*: that is, both "Pir Sultan" and "Pir Sultan Abdal."[16]

The persona of Pir Sultan Abdal has motivated a vast literary and dramatic output. This includes the numerous collections of poems, novelistic treatments such as those by Orhan Ural (1990) and Battal Pehlivan (1993), poetic treatments by Zeki Büyüktanır (1998) and Mehmet Başaran (2002), and dramatic treatments, notably Erol Toy's 1969 play and the 1973 feature film by Remzi Jöntürk starring Fikret Hakan based on the legend as told by the Divriği *aşık* Mahmut Erdal (1999:37).

The (Re-)Construction of Historical Identity

Despite the fact that there are no known contemporary documents that definitely identify him, there is no compelling reason to doubt the existence of a historical identity behind the persona of Pir Sultan Abdal who lived in the sixteenth century. We know, for example, of Shah Ismail, the first Safavid Shah of Iran, as a historical identity who also composed lyric poetry in Turkish and that *deyiş* attributed to him with the *mahlas* "Hatayi" have been maintained in Alevi oral tradition.[17] Further, there is no tradition of inventing the composers of *deyiş* among the Alevi. The importance and authority attributed to the *aşıklar* as the composers and transmitters of Alevi ritual culture argues against such possiblity.

Most published editions concerned with Pir Sultan address, in greater or lesser detail and conviction, the issue of his historical location.[18] The attempts to locate the historical identity are necessarily based, in large part, on finding plausible connections between known historical

---

[13] Personal communication with Dertli Divani, July 2, 2002, Dikmen, Ankara.

[14] This work is also known as the *İmam Cafer Buyruğu* or the *Büyük Buyruğu*.

[15] The published edition cited is in fact from a manuscript copied around 1612 or 1613 (Bisâtî 2003:8). The text of one of the two *deyiş* from this manuscript attributed to Pir Sultan is included in the Appendix along with my English translation.

[16] Regrettably, Gölpınarlı did not publish this manuscript, but he does indicate elsewhere (2007:654) that it was copied from a manuscript dated 1017 in the *Hijri* calendar (around 1608-09).

[17] On the influence of the lyric works of Shah Ismail in Alevi-Bektaşi culture, see especially Gallagher 2004 and, as Gallagher notes, see the early evidence of this influence in proto-Alevi *kızılbaş* ritual in Michele Membré's account of his mission to the court of Shah Tahmasp I in 1539-1542 (1999:42).

[18] Some scholars, for example İsmail Kaygusuz (1995) and Mehmet Bayrak (1984), go to some lengths to establish plausible chronologies. Ali Haydar Avcı (2004 and 2006) provides the most substantial treatment of the issues of historical location, while Esat Korkmaz (2005b:24-25) gives a useful summary of the prevailing views.

circumstances and the content of his songs, along with a concordance of his putative life with the historical record and scraps of group biographical data—suggestive of, if not strictly, a prosopographical approach. Specifically, this comes down to two fundamental contentions: that Pir Sultan was involved in rebellious activity against the Ottoman authorities (in support of the Safavid Shah) when such activity was fervent during the sixteenth century; and that he was executed by an Ottoman governor called, according to legend, Hızır Paşa. To this account might be added the documentary evidence of the *Menâkıbu'l-Esrar Behcetü'l-Ahrâr* in which, in early seventeenth-century manuscripts, we have the first record of lyric works attributed to Pir Sultan. Since the other poets included in this *buyruk,* such as Hatâyi (Shah Ismail), Nesimi, and Kaygusuz Abdal, are among the major Alevi-Bektaşi poets, it would seem that Pir Sultan's name and reputation was sufficiently established by this time to be included among such company.

It is not within the scope of this essay to go into the arguments for or against any particular dating in detail. However, it should be emphasized that there is a persistent interest among scholars in locating Pir Sultan Abdal in a time and circumstance that reflects a desire to reach a historicist interpretation of the persona. This is focused on establishing the date of his death (from which his approximate period of birth and the years he was active may also then be deduced) and the likely uprising or insurgent activities in which he may have participated. Other speculations arise from situating the historical person, such as his possible travels, particularly to the Balkans[19] and Iran.

An evocative record of the times in which the historical Pir Sultan Abdal lived is found in the *mühimme defterleri* (records of significant issues), which chronicle the orders sent from the Ottoman Divan to local authorities (*sancak bey*-s, *beylerbeyi*-s) to deal with insurgent activities. These records commence in the mid-sixteenth century, and a number of the records for the later part of the century are orders that deal with insurgent pro-Safavid *kızılbaş* activity. Such records are often brief and tantalizing, opening the door, if only fleetingly, to such activity in Anatolia.[20] Not surprisingly, some scholars have identified possible connections with Pir Sultan Abdal in the *mühimme defterleri*. Though there is no specific mention of Pir Sultan, Saim Savaş (2002) suggests a certain Şeyh Haydar as a possible historical Pir Sultan Abdal, noting the fact that Pir Sultan's real name—according to tradition and the evidence of some poems—was Haydar. Şeyh Haydar appeared in 1585 in a village near Amasya, apparently after a long absence, claiming to have been with the (Safavid) Shah and to have raised 40,000 men from the region for his cause. Şeyh Haydar was captured by Ahmet Çavuş and imprisoned in Çorum (Savaş 2002 and Imber 1979).

Others have suggested the activities of the so-called "False Ismail" as a plausible fifth column movement with which Pir Sultan Abdal may have been associated. This "False Ismail" (*düzmece* or *sahte* Şah İsmail) suddenly appears in the *mühimme defterleri* in the middle of 1578 and disappears equally mysteriously around January 1579. "False Ismail" claimed to be

---

[19] Turgut Koca (1990) proposes a distinct and earlier, fifteenth-century identity located in the Balkans who he refers to as "Serezli Pir Sultan," a proposition that Avcı (2006:318-23) dismisses by noting Koca's apparent confusion with a Macedonian Bektaşi leader Piri Baba.

[20] C. H. Imber (1979) gives a detailed account of these records in reference to the subjugation of the *kızılbaş* in the sixteenth century.

Shah Ismail; he attracted a large following particularly in the Bozok (Yozgat) region and may have been acting independently or as an agent of the Safavids. The "False Ismail" episode does give a plausible picture of the sort of activity that Pir Sultan Abdal may well have been involved with or sympathetic to, though we cannot say for certain that he was. Pir Sultan is not mentioned by name in relation to the "False Ismail" events, though one notable follower (*halife*), Yunus, is indeed identified by name (Imber 1979:251-54). The absence of any mention of Pir Sultan from the *mühimme defterleri* may lend support to an earlier dating of his period of activity, especially during the time of or shortly after the Kalendar Şah revolt in the late 1520s.[21]

A more remarkable assertion is that of Erdoğan Çınar (2007), who suggests Constantine Silvanus (the seventh-century Paulician) as the source of the Pir Sultan Abdal identity.[22] The lack of any contemporary documents to identify the historical Pir Sultan behind the persona leaves open the possibility of all manner of speculation upon improbable identities. The name Pir Sultan Abdal is in fact a quite generic appellation, if particularly exalted. *Pir* carries the meaning of a patron saint or the founder and leader of a *tarikat* (dervish order) or, more simply, a spiritual leader.[23] The designation of *Sultan* connotes a person of high standing within the Alevi-Bektaşi *yol* (path) or *tarikat*. The basic meaning of *Abdal* is "dervish," but it may also refer specifically to one belonging to one of the "mystical anarchist" antinomian groups active in sixteenth-century Anatolia (Karamustafa 1993), the *Rum Abdallar* (Abdals of Anatolia).[24] John Kingley Birge (1994:251) also notes a formal mystical meaning in respect to *abdal*, connoting the ability to change from a physical state to a spiritual state. It is, then, perhaps not so remarkable that one encounters references in the historical record to other shadowy "Pir Sultans." It is more remarkable that they are indeed elusive, and it is all the more tempting because of their scarcity to look for some connection to the Pir Sultan Abdal of legend no matter how tenuous. For example, is there anything to be learned from the evidence of Mustawfi, a fourteenth-century source, who mentions a certain Pir Sultan as being the son of the Ilkhanid Rashid al-Din, the Persian historian and the brother of the vezir Ghiyath al-Din who, along with his brother, was executed in 1336 (Morton 1999)?[25] An even more remote possibility is a mysterious saint in Baluchistan called Pir Sultan who is reported as providing holy protection and is said to have

---

[21] Halil Inalcik (1973:195), for example, specifically relates Pir Sultan's verses to the period of Ottoman-Safavid conflict in 1534-35.

[22] Çınar's attractively produced and illustrated book was published in April 2007, and the next published monograph on Pir Sultan by the Marxist writer and artist Suha Bulut, published in December 2007, takes issue immediately with Çınar's claims in its opening pages, thus demonstrating the active discourse in respect to interpretations of Pir Sultan's formative identity.

[23] This and the following definitions follow Birge (1994) and Korkmaz (2005a). The latter gives a particularly detailed consideration of *pir*.

[24] In Pir Sultan Abdal's *mahlas* it may perhaps even be suggested that "Abdal" is descriptive and used adjectivally in respect to the nominative Pir Sultan.

[25] The reference to the execution of this Pir Sultan is tantalizing in respect to the legendary demise of Pir Sultan Abdal (see below in regard to the legendary story of Pir Sultan Abdal).

rendered innocuous all the snakes in the area (Tate 1909:46), also giving his name to the great mountain Kuh-i-Sultan that is claimed to have engulfed the saint when he died (19).

The *Mahlas* Convention and the Social Maintenance of Persona

A striking aspect of the Alevi-Bektaşi *deyiş*—and perhaps most readily dismissed or overlooked because of its ubiquity within the form—is the use of the self-naming convention, *mahlas*,[26] in which the poet ostensibly identifies himself (or herself) within the final, signature verse. While it could not be considered a widespread convention in other poetic traditions, self-naming is common in Persian and Ottoman lyric poetry (Losensky 1998; Andrews 1985) and, in a less pervasive manner, in the *troubadour* poetry of twelfth-century Provence—for example in the poetry of Marcabru (Kimmelman 1999)—and in the French lyrics of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century *trouvères* such as Gace Brulé and Blondel de Nesle (Rosenberg 2004).[27] The latter are courtly traditions displaying a stylized self-conscious sensibility in which it is possible to detect the overt self-promotion of the artist or even a nascent modern literary persona (Kimmelman 1999). Samuel N. Rosenberg (2004:57-58) places the introduction of the poet's signature in the lyrics of Gace Brulé in the context of the prosodic and semantic function of closure and summation of the *envoi*, suggesting that it also marks the limit of the performer's assumption of the poem's first person voice and a rupture of the fusion of poetic persona and performer; and, in the case of Blondel de Nesle, a notable insistence on self-naming that suggests self-centeredness (66). Walter G. Andrews (1985:170), referring to Ottoman lyric song, is right to discourage a simple dismissal of a practice that is so common and suggests that the *tahallus*[28] (*mahlas*) is a "forceful reminder of the dramatic situation" that may include self-praise and an assertion of competitive superiority by the poet. While Andrews (2002:36) proposes that "we will never really understand the Ottoman poetry of the elites until we understand the Ottoman poetry of the masses and the reverse,"[29] I would add that the ubiquity of the *mahlas*/*tahallus* in both these poetic traditions suggests this device as a focus for comparative study particularly in regard to its function in the respective traditions.[30]

---

[26] This self-naming convention is also sometimes referred to in Turkish as *takma ad* or *tapşırma*, the latter particularly in respect to the Sunni *aşık* tradition of competitive performance encounters (*aşık karşılaşmaları*), where it carries the inherent meaning of "delivering" or "commending" oneself to another.

[27] The convention also appears in other mystical poetic traditions, including the *ginans* of the Indian Satpanth Isma'ili saint, Pir Shams (Kassam 1995).

[28] In respect to Persian and Ottoman lyrics the self-naming convention is variously referred to as *takhallus*, *tahallus, tahallüs*, and *makhlas* or *maxlas*.

[29] The subtle, even covert, relationship between high Ottoman poetic culture and traditional expressive culture, as exemplified by the Alevis, in sustaining an Ottoman ideological ethos of compartmentalized groups is the subject of a fascinating study by Walter Andrews and Irene Markoff (1987).

[30] While the literature on the *mahlas*/*tahallus* remains scant, in addition to the works of Paul E. Losensky and Andrews already cited, see also Arberry 1946, Skalmowski 1990, de Bruijn 1999, and Meisami 1990.

In the oral tradition of Alevi lyric song it is through the social function of maintaining a community of associative personas that the persistence and strength of the *mahlas* may, with further research, be revealed more deeply.[31] In the oral tradition this self-naming convention takes on a more socially faceted and ambiguous function rather than a mere convention, rhetorical self-reference, or residual technical device,[32] and more subtle than the self-promotion of poetic prowess. While the *mahlas* may indeed be seen as essentially a signing device used to assert the authorship or attribution of the poem, when this strategy is perpetuated in the communal expressive context of the oral tradition it is invested with both the potential to function as the assertion of transmitted and remembered authority and the potential for the creative and interpretive possibility offered by the expressive ambiguities of orally transmitted personas. It is my assertion that the *mahlas* is in fact an indispensable and perhaps even determining factor in the function, persistence, and nature of this poetic, mystical song tradition through its referencing, regeneration, and re-interpretation of the expressive authorities of that tradition.

It is clear that the *mahlas* can be an ambiguous or malleable device and *deyişler* attributed to one poet on the basis of the *mahlas* may also be attributed to another by changing the *mahlas*. However, this should not be understood to be a matter of whim or mischief. Some *deyiş* may be able to be attributed to either Pir Sultan Abdal or Şah Hatayi,[33] for example, since they emerge from a common milieu. And certainly it is possible for later compositions to be attributed to earlier poets because they were composed deliberately with the perceived understanding of the earlier poets' works or they suit received poetic identities. It is the involvement of the tradition—that is, those who maintain and construct the tradition—that affirms and creatively develops the poetic identity. The conventional use of the *mahlas*, combined with the themes and concerns of the text (particularly in respect to ritual and belief, authoritative figures, and identity) thus maintains these personas in a social context. For this reason (though there are certainly others), the attempts to specifically identify multiple identities for Pir Sultan, the notion of the so-called "Pir Sultan Abdallar" ("Pir Sultan Abdals"), as well as distinguishing them in large part by the form of the *mahlas*, seem ultimately unnecessary and unsupportable. The highly respected Sivas folklorist İbrahim Aslanoğlu (1920-95) is the most influential in respect to associating specific lyrics (with specific *mahlas* forms) with distinct authorial identities. His identification of six distinct Pir Sultan Abdals[34] (Aslanoğlu 1984) is attractive in its neatness and certainly influential, being adopted by scholars such as Asım

---

[31] In respect to this proposition, interpretation of the function of the *mahlas* in Alevi lyric that employs Thomas A. DuBois' (2006) typology of interpretive axes (specifically the associative axis) may prove instructive.

[32] The self-naming convention in respect to Persian poetry can be related back to the rhetorical transitional device of Arabic origin (de Bruijn 1998).

[33] Mehmet Fuad Köprülü noted this in 1928 (1991:7) and Haydar Kaya (1999:56f.) lists twenty such examples.

[34] The six include: Pir Sultan, Pir Sultan Abdal, Pir Sultan'ım Haydar, Pir Sultan Abdal (Halil İbrahim), Abdal Pir Sultan, and Pir Sultan Abdal (*Aruz Şairi*).

Bezirci[35] (d. 1993) and others since. Aslanoğlu's work is serious, worthy, and surely valuable if for no other reason than to demonstrate the unsustainability of the conclusion, as other scholars have shown.[36] Whether there are six or more contributors to the canon of Pir Sultan Abdal *deyiş* is not the critical point, since whatever the identities of the poets who contributed to the canon, within the tradition in which these songs have been maintained the identity of Pir Sultan Abdal continues to be perceived as a single persona. Even the scholars and anthologists who support the concept of multiple Pir Sultans seem reluctant to fully commit to their assertion and so deconstruct the persona, continuing to include in their collections *deyiş* under the various forms of the *mahlas*.

The *mahlas* remains an aspect of Turkish folk literature that has received little detailed and analytical attention[37] even though it is the basis upon which the prolific collection and anthologizing of Turkish folk poetry (*halk şiirleri*) is conducted and remains fundamental to the understanding of the poetic identity at the center of such collections. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to consider the *mahlas* in detail, my purpose is, in part, to highlight the *mahlas* in the Alevi lyric tradition as a convention that, rather than being lightly dismissed, requires and will reward greater scholarly attention.

The Legend of Pir Sultan Abdal

The legendary story of Pir Sultan Abdal is understood from songs that are part of the Pir Sultan Abdal tradition as well as from folk legends, the latter collected particularly from the Sivas region. The following gives an outline of the essentials of the story.[38]

---

[35] Bezirci was one of the victims killed at the Madımak Otel in the 1993 Sivas riots.

[36] See Avcı 2004:163ff. for a detailed response to the "Pir Sultan Abdallar" assertion.

[37] The attention that has been given to the *mahlas* in Turkey has focused overwhelmingly on Ottoman elite literary tradition and cataloging of names; see Yılıdırım 2006, Semih 1993, and Çalık 1999. Works that have considered the *mahlas* in popular tradition include Elçin 1997 and D. Kaya 1998.

[38] The story is recounted in most of the books devoted to Pir Sultan and even expanded into novel form in Pehlivan 1993 and Ural 1990. For simplicity, the version given here largely follows Fuat 1999 and Öztelli 1971. Pertev Naili Boratav draws on his valuable field research undertaken in 1939 in the Sivas region, including in Banaz for the best documented account of the folk legend (Gölpınarlı and Boratav 1943), from which many have subsequently drawn.

According to legend and song, Pir Sultan's family came originally from Yemen and was descended from Imam Ali's grandson, the fourth Imam[39] Zeynel-Abidin.[40] His family settled in Banaz north of Sivas in the shadow of Yıldız Dağ (Star Mountain). Pir Sultan's original name was Haydar.

One day when the seven-year-old Haydar was pasturing his father's sheep near Yildiz Dağ he fell asleep and began to dream. In his dream he saw a white-bearded old man holding liquor (*içki*) in one hand and an apple in the other. Haydar first took the liquor and drank; then, after taking the apple and seeing that the palm of the old man's hand was a gleaming green, he understood that this man before him was Hacı Bektaş Veli. In the dream Hacı Bektaş Veli gave Haydar the name Pir Sultan. Thus he found himself among the *erenler*, "those on the path seeking truth," playing and singing his poems with the name Pir Sultan, and his fame became widespread.

Some time later, in the village of Sofular, located between Sivas and Hafik, there lived a certain Hızır who, hearing of Pir Sultan's fame, ventured to Banaz. Hızır spent seven years with Pir Sultan (for some time as his *mürid,* or disciple); then one day he came to the Pir asking for his favor and advice as to what post (*makam*) he should eventually assume. Pir Sultan predicts that Hızır would become a great man (*paşa*) who would one day return to hang him.

In due course Hızır goes to Istanbul and with Pir Sultan's support he continues there and becomes a *paşa*. Finally he becomes the *Vezir* (governor) of Sivas, where he gains a reputation for suppressing the poor, eating unlawful food (*haram*), and dishonesty. At this time in Sivas there lived two judges (*kadı*) also known for unlawful indulgence (eating *haram*). Their names were Kara Kadı (Black Judge) and Sarı Kadı (Yellow Judge). Pir Sultan gives the same names, *karakadı* and *sarıkadı*, to his two dogs. Hearing of this action, the judges have Pir Sultan brought to Sivas for questioning, whereby Pir Sultan says to them that his dogs are better than them because unlike the judges they do not eat *haram* food. And to prove it, Pir Sultan challenges the judges to a test. The town's worthies (*hacılar*, *hocalar*) prepare a pot of *helal* (rightful) food and a pot of *haram* food. The judges sit down and eat of the *haram* food while Pir Sultan's dogs do not go near it but go straight to the *helal* food. The worthies declare that the good dogs prevailed over the bad judges. On this event Pir Sultan composes and sings the song beginning, "Koca başlı koca kadı" ("The fat-headed old judge").

Meanwhile a *fetva* (decree) is declared by the Sultan forbidding the mention of the name of the (Safavid) Shah and giving orders to kill those followers of Ali (the *kızılbaş*). Pir Sultan

---

[39] That is, the fourth Imam of Shi'ite tradition.

[40] Alternatively, and perhaps more plausibly, it is recounted that Pir Sultan's family came from the Horasan region (Khorasan) in northeastern Iran, a place noted for its strong connection to Turkmen Sufic and esoteric (*batını*) dervish traditions and the birthplace of the Bektaşi patron saint Hacı Bektaş Veli. Boratav, visiting Banaz in 1939, reports that he was shown the millstone (*taş*) reputedly brought by Pir Sultan from Horasan (Gölpınarlı and Boratav 1943:34). Tahir Kutsi Makal (1999:42 and 1977:68), visiting Banaz four decades later, reports villagers saying this stone was brought by the Pir from Yemen by horse. Aşık Banazlı Nuri (Nuri Kılıç, also known as Aşık Deryanî, d. 1997) tried to unravel the mystery of Pir Sultan's family origin for Makal by saying all Turks come from Central Asia through the mixing pot (*harman yeri*, literally "threshing place") of Horasan, but from the perspective of belief (*ibadet*) and essence (*mana*) they come from Yemen, Hijaz, Mosul, Damascus, and Bagdad (Makal 1999:44). The stone can still be seen in Banaz.

records this event in the song beginning, "Fetva vermiş koca başlı kör Müftü" ("So the dim fat-headed Mufti has passed judgment"). Pir Sultan rises to this challenge and makes it clear he will not abandon his devotion to the Shah and sings the song that starts, "Padişah katlime ferman dilese" ("If the Sultan desires an order for my murder"). As Pir Sultan begins to stir up trouble, Hızı Paşa sends for Pir Sultan and tries to treat his former *şeyh* (teacher) well, placing good food before him. But Pir Sultan is not swayed and tells Hızır Paşa that he (Hızır) has left the truth path (*yol*), eaten *haram* food, and stolen the inheritance of orphans. Pir Sultan says he will not eat and not even his dogs would eat, and to prove this he calls to his dogs to come from Banaz—a distance of some forty-five kilometers! Hızır Paşa becomes angry and casts Pir Sultan, his former spiritual master, into the prison at Sivas's citadel Toprakkale.

But Hızır Paşa remains uneasy and after a time he brings Pir Sultan before him again and says that if Pir Sultan will sing three songs without mentioning the Shah he will pardon him. In response, Pir Sultan does indeed sing three songs but entwines all three from beginning to end with many references to the Shah. These are the songs beginning, "Hızır Paşa bizi berdar etmeden" ("Before Hızır Paşa hangs us"), "Kul olayım kalem tutan eline" ("I am a slave to the hand holding the pen"), and "Karşıdan görünen ne güzel yayla" ("How beautiful the plateau over there appears"). Hızır Paşa is enraged by Pir Sultan's response and orders him to be hanged. And so a gallows is erected in a place in Sivas called Keçibulan.

As Pir Sultan goes to his place of execution, he sings the song that starts, "Bize de Banaz'da Pir Sultan derler" ("They call us in Banaz Pir Sultan"). Hızır Paşa orders the populace to stone Pir Sultan while he proceeds to the gallows and commands death for anyone who does not follow this order. At this time, Pir Sultan's closest friend (*musahib*), Ali Baba, is troubled at what to do and so he casts a rose as though it were a stone. In response to this act Pir Sultan sings the song beginning, "Şu kanlı zalimin ettiği işler" ("The works of that bloody tyrant"),[41] expressing the fact that he is wounded greatly by this dissembling act while the stones that the strangers throw do not touch him.

The next morning there is much talk in the coffeehouses of Sivas. Someone says "Hızır Paşa hanged Pir Sultan," while another counters: "Impossible, I saw him this morning on the Koçhilar road, in Seyfebeli." Another questions: "How can this be? I saw him this morning on the Malatya road, on the Kardeşler Pass." Someone replies: "You are mistaken, I saw him this morning on the Yenihan road on the Şahna Pass." To which still another says: " I saw him this morning on the Tavra Narrows." So the people get up and go to the gallows to look. There they see Pir Sultan's *hırka* (dervish cloak) hanging on the gallows, but he is gone. Hızır Paşa's watchmen race out after him and come to the Kızılırmak (Red River), where they see Pir Sultan who has crossed over a bridge to the far bank of the river. Noticing the watchmen, Pir Sultan calls out to the bridge to bend, which it does; it then sinks into the water so the watchmen are left on the other side. Pir Sultan then goes to the Shah in Horasan and sings the songs beginning "İptıda bir sofu Şah'a varınca" ("At first a devotee upon reaching the Shah") and "Diken arasında bir gül açıldı" ("A rose opened among the thorns"). From Horasan he goes to Ardabil where he dies and is buried.

---

[41] The full text along with my English translation is included in the Appendix.

Pir Sultan is believed to have had three sons—Seyyit Ali Sultan, Pir Mehmet, and Er Gaip Sultan (Pir Gaip)—and one daughter, Sanem, to whom a famous lament (*ağıt*) on her father's death is attributed:[42]

Pir Sultan kızıydım ben de Banaz'da
Kanlı yaş akıttım baharda güzde
Dedemi astılar kanlı Sivas'ta
Darağacı ağlar Pir Sultan deyü

I am Pir Sultan's daughter and in Banaz
I shed bloody tears in spring and autumn
They hung my master in bloody Sivas
The gallows tree weeps, crying Pir Sultan

The Personal as Universal Theme

A theme that emerges from most presentations of the legend of the life of Pir Sultan Abdal is that of the intimate personal story focusing on his resilience and steadfastness in his time of travail at the hands of his persecutor and ultimately executioner, Hızır Paşa. A significant element of this story is the relationship of Pir Sultan Abdal and Hızır Paşa, since the latter was formerly a favored disciple of Pir Sultan Abdal. The story is not merely one of oppression, rebellion, and downfall—it is personal and is raised to universal understanding because of this fact. It is the act of personal betrayal by Hızır Paşa that elevates the mythology of Pir Sultan Abdal's steadfastness: "Dönen dönsün ben dönmezen yolumdan" ("Let the one who turns away, turn, but I will not turn from my path") sings Pir Sultan. This is the great betrayal of Hızır Paşa: that he had turned from the true path. Similarly, in the famous song "Şu kanlı zalimin ettiği işler,"[43] it is the dissembling act of Pir Sultan Abdal's *murid*, Ali Baba, that is presented as the wounding betrayal. It is this inner integrity that is betrayed by Ali Baba.

Brief Notes on the Form and Subject of Pir Sultan Abdal *Deyiş*

The *deyiş* attributed to Pir Sultan Abdal are composed almost exclusively in one of two forms associated with Turkish folk verse: *koşma* (with eleven syllables and regular caesura in units of 6+5 or 4+4+3) and *semai* (with eight syllables and units of 5+3 or 4+4). Haydar Kaya (1999) in his anthology of 407 texts identifies 83 percent as being in eleven-syllable *koşma* form and all but two of the rest in eight-syllable *semai* form. The stanzas may be understood to be composed in quatrains (*dörtlük*) observing a rhyme scheme of *a,b,a,b* for the first stanza

[42] Avcı 2006:375f. provides a good account of the information we have about Pir Sultan's children and also gives another version of the lament for Pir Sultan, attributing it to his son Pir Mehmet (230).

[43] See Appendix for text and translation.

followed by *c,c,c,b*; *d,d,d,b*; and so forth for subsequent stanzas.[44] These forms utilize purely syllabic meter (*hece vezni*) in contrast to the weighted meter (*aruz vezni*) of Ottoman classical verse. The verses in *koşma* form have as a minimum three stanzas and as many as twelve—at least in the case of those attributed to Pir Sultan.[45] Asım Bezirci's analysis of 196 texts shows that 53.4 percent have five stanzas with the majority of the rest having four, six, or seven (1994:119). It is a concise lyrical form that also makes use of parataxis and shifts in person, particularly in the climactic signature verse (*mahlas beyti*):

Pir Sultan Abdal'im can göğe ağmaz

I am Pir Sultan Abdal the soul does not flee
. . .

Pir Sultan Abdal'ım dağlar aşalım

I am Pir Sultan Abdal let us pass over mountains
. . .

Felek bir iş bişirmiş diyar gel ha ic
Yüz yıl calış aziş ahir sonı hiç
Şu dünya kona kondur göce göc
Pîr Sultanım gecdi bir gün sabahdan

Fate cooks up something, so come here and drink
Work for a hundred years and for little in the end
Let that world come to a halt or move on
I am Pir Sultan, he passed one day in the morning[46]

A number of the songs attributed to Pir Sultan Abdal concern the events of his life, legend, and connection to the Safavid Shah(s). However, the thematic center of Pir Sultan's *deyişler* is Alevi belief (*inanç*), as expressed most importantly through the primacy of the Imam Ali. Kaya asserts from an analysis of 400 texts that around seventy-five percent of them refer either explicitly or covertly to Allah, Muhammad, Ali, Hüseyin, and other Alevi-Bektaşi identities (H. Kaya 1999:47, 55). The themes of resistance, asserting the true path, and ultimately the climax of martyrdom, are also prominent. Pir Sultan views his own fate as a direct line of

---

[44] See Bezirci 1994 for a more detailed description and analysis of the formal structure and rhyme schemes of the *koşma* texts. Markoff 1986a and Moyle 1990 both provide a detailed description of these forms in English.

[45] In fact, lyrics in *deyiş* form can have a much greater number of verses, as in a well-known *tevhid* of Kul Himmet (Üstadım) that runs to 26 verses (Aslanoğlu 1995:123) or Edip Harabi's *Vahdetname* with 28 verses (Özmen 1998:iv, 528).

[46] The full text and translation of this *deyiş* is included in the Appendix.

martyrdom from the Imam Hüseyin through to the Hurufi *batını* (esoteric) poet Seyyid Nesimi[47] (whose own martyrdom was connected to his sympathy for Mansūr al-Hallāj martyred for his assertion of *anā'l-Haqq*—Turkish *enel Hak*—"I am God"[48]). So Pir Sultan sings:

Üçüncü ölmem bu hain
Pir Sultan ölür dirilir

This treachery is my third dying
Pir Sultan dies and returns to life
. . .

Pir Sultan Abdal'ım Seyyid Nesimi
Şu âleme destan ettin sesimi

I am Pir Sultan Abdal, Seyyid Nesimi
You made my voice the story for this world
. . .

Çeke çeke ben bu dertten ölürüm
Seversen Ali'yi değme yarama
Ali'nin yoluna serim veririm
Serversen Ali'yi değme yarama

Ever enduring I die from this malady
If you love Ali don't touch my wound
I devote myself to the way of Ali
If you love Ali don't touch my wound
. . .

Pir Sultan'ım Haydar Nesimî'yiz
Tâ ezelden Şah'a kurban serimiz
On İki İmamlar dâr meydanımız
Biz şehidiz Ali'dir serdârımız

I am Pir Sultan, Haydar, we are Nesimi
Even from eternity we are given to the Shah
The twelve Imams, our place of dwelling
We are martyrs and Ali our commander

---

[47] Özmen 1998:i, 249-396 includes a usefully substantial collection of Nesimi's poems and detail about his life.

[48] On Mansūr al-Hallāj and *anā'l-Haqq*, see Schimmel 1975.

Pir Sultan's verse is robust and expresses the esoteric and heterodox beliefs emanating from the time when Alevi-Bektaşi identity was coalescing out of the antinomian Anatolian dervish groups of the sixteenth century (Karamustafa 1993; 1994:83f). It also reflects a response to times of social and political unrest as the Ottoman government asserted its authority in Anatolia in the face of the new threat posed by the Safavid rulers in Iran.[49] One of the most engaging aspects of Pir Sultan's verse is the manner in which he imbues these themes with references that evoke a sense of the Anatolian landscape, the real world of places, and the resonances of the seasons—a factor that plays a part in connecting his verse intimately with the people.

Bahar oldu otlar bitti güz geldi
On'ki İmam'lara giden turnalar

Spring is done, the grass gone, Autumn come
The red cranes are going to the twelve imams
. . .

Abdal olup dağdan dağa dolandım
Aştığım bellere göç eylemişim
Kızıl ırmakları bulandırınca
Kayalı göllere göç eylemişim

I wandered as a dervish from mountain to mountain
I migrated to mountain passes that I went beyond
When the waters of the Red River were churned to mud
I migrated to the rocky lakes
. . .

Bu yıl bu dağların karı erimez
Eser bâd-ı sâbah yel bozuk bozuk
Türkmen kalkıp yaylasına yürümez
Yıkılmış aşiret il bozuk bozuk

The snow doesn't melt on the mountains this year
The morning breeze blows an ill wind of ruin
The Turkmen no longer start out for the highlands
The nomads have cleared off and the land is in ruin[50]

---

[49] Barkey 1994 and 2008 and Faroqhi 1995 are particularly useful on the issue of social unrest in Anatolia and the administrative response to it.

[50] The full text along with my English translation of this *deyiş* is included in the Appendix.

This lived world as expressed through the verse suggests a plausible, sound oral "chain of transmission" (Vansina 1985:29) and the strong possibility that we have an authentic voice in the *deyiş* of Pir Sultan. This is not to assert that this is an individual voice or authorship, but rather that the texts have been maintained and formed following these central themes with considerable authenticity and integrity through successive generations of performance.

Encounters in Music and Performance

While it is natural to focus on the texts, it is important to remember that these are the texts of songs to be performed with music. These are works to be understood in a performance context in which the performer, audience, and the poet's persona are engaged. Thus, it is the context of the performance and perception of the audience that also play a role in the expression of the poet's work. The foundational and referential context of the performance of Pir Sultan's *deyiş* is the Alevi *cem* congregation in which ritual song and dance form a central act of worship (*ibadet*).

What constitutes an authentic performance is elusive, since it must be expressed in terms of what defines Alevi music. This is a subject beyond the scope of this paper; however, I would suggest that any definition of Alevi music begin with an understanding of the specific Alevi musical genres associated with the *cem* ritual *ibadet* services such as *semah*, *tevhid*, *duaz-ı imam*, and *mersiye.*[51] In the broader performance context of the *deyiş*, it is reference to such elements that define the Alevi-ness of the music, at least for those with the knowledge or familiarity to distinguish such associations. Alevi music is essentially song—music with words—and as such the language too is a fundamental element in defining the music. As the renowned Alevi performer Arif Sağ has said, "Alevi için Aleviliğin simgesel sözleri vardı" ("for Alevis, Alevi symbolism is its words") (Poyraz 2007:165). Words such as *şah* and *pir,* which bear specific meaning in the Alevi context, can be replaced by "*dost*" or "*yar*,"[52] introducing ambiguity and dissembling such that the Alevi-ness of a song is diluted for public performances. Alevis themselves have participated in this form of dissembling. Mahmut Erdal, for example, reports that he altered a Pir Sultan Abdal text for a version of the *Turna semahı* to a (somewhat garbled) text from Karacaoğlan and Esirî when informed that the Pir Sultan Abdal text could not be sung

[51] Published works on Alevi-Bektaşi music are scant, particularly in regard to specific ritual forms, although the mystical dance *semah* has received attention. Vahid Lütfü Salcı's short monograph (1940) was the first work of substance in respect to Alevi-Bektaşi music. French musicologist Eugene Borrel published a paper (1934) on Alevi music some years earlier that was indebted to documents provided by Salcı. More recent works that consider music in the context of Alevi ritual practice and expressive culture include Onatça 2007, Erol 2002, Duygulu 1997, and Markoff 1986b and 2002. Markoff 1994 also provides the best consideration of the stylistic characteristics of Alevi music, including instrument tunings, the predominant mode, meter, and stereotyped cadences.

[52] Both *dost* and *yar* have shades of meanings encompassing "friend," "lover," or "beloved."

on the radio (1999:136). It is this version that now forms part of the standard "repertoire."[53] Aşık Veysel's commercial recording of one of Pir Sultan's most famous songs, *Kul olayım kalem tutan ellere* (Şatıroğlu 2001), uses *yar* rather than *şah* and omits the *mahlas* verse altogether. Perhaps the reason such dissembling is readily adopted by Alevis is that the message is obscured only to the outsider, not to those who understand the immanent associations. Alevi music will be defined by context, intention, persona, and musical sound (such as the use of specific instrumental accompaniment, since it would be difficult to conceive of Alevi *deyiş* performed *as* Alevi music without the central place of the long necked lute, the *bağlama*[54]). The identification and definition of Alevi music is perhaps finally completed by a further element in the performance space—that is, the audience members who understand the extratextual meanings that remain unspoken and who individually or collectively determine the degree to which they observe and acknowledge such extratextual meanings.[55]

In the 1970s the songs of Pir Sultan Abdal were encountered in the public space through popular commercial recordings of artists associated with the political left, including Ruhi Su in 1972 (Su 1993), Rahmi Saltuk in 1975 (Saltuk 1992), and Sadık Gürbüz in 1977 (Gürbüz 2007), who all released long-play recordings devoted entirely to Pir Sultan.[56] Also notable was Zülfü Livaneli who recorded Alevi songs (while living in Sweden in the early 1970s), including those of Pir Sultan Abdal (Livaneli n.d.) performed in a style that adopted regional Alevi *aşık* tuning on the *bağlama*,[57] distinguishing them from the stylistically urbane performances of Su, Saltuk, and Gürbüz and pointing toward the direction that popular Alevi performers such as Arif Sağ would pursue most creatively and influentially in the 1980s. Alevi musicians also began to be heard in the 1960s and 1970s, one of the most notable being Feyzullah Çınar (1937-83) from the Divriği region who recorded *deyiş* from many of the Alevi master poets. In the 1970s Livaneli produced

---

[53] Halil Atılgan's interesting study notes many of the differences between the standard performed repertoire (that is, of the Turkish national broadcasting corporation Türkiye Radyo ve Televizyon Kurumu) and the sources. He does discuss the *Turna Semahı,* and although he notes Mahmut Erdal as the source, he does not mention the change that Erdal asserts (Atılgan 2003:203f.). Erdal does reproduce a facsimile notation of his version with the Pir Sultan text in his book (1999:365-70).

[54] It is not necessary, however, to rely only on imagination to conceive Alevi *deyiş* performed in a manner with little or no reference to Alevi expressive culture; Pir Sultan *deyiş* that are performed in a style far removed from the Alevi music context can be sampled in the jazz arrangements by Senem Diyici of *Ötme bülbül ötme* and *Beni beni* (*Şu kanlı zalimin ettiği işler*) on her recording *Takalar* (Diyici 2000).

[55] John Miles Foley (1991b) discusses this concept of extratextual context in respect to oral tradition. It is my view that the study of Alevi expressive lyric culture would benefit from research applying Foley's notion of "immanent art" (1991a and 2002).

[56] These recordings do not necessarily represent the earliest popular commercial recordings of Pir Sultan Abdal *deyiş*, however. For example, Muazzez Türüng recorded *Geçti dost kervanı* for Odeon in 1962 (*Harman* 2007).

[57] Livaneli writes about the profound effect on him when as a young boy visiting the Çorum region, he heard a *dede* playing the *cura* in the Alevi style and how he later sought out an instrument maker and teacher in Ankara to learn this style (2007:52f.). While Livaneli publishes his novels and other writings under his full name Ömer Zülfür Livaneli, as a musician whose repertoire includes Alevi *deyiş* he omits Ömer, a name which he learned was anathema to Alevis when as a youth he introduced himself to an Alevi *bağlama* maker in Ankara (*ibid.*:54).

a recording of Çınar devoted entirely to Pir Sultan Abdal *deyiş* entitled *Pir Sultan Abdal yeryüzü şarkılar*.[58]

Performances of the songs since the early 1990s have seen, in one direction, the development of dramatic stylized arrangements, for example in the recordings of *Yürü bre Hızır Paşa* by Emre Saltık employing a traditional melody but with vocal and instrumental arrangements used to highlight the dramatic text (*Pir Sultan dostları* 2004; *Bitmeyen türküler* 1991) or the recording by Selda Bağcan (Bağcan and Kaya 1991) of Ali Çağan's purposefully composed melody for this same *deyiş*.[59] In another direction, there is an emphasis on and move toward performances and arrangements that adopt the more consciously intimate performance and stylistic techniques associated with Alevi ritual music such as *şelpe*,[60] as demonstrated in the recordings by Ulaş Özdemir (1998), Gani Pekşen (2007), and Muharrem Temiz (2008). Interestingly, historical nostalgia is not evident in the performance of Alevi music, at least in terms of musical sound. By this statement I mean there is no attempt to interpret the songs in a style that tries to re-create the sound of sixteenth-century Anatolia, even if that were actually possible. Even when techniques associated with authentic practice that suggest an older and even worshipful style of performance are introduced—such as playing the *bağlama şelpe* style rather than with a plectrum or using forms of the instrument associated with ritual performance such as the *dede saz*—this practice has generally been in a manner that seeks to develop existing techniques creatively within acceptable bounds. Influential performers such as Arif Sağ are able to be creative and progressive in their techniques while remaining aware of, and attuned to, the defining elements of the referential performance style.[61] Such performances suggest an ambition to be progressive and an interest in achieving a broad audience, thus highlighting a contemporary engagement with and commitment to the relevance of the tradition of which the songs of Pir Sultan Abdal form a significant part.

Conclusion

We can approach an understanding of Pir Sultan Abdal through the various illuminations we draw upon and which ultimately converge to form the perceived persona. Thus we may approach Pir Sultan Abdal as illuminating the continuation of symbolic martyrdom stories; or in the light of the very personal core element of that story played out in his relationship with and

---

[58] Curiously, Çınar's recording is the only one of the 1970s recordings mentioned that has not been re-issued on CD at the time of writing. I am grateful to Irene Markoff for noting the omission of Çınar from an earlier draft of this article.

[59] Çağan has explained that his primary reason for composing the melody was so that this song could reach the people (*halka ulaşması*), believing that the melody should not be of a mystical type but should suit the anger of the song (Çağan 2000).

[60] A style of playing using the fingers rather than the *tezene* (plectrum).

[61] See Markoff 1986a for a detailed analysis of Sağ's creative approach to the interpretation of traditional performance style.

demise at the hands of Hızır Paşa. We can interpret Pir Sultan through the assumption of his place as a historical identity in the volatile and formative world of sixteenth-century Anatolia, or indeed in other interpretations and speculations. The search for the historical identity, certainly, remains a tantalizing and engaging task, but it is not the critical point since the essentially unknown historical Pir Sultan cannot and does not own the persona of the tradition. The Pir Sultan Abdal persona persists on its own terms—terms asserted most tellingly in the functional possibilities of the *mahlas*, which is a structural convention that, while ostensibly a signature device, provides in the process of transmission over time and in the context of performance a complex, creative, ambiguous, but meaningful relationship between the persona and those with whom his songs interact. Finally, Pir Sultan Abdal persists as a persona of great vitality in the substance of the songs attributed to him and in the interest and attraction they engender for those who would assert their own position, views, creativity, or identity through the maintenance or interpretation of that persona.

University of Western Sydney

References

Andrews 1985 — Walter G. Andrews. *Poetry's Voice, Society's Song: Ottoman Lyric Poetry*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Andrews 2002 — _____. "Starting Over Again: Some Suggestions for Rethinking Ottoman Divan Poetry in the Context of Translation and Transmission." In *Translations: (Re)shaping of Literature and Culture*. Ed. by Saliha Paker. Istanbul: Boğaziçi University Press. pp. 15-40.

Andrews 2004 — _____. "In Pursuit of a Poem: Reflections on Translating Ottoman Turkish Poetry." *Translation Review*, 68:23-32.

Andrews and Markoff 1987 — _____ and Irene Markoff. "Poetry, the Arts, and Group Ethos in the Ideology of the Ottoman Empire." *Edebiyat*, 1:28-70.

Andrews et al. 1997 — _____, Najaat Black, et al. *Ottoman Lyric Poetry: An Anthology*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Arberry 1946 — A. J. Arberry. "Orient Pearls at Random Strung." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 11:699-712.

Aslanoğlu 1984 — İbrahim Aslanoğlu. *Pir Sultan Abdallar*. Istanbul: Erman Yayınevi.

Aslanoğlu 1976/1995 — _____. *XIX yüzyıl Alevi-Bektaşi şairi Kul Himmet Üstadım: yaşamı, kişiliği ve şiirleri*. 2nd ed. Istanbul: Can Yayınları. Orig. ed., 1976.

Atalay 1924/1991 — Besim Atalay. *Bektaşilik ve edebiyat*. Trans. by V. Atila. Istanbul: Ant Yayınları. Orig. ed., 1924.

Atılgan 2003 — Halil Atılgan. *Türküler isyanı: söz yanlışlıkları, sakatlıklar, haksız sahiplenmeler*. Ankara: Akçağ.

Avcı 2004 — Ali Haydar Avcı. *Bize de Banaz'da Pir Sultan derler*. Istanbul: Cumhuriyet Kitapları.

Avcı 2006 — _____. *Osmanlı gizli tarihinde Pir Sultan Abdal ve bütün deyişleri*. Istanbul: Noktakitap.

Bağcan and Kaya 1991 — Selda Bağcan and Ahmet Kaya. *Koçero, Fadike.* Esslingen: Destan. Audio CD.

Barkey 1994 — Karen Barkey. *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Barkey 2008 — _____. *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Başaran 2002 — Mehmet Başaran. *Pir Sultan ölür ölür dirilir: şiir*. Istanbul: Evrensel Basım Yayın.

Başgöz 1998 — İlhan Başgöz. "Pir Sultan Abdal ve Pir Sultan Abdal geleneği." In *Anadolu Aleviliği ve Pir Sultan Abdal*. Ed. by A. Yıldırım. Ankara: Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Derneği. pp. 19-66.

Bayrak 1984 — Mehmet Bayrak. "'Pir Sultan Abdal' ın yaşamında 'Düzmece Şah İsmail' olayı ve Delı Hızır Paşa." *Yazko Edebiyat*, Sept. 1984. In Ömer Uluçay. *Kalemlerde Pir Sultan*. Adana: Gözde Yayınevi. Rpt. 1995. pp. 193-217.

Bezirci 1994 — Asım Bezirci. *Pir Sultan Abdal: yaşamı, kişiliği, sanatı, bütün şiirleri*. Istanbul: Evrensel Basım Yayın. Orig. ed., 1986.

Birge 1994 — John Kingsley Birge. *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*. London: Luzac Oriental. Orig. ed., 1937.

Bisâtî 2003 — Bisâtî. *Şeyh Sâfî buyruğu, Menâkıbu'l-Esrâr Behcetü'l-Ahrâr*. Ed. by Ahmet Taşğın. Ankara: Rheda-Wiedenbrück Çevresi Alevi Kültür Derneği.

Bitmeyen türküler 1991 — *Bitmeyen türküler*. Güvercin Müzik. Audio cassette tape.

Borrel 1934 — Eugene Borrel. "Sur la musique secrète des tribus turques Alévi." *Revue des études islamiques*, 8:241-50.

Bulut 2007 — Suha Bulut. *Pir Sultan Abdal: esnaf-sanatkârın fütüvva hırkası*. Istanbul: Sorun Yayınları.

Büyüktanır 1998 — Zeki Büyüktanır. *Pir Sultan Abdal destanı*. Istanbul: Can Yayınları. Orig. ed., Yazın Kitabevi, 1994.

Çağan 2000 — Ali Çağan. October 8, 2000. E-mail correspondence.

Çalık 1999 — Etem Çalık. *Türk edebiyatında müstear, mahlas ve tapşırmalar*. Erzurum: Aktif Yayınevi.

Çınar 2007 — Erdoğan Çınar. *Kayıp bir Alevi efsanesi*. Istanbul: Kalkedon.

Clarke 1999 — Gloria L. Clarke. *The World of the Alevis: Issues of Culture and Identity*. New York and Istanbul: AVC Publications.

de Bruijn 1998 — J. T. P. de Bruijn. "Takhallus." In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam.* vol. 10, fascicules 165-66. Ed. by Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Douzel, and W. P. Heinrichs. Leiden: Brill.

de Bruijn 1999 — _____. "The Name of the Poet in Classical Persian Poetry." In *Proceedings of the Third European Conference of Iranian Studies, Part 2: Mediaeval and Modern Persian Studies*. Ed. by Charles Melville. Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert Verlag. pp. 45-65.

Diyici 2000 — Senem Diyici. *Takalar.* Istanbul: Kalan. Audio CD.

DuBois 2006 — Thomas A. DuBois. *Lyric, Meaning, and Audience in the Oral Tradition of Northern Europe*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

Duygulu 1997 — Melih Duygulu. *Alevi-Bektaşi müziğinde deyişler*. Istanbul: n.p.

Elçin 1997 — Şükrü Elçin. "Türk halk nazmında 'mahlas/tapşırma' alma geleneği." In *Halk edebiyatı araştırmaları 1*. Ankara: Akçağ. pp. 41-48. Orig. publ. in *Studia Turcologica, Memoriae Alexii Bonmubacı Dicata*, 1982.

Erdal 1999 — Mahmut Erdal. *Bir ozanın kaleminden*. Istanbul: Can Yayınları.

Ergun 1929 — Sadettin Nüzhet [Ergun]. *XVII'inci asır sazşairlerinden Pir Sultan Abdal*. Istanbul: Evkaf Matbaası.

Erol 2002 — Ayhan Erol. "Birlik ve farklılık ekseninde Alevilik ve Alevi müziği." *Folklor/ Edebiyat,* 8:287-306.

Faroqhi 1995 — Suraiya Faroqhi. *Coping with the State: Political Conflict and Crime in the Ottoman Empire, 1550-1720*. Istanbul: Isis.

Ferraro and Bolat 2007 — Jennifer Ferraro and Latif Bolat. *Quarreling with God: Mystic Rebel Poems of the Dervishes of Turkey*. Ashland, OR: White Cloud Press.

Fo 1997 — Dario Fo. *Contra jogulatores obloquentes*. Nobel Foundation. http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1997/fo-lecture.html

Foley 1991a — John Miles Foley. *Immanent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Foley 1991b — _____. "Orality, Textuality, and Interpretation." In *Vox Intexta: Orality and Textuality in the Middle Ages*. Ed. by A. N. Doane and C. B. Pasternak. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. pp. 34-45.

Foley 2002 — _____. *How to Read an Oral Poem*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. eCompanion at http://www.oraltradition.org/hrop/

Fuat 1999 — Memet Fuat. *Pir Sultan Abdal: yaşamı, düşünce dünyası, sanatçı kişiliği, seçme şiirleri*. Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları.

Gallagher 2004 — Amelia Gallagher. "The Fallible Master of Perfection: Shah Ismail in the Alevi-Bektashi Tradition." Unpubl. Ph.D. Dissertation, McGill University.

Gölpınarlı and Boratav 1943 — Abdülbâki Gölpınarlı and Pertev Naili Boratav. *Pir Sultan Abdal*. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi.

Gölpınarlı 2007 — _____. *Tarih boyunca İslam mezhepleri ver Şiilik*. Istanbul: Der Yayınları.

Gürbüz 2007 — Sadık Gürbüz. *Pir Sultan Abdal*. Istanbul: İMM. Audio CD.

Halman 1972 — Talat Sait Halman. *The Humanist Poetry of Yunus Emre*. Istanbul: RCD Cultural Institute.

Halman 1992 — _____. *Turkish Legends and Folk Poems*. Istanbul: Dost Yayınları.

Halman 2004 — _____. "Translating Turkish Literature and 'Cultranslation'." *Translation Review*, 68:43-45.

Harman 2007 — *Harman*. Istanbul: Odeon. Audio CD.

Imber 1979 — C. H. Imber. "The Persecution of the Ottoman Shi'ites According to the Mühimme Defterleri, 1565-1585." *Der Islam,* 56:245-73.

Inalcik 1973 — Halil Inalcik. *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age 1300-1600*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson.

Jöntürk 1973 — *Pir Sultan Abdal*. Dir. Remzi Jöntürk. Ulus Video & Star Muzik. http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0280036/

Karabaş and Yarnall 1996 — Seyfi Karabaş and Judith Yarnall. *Poems of Karacaoğlan: A Turkish Bard*. Bloomington: Indiana University.

Karamustafa 1993 — Ahmet T. Karamustafa. "Kalenders, Abdâls, Hayderîs: The Formation of the Bektâşiye in the Sixteenth Century." In *Suleyman the Second* [*sic*] *and His Time*. Ed. by H. Inalcik and C. Kafadar. Istanbul: Isis. pp. 133-41.

Karamustafa 1994 — _____. *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period, 1200-1550*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.

Kassam 1995 — Tazim R. Kassam. *Songs of Wisdom and Circles of Dance: Hymns of the Satpanth Isma'ili Muslim Saint, Pir Shams*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

D. Kaya 1998 — Doğan Kaya. *Sivas'ta aşıklık geleneği*. Sivas: n.p.

H. Kaya 1999 — Haydar Kaya. *Pir Sultan Abdal: yaşamı, sanatı, yapıtları*. Istanbul: Engin Yayıncılık.

Kaygusuz 1995 — İsmail Kaygusuz. *Alevilik inanç, kültür siyaset tarihi ve ululari*. Istanbul: Alev Yayınları.

Kimmelman 1999 — Burt Kimmelman. *The Poetics of Authorship in the Later Middle Ages: The Emergence of the Modern Literary Persona*. New York: Peter Lang.

Koca 1990 — Turgut Koca. *Bektaşi nefesleri ve şairleri*. Istanbul: Naci Kasım İstanbul Maarif Kitaphanesi ve Matbaası.

Köprülü 1991 — Mehmet Fuad Köprülü. "Bir kızılbaş şairi: Pir Sultan Abdal." In *Kalemlerde Pir Sultan*. Ed. by Ö. Uluçay. Adana: Gözde Yayınevi. pp. 7-18.

Korkmaz 2005a — Esat Korkmaz. *Ansiklopedik Alevilik-Bektaşilik terimleri sözlüğü*. Istanbul: Anahtar Kitaplar.

Korkmaz 2005b — _____. *Pir Sultan Abdal: üçüncü ölmem bu hain*. Istanbul: Alev Yayınevi.

Livaneli 2007 — Ömer Zülfü Livaneli. *Sevdalım hayat*. Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi.

Livaneli n.d. — Zülfü Livaneli. *İlk türküleri, 1971-1981*. Istanbul: Ada Müzik. Audio CD.

Losensky 1998 — Paul E. Losensky. "Linguistic and Rhetorical Aspects of the Signature Verse (*takhallus*) in the Persian Ghazal." *Edebiyat*, 8:239-71.

Makal 1977 — Tahir Kutsi Makal. "Banaz'lı Âşık Nuri Pir Sultan Abdal'ın derdine yanıyor." *Milli Kültür*, 1:68-69.

Makal 1999 — _____. *Pir Sultan Abdal*. Istanbul: Toker Yayınları.

Markoff 1986a — Irene Markoff. "Musical Theory, Performance, and the Contemporary Bağlama Specialist in Turkey." Unpubl. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington.

Markoff 1986b — _____. "The Role of Expressive Culture in the Demystification of a Secret Sect of Islam: The Case of the Alevis of Turkey." *The World of Music,* 28:42-54.

Markoff 1994 — _____. "Music, Saints, and Ritual: Samā' and the Alevis of Turkey." In *Manifestations of Sainthood in Islam*. Ed. by G. M. Smith. Istanbul: Isis. pp. 95-110.

Markoff 2002 — _____. "Alevi Identity and Expressive Culture." In *The Garland Encylcopedia of World Music: The Middle East*. Ed. by V. Danielson, S. Marcus, and D. Reynolds. London: Routledge. pp. 793-800.

Markussen 2005 — Hege Irene Markussen, ed. *Alevis and Alevism: Transformed Identities*. Istanbul: Isis.

Meisami 1990 — Julie Scott Meisami. "Persona and Generic Conventions in Medieval Persian Lyric." *Comparative Criticism*, 12:125-51.

Membré 1999 — Michele Membré. *Mission to the Lord Sophy of Persia (1539-1542)*. Trans. by A. H. Morton. Warminster: E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Trust. Orig. ed., 1993.

Menemencioğlu 1978 — Nermin Menemencioğlu, ed. *The Penguin Book of Turkish Verse*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Morton 1999 — A. H. Morton. "The Letters of Rashid al-Din: Ilkhanid Fact or Timurid Fiction?" In *The Mongol Empire and its Legacy*. Ed. by R. Amitai-Preiss and D. O. Morgan. Leiden: Brill. pp. 155-99.

Moyle 1990 — Natalie Kononenko Moyle. *The Turkish Minstrel Tale Tradition*. London: Garland.

Olsson et al. 1998 — Tord Olsson et al., eds. *Alevi Identity: Cultural, Religious and Social Perspectives*. Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul.

Onatça 2007 — Neşe Ayışıt Onatça. *Alevi-Bektaşi kültüründe kırklar semahı: müzikal analiz çalışması*. Istanbul: Bağlam.

Özdemir 1998 — Ulaş Özdemir. *Ummanda: Maraş Sinemilli deyişleri.* Istanbul: Kalan. Audio CD.

Özmen 1998 — İsmail Özmen. *Alevi-Bektaşi şiirleri antolojisi*. 5 vols. Ankara: T. C. Kültür Bakanlığı.

Öztelli 1971 — Cahit Öztelli. *Pir Sultan Abdal: bütün şiirleri*. Milliyet Yayınları.

Öztelli 1973 — _____. *Bektaşi gülleri: Alevi-Bektaşi şiirleri antolojisi*. Milliyet Yayınları.

Pehlivan 1993 — Battal Pehlivan. *Pir Sultan Abdal*. Istanbul: Alev Yayınları.

Pekşen 2007 — Gani Pekşen. *Küll*: Istanbul: Kalan. Audio CD.

Pir Sultan dostları 2004 — *Pir Sultan dostları*. Istanbul: Ateş Müzik. Audio CD.

Poyraz 2007 — Bedriye Poyraz. *Direnişle piyasa arasında Alevikik ve Alevi müziği*. Ankara: Ütopya Yayınevi.

Ricoeur 1981 — Paul Ricoeur. *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action, and Interpretation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rosenberg 2004 — Samuel N. Rosenberg. "The *Envoi* in Trouvère Lyric, with Particular Attention to the Songs of Gace Brulé." *Romance Philology*, 58:51-67.

Salcı 1940 — Vahid Lütfü Salcı. *Gızlı Türk halk musikisi ve Türk musikisinde (armoni) meşeleri*. Istanbul: Nümane Matbaası.

Saltuk 1992 — Rahmi Saltuk. *Açılın kapılar şaha gidelim*: Istanbul: Saltuk Plak. Audio cassette tape.

Şatıroğlu 2001 — Veysel Şatıroğlu. *Âşık Veysel.* Istanbul: Kalan. Audio CD.

Savaş 2002 — Saim Savaş. *XVI Asırda Anadolu'da Alevilik*. Ankara: Vardi Yayınları.

Schimmel 1975 — Annemarie Schimmel. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Semih 1993 — Mehmet Semih. *Türk edebiyatında mahlaslar, takma adlar, tapşırmalar ve lakaplar*. Istanbul: Anahtar Kitaplar Yayınevi.

Şener 2009 — Cemal Şener. *Alevism with Questions*. Trans. by Nazmiye Akdağ. Istanbul: Pozitif.

Shankland 2003 — David Shankland. *The Alevis in Turkey: The Emergence of a Secular Islamic Tradition*. New York: Routledge.

Silay 1996 — Kemal Silay, ed. *An Anthology of Turkish Literature*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Skalmowski 1990 — Wojciech Skalmowski. "Modes of Address in the *Maxlas* of the Ghazals of Sa'di and Hafez." In *Proceedings of the First European Conference of Iranian Studies, Part 2. Middle and New Iranian Studies*. Ed. by Gherardo Gnoli and Antonio Panaino. Rome: Istituto Italiano Per Il Medio Ed Estremo Oriente. pp. 532-40.

Smith 1993 — Grace Martin Smith. *The Poetry of Yunus Emre, a Turkish Sufi Poet*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Sökefeld 2008 — Martin Sökefeld. *Struggling for Recognition: The Alevi Movement in Germany and in Transnational Space*. New York: Berghahn Books.

Su 1993 — Ruhi Su. *Pir Sultan Abdal*: Istanbul: Imece Müzik. Audio CD.

Tate 1909 — G. P. Tate. *The Frontiers of Baluchistan: Travels on the Borders of Persia and Afghanistan*. London: Witherby and Co.

Temiz 2008 — Muharrem Temiz. *Kisb-i kâr*. Istanbul: Kalan. Audio CD.

Toy 1969/2000 — Erol Toy. *Pir Sultan Abdal*. Istanbul: Yaz Yayınları.

Ulusoy n.d. — A. Celalettin Ulusoy. *Yedi ulu'lar*. Ankara: Ajans-Türk Matbaacılık Sanayii.

Ural 1990 — Orhan Ural. *Pir Sultan Abdal*. Istanbul: Ant Yayınları. Orig. ed., Türk Dil Kurumu, 1982.

Vansina 1985 — Jan Vansina. *Oral Tradition as History*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

White and Jongerden 2003 — Paul J. White and Joost Jongerden, eds. *Turkey's Alevi Enigma: A Comprehensive Overview*. Leiden: Brill.

Yaman and Erdemir 2006 — Ali Yaman and Aykan Erdemir. *Alevism-Bektashism: A Brief Introduction*. Trans. by A. Erdemir, R. Harmanşah, et al. Istanbul: Cem Foundation.

Yıldırım 2006 — Ali Yılıdırım. *Divan edebiyatında mahlas ve mahlas-nâmeler*. Ankara: Akçağ.

APPENDIX

The translations included here are provided as a modest addition to the very few available English versions of Pir Sultan Abdal lyrics.[62] Like Andrews (2004) I have considered formal features of the original text, such as rhyme and line length, to be expendable in translation (for good or ill). Unlike Andrews (26) I have not taken the view that footnotes or extraneous explanations "should be avoided at all costs"; nor in making the translations have I felt qualified "to guess at contexts and reflect them in style and tone" (31). I have sought less to make the translations poetic accomplishments in their own right than to provide what I believe are semantically accurate versions. I concur with Halman (2004:45) that "a single translator can hardly do a definitive version," but that a consort of renditions, that is to say a plurality of voices and versions able to be read together, may ultimately be more effective in working out the meanings of the text in translation. My translations thus represent only a single voice in such a consort of renditions.

[62] Available published English translations include two in Ferraro and Bolat 2007, three in Menemencioğlu 1978, and two in Silay 1996, the latter being new translations of lyrics already translated in Menemencioğlu 1978. Halman (1992) includes one complete translation in his illustrated edition of Turkish legends and folk poems.

Deyiş example 1

Turkish text from the *Menâkıbu'l-Esrar Behcetü'l-Ahrâr* (Bisâtî 2003:84) in a Latin script edition prepared by Ahmet Taşğın.[63]

Benim pîrim Şah-ı Merdân Ali'dir	My master[64] is Ali, Shah of the Seven Guides[65]
Selâmını göndür bedr-i sabahdan	Send him your greetings by the moon at dawn
Ben tâlibim ne haddim var pîr olam	I am a seeker,[66] how could I dare to be a master
Pîre duâcıyım her gün sabahdan	I pray to the master every day in the morning
Ahşam oldı günde gitti yerine	Evening time and the sun goes to ground
Tâlib olan kulluk eyler pîrine	The seeker does service to his master?
İki musâhibde biri birine	Two in companionship, one for each other
Cümle müşkillere yeter sabahdan	Enough for all hardship in the morning
Bizim yerde göz dikerler akceye	In our land the eye is fixed on the coin
Akceyi virirler gene akcesiye	All they give for coin is a coin again
Seher vakti bilbül konar bakceye	The nightingale settles in the garden at dawn
Göz yaşını gün döker sabahdan	The sun sheds its tears in the morning
Deryalarda biter iki dürdane	Two pearls grow in the deep oceans
Biri gevher biri sedef biri dürdane	One a gem, one mother-of-pearl, one a pearl
Biz de sığınmısız Şah-ı Merdâna	We have refuge with the Shah of the Seven Guides

---

[63] The version of the text from which my translation stems is the Latin script transcription by Ahmet Taşğın. I have not attempted to normalize the text to modern Turkish forms or orthography; so, for example, *bilbül* is not changed to *bülbül* nor *ahşam* to *akşam*. This text given here, which does not appear to have survived in the oral tradition but rather only in the *Menâkıb* manuscript and so cannot be compared with orally transmitted versions, must be understood with the awareness Andrews advises (in respect to Ottoman lyric poetry more generally) that we are often working with "an editor's version of an already interpreted transcription of a manuscript" (Andrews et al. 1997:13). I am grateful to a reviewer of this paper for valuable critical comments on my original attempt at translating this *deyiş*. While I have been guided by the reviewer's comments and suggestions, the inevitable shortcomings of the translations remain in every sense my own.

[64] *Pir* refers to a founding saint of a *tarikat*; or more generally a saint, sage, or master. In this lyric Pir Sultan asserts the central importance of the master-disciple (seeker) relationship intimating at the transmission of authority by expressing his humility to his master (*pir*) the Imam Ali in the opening verse while declaring his own exalted status in the form of his *mahlas* in the final line.

[65] *Şâh-ı Merdân* is a common epithet for the Imam Ali. The translator must confront the question whether to translate such constructions. In this case I have chosen to leave *Şah* as the anglicized and functional "Shah" (rather than the translation of "Lord" or "Monarch") while translating the qualifying element of the *izafet* group that constitutes the epithet. In this context *Merdan* refers to the seven spiritual beings considered the guides or masters of the faithful. The epithet *Şâh-ı Merdân* is significant in Alevi lyric because it identifies Ali as the monarch of all spiritual guides or greatest among men, "*mert insanların en büyüğü*" (Öztelli 1973:16).

[66] *Tâlip* refers to one who seeks or strives in Alevi ritual culture and who may be understood as a follower or disciple of a specific *dede* lineage.

Cümle müşkillere yeter sabahdan	Enough for all hardship in the morning
Felek bir iş bişirmiş diyar gel ha ic	Fate cooks up something,[67] so come here and drink
Yüz yıl calış aziş ahir sonı hiç	Work for a hundred years and for little in the end
Şu dünya kona kondur göce göc	Let that world come to a halt or pass on
Pîr Sultanım gecdi bir gün sabahdan	I am Pir Sultan, he[68] passed by one day in the morning

[67] I am grateful to a reviewer of this paper for this felicitous rendering—my original attempt being verbose and vague—and for the suggestion that *diyar* (meaning "country" or "land") may be an incorrect transcription for *deyr*, meaning "hermitage" or "tavern" (or indeed "monastery" or "temple") and which also carries the sense of "the world" in respect to mystical concerns. While it is a plausible reading and, with the addition of the dative ending (*deyre*) would neatly fulfill the syllabic requirement of the line, the manuscript as reproduced by Taşğın (Bisâtî 2003:175) supports the editor's transcription as *diyar*.

[68] *Gecdi* (*geçti*) could effectively be translated here as "who passed," but I have settled on the more literal reading of "he passed" to highlight the grammatical shift in person common in *deyiş*, especially in respect to the *mahlas* verse. This reading still retains the connection to Pir Sultan while suggesting a degree of distanciation—in Ricoeur's sense of the inscribed expression's relationship to its potential for autonomy and interpretation—that I suggest is a latent characteristic in this lyric form. Had the verb preceded the name in a position suggesting more clearly a participial function, a translation as "who passed" would have been more compelling.

Deyiş example 2

Turkish text from Gölpınarlı and Boratav (1943:49), collected from Aşık Ali İzzet Özkan (Şarkışla, Sivas region).

Şu kanlı zalimin ettiği işler	Those blood-tainted tyrant's deeds
Garip bülbül gibi zâreler beni	Make me moan like a lonely nightingale
Yağmur gibi yağar başıma taşlar	Stones rain down on my head like a torrent
Dostun bir fiskesi paralar beni	But it is the friend's mere pinch that breaks me
Dâr günümde dost düşmanım bell'oldu	In my dire days my friend and foe are revealed
On derdim var ise şimdi ell'oldu	My troubles that once were ten are now fifty
Ecel fermanı boynuma takıldı	The order for my death is fixed to my neck
Gerek asa gerek vuralar beni	So let them strike me down or let them hang me
Pir Sultan Abdal'ım can göğe ağmaz	I am Pir Sultan Abdal, the soul[69] does not flee
Hak'tan emr olmazsa irahmet yağmaz	If not decreed by God[70] mercy does not rain down
Şu illerin taşı hiç bana değmez	The stones of those strangers will never touch me
İlle dostun gülü yaralar beni	But it's the rose of that friend that wounds me

[69] This could rightly be rendered as "my soul," assuming *can* to refer to Pir Sultan's soul irrespective of the absence of possessive suffix. However, I have preferred a more literal rendering that neither asserts nor disclaims the ownership of the "soul."

[70] *Hak*, with its deep and encompassing meaning in Turkish, is one of the more problematic concepts to render in English. It may mean "God," "truth," "justice," and "right," and the translator must look to context and purpose to settle on an appropriate rendering.

Deyiş example 3

Turkish text from Gölpınarlı and Boratav (1943:93), collected by Aşık Ali İzzet Özkan from Ali Baba (Şarkışla, Sivas region).

Bu yıl bu dağların karı erimez	The snow doesn't melt on the mountains this year
Eser bâd-ı sabâ yel bozuk bozuk	The morning breeze blows an ill wind of ruin
Türkmen kalkıp yaylasına yürümez	The Turkmen no longer start out for the highlands
Yıkılmiş aşiret il bozuk bozuk	The nomads have cleared off and the land is in ruin
Kızıl Irmak gibi çağladım aktım	I purled and flowed like the Red River[71]
El vurdum göğsümün bendini yıktım	I struck out and threw off the barrage within me
Gül yüzlü ceranın bağına çıktım	I left the orchard of the rose-faced gazelle
Girdim bahçesine gül bozuk bozuk	I entered the garden where the rose is in ruin[72]
Elim tutmaz güllerini dermeğe	I cannot hold his roses for the gathering
Dilim tutmaz hasta halin sormağa	I cannot speak of my sickness for the asking
Dört cevabın manasını vermeğe	Nor to give the meaning of the sacred books[73]
Sazım düzen tutmaz tel bozuk bozuk	My *saz*[74] untuned, the strings broken and in ruin
Pir Sultan'ım yaradıldım kul diye	I am Pir Sultan, I was created a mere subject
Zâlim Paşa elinden mi öl diye	And so to die at the hand of the tyrant Pasha?[75]
Dostum beni ısmarlamış gel diye	My companion commanded me saying come
Gideceğim amma yol bozuk bozuk	I will go but the way lies destroyed and in ruin

[71] I have translated *Kızıl Irmak* literally as "Red River," although this is certainly a reference to the major northern Anatolian river Kızılırmak, which flows from the Köse mountain range east of Sivas, south past Sivas and Nevşehir, making its way northwards to the west of Çorum, and emptying into the Black Sea to the west of Samsun.

[72] *Bozuk bozuk* with its intensifying repetition has a strong sense of "devastation," "destruction," or "complete ruin." In translating this phrase I have sought to use a repetitive English phrase that will function in all the verses to convey a sense of burden or refrain or the original, although this has not always captured the intensity of the original.

[73] *Dört cevap*, literally "the four responses." I follow Fuat (1999:141) in understanding this as reference to the four sacred books: *Tevrat* (Pentateuch), *İncil* (New Testament), *Zebur* (Psalms of David), and *Kuran* (Koran).

[74] *Saz* refers to the long-necked lute sacred to Alevi culture. I chose not to translate *saz* as "lute," though such a translation is simple and organologically accurate, in order to avoid suggestion of the courtly lute-playing minstrel or troubadour of Western tradition.

[75] Generally understood as a reference to Pir Sultan Abdal's nemesis Hızır Paşa; see again Fuat 1999:141.

Oral Tradition, 26/1 (2011): 221-246

Ritual Scenes in the *Iliad*: Rote, Hallowed, or Encrypted as Ancient Art?

Margo Kitts

To analyze ritual scenes in the *Iliad*, one first must contend with the myriad scenes scholars have deemed ritualistic. These include not only prayer, supplication, sacrifice, and oath-making,[1] but also gift exchanges and hospitality,[2] speechmaking and taunting,[3] grieving and funeral ceremonies,[4] and dressings and armings.[5] Indeed, the whole performance of the *Iliad* has been described as a ritualized feature of *Totenkult* (Seaford 1994; Derderian 2001) or, less comprehensively, a performance of *Todesdichtung* permeated with themes of lament, lament itself being identified as a micro-ritual with discernible performance features (Tsagalis 2004). Expressly or not, Homerists have attuned their ears to rituals in the poem ever since Parry and Lord discovered the performance-contexts for bards in the Balkans (for example, Lord 1960:13-29). By analogy with those performances, the *Iliad* represents an artifact of an extensive tradition of ritual performance: the ritual performed was the poem.

Although ritual is basic to oral-traditional performance and to many features of Homeric life, one cannot presume that ritual scenes simply reflect lived traditions outside of the poem. Given the likely evolution of the poems, the claim is just too broad. Whose rituals? Which side of the Mediterranean? Which generation of poets? Further, as Katherine Derderian notes of the poem's funeral rituals, they must be at least in part fictionalized (2001:9). We can be reasonably sure that funeral rituals did not occur in hexameter, for instance, or not wholly so. In this essay I ponder to what extent ritual scenes in the poem might reflect actual ritual traditions, by examining those scenes in the light of ritual performance theory. I will argue that ritual scenes are composed with unique constraints that reflect the crystallization of especially ancient ritual traditions. Thus, they reflect compositional pressures beyond those of other kinds of typical scenes.

---

[1] On these scenes there is abundant scholarship. On prayer, see Lateiner 1997. On supplication see Thornton 1984, Crotty 1994, and Gould 1973. On sacrifice see Kitts 2002 and 2005. On oath-making see Karavites 1992.

[2] Among others, see Herman 1987, Reece 1993, and Edwards 1975.

[3] Among others, see Martin 1989 and Parks 1986.

[4] See Tsagalis 2004, Derderian 2001, Alexiou 1974 and 2002, and Seaford 1994.

[5] See Edwards 1987.

Scenes of commensal and oath sacrifice are convenient for this investigation because they are highly formalized. Sacrifice scenes will be treated as a subgenre of typical scenes with unique performance features and genealogies. The focus, however, is not on the cultural differences between these two sacrificial traditions,[6] but on the extent to which their respective typical scenes manifest the features we can discern in ritual performances at large.

How to Identify a Ritual

To begin we must consider what features identify rituals *per se*. For the last four decades scholars have viewed rituals typically in terms of communication and performance theory,[7] focusing not on enacted myth[8] but on the typical features that shape and distinguish ritual communication. Such features usually are non-instrumental (Rappaport 1999:51), superfluous to practical aim, and irreducible to technical motivations (Whitehouse 2004:3). They might include, for example, exaggerated gestures, marked tempos, ceremonial implements, or speech acts in heightened registers or arcane dialects. This is not to say that higher order awarenesses or different affects may not emerge for participants in a ritual (Rappaport 1999:72; Whitehouse 2004:105-36), but merely that, from goose mating dances to a Latin mass, ritual is a distinct order of communication.

Identifying features depend on the theorist. Stanley Tambiah identified four principal features: formality, stereotypy, condensation, and redundancy (1981:119). Maurice Bloch observed degrees of formality, patterning, repetition and rhythm (1989:21). Roy Rappaport discerned ritual encoding by someone other than the performers, formality, degree of invariance, and metaperformative qualities, by which he meant the way that a ritual's performance establishes the conventions it enacts (1999:32-50). Valerio Valeri recognized ritual patterns as behaving like poetry: they communicate form over syntax, equivalence over difference, and on a paradigmatic rather than syntagmatic axis (1985:343). Even the evolutionary anthropologists, such as Alcorta and Sosis, have observed in ritual a deep structural grammar, which they claim has an ontogenetic basis (2005:332). Synthesizing all this for a short essay, we can compress these features into four: patterning, rhythm, condensation, and formality. These features overlap but have the advantage of being traceable in the poem.

---

[6] See Kitts 2002 and 2003.

[7] This is to be distinguished from the nineteenth-century view of ritual as an addendum to or dramatization of myth, itself seen as primitive science or, at best, transtemporal communication with supernaturals (Tylor 1871/1958). Among classicists, Christopher Faraone, for instance, points out that the presence or absence of gods makes no difference in terms of form or effect in religious or magical ritual, and he denies the categorical distinction between magic and religion in any case (1993:60-80, espec. 77).

[8] An exception is Marcel Detienne, who famously ascribes mythic horror to the *Bouphonia*—the ritualized murder of a domesticated ox, traditionally regarded as a member of the household, at least by the Pythagoreans (1994:54-55; 1989:12).

Patterning in Sacrifice Scenes

Patterning is probably the most basic feature of rituals and characterized by predictability and conformity to a preordained shape. The authorial source for a ritual's shape tends to be inchoate (Valeri 1985:342), belonging to a primordial stratum of cultural memory wherein certain Ur-institutions—Rappaport calls them Rho postulates (1999:277-312)—were set down. According to Tambiah, audiences recognize primordially creative acts emanating through particular ritual performances in the way one recognizes underlying shapes emerging through abstract works of art (1981:134). Recognition will range from distinct to implicit, depending on the audience's anticipation of the underlying ritual paradigm and on the degree of formalization of the performance.

Commensal sacrifice scenes are distinctly patterned in Books 1, 2, 7, 9, and 24 and the patterning in oath-sacrificing scenes is conspicuous in Books 3 and 19, even while context allows for expansion and compression of both ritual types. Please note the number of telltale steps given in Charts 1 and 2.[9] We have 15 in our most extended commensal sacrifice scenes in Books 1 and 2, with 10 features represented identically in at least two ritual scenes among the five (Chart 1). It is possible to break down commensal sacrifice even further in the examples of Books 9 and 24, which include bread being laid out in baskets, meat being served (9.216-17, 24.625-26), and hands stretched out to the refreshments (9.221, 24.627). There are 11 telltale steps for oath-sacrifice (Chart 2), and only two identical verses. Yet there are four half-verses and many behavioral features in common. Oath-sacrificing rituals appear only twice in the poem.

Book 1's commensal sacrifice scene is the fullest, conceivably in narrative counterpoint to the disharmonies that precede and follow it. The context is the reconciliation of Agamemnon and Chryses. Steps include:

Chart 1: Commensal Sacrifice

(1) 1.447-48*:* . . . They swiftly set in order the sacred hecatomb for the god around the well-built altar,	(1) 1.447-48 . . . τοὶ δ' ὦκα θεῷ ἱερὴν ἑκατόμβην ἑξείης ἔστησαν ἐΰδμητον περὶ βωμόν,
(2) 1.449 They washed their hands and took up barley.	(2) 1.449 χερνίψαντο δ' ἔπειτα καὶ οὐλοχύτας ἀνέλοντο.
(3) 1.450 [prayer] On their behalf, Chryses held up his hands and prayed; . . .	(3) 1.450 τοῖσιν δὲ Χρύσης μεγάλ' εὔχετο χεῖρας ἀνασχών· . . .
(4) 1.458 **(ditto 2.421)** But once they prayed and threw barley,	(4) 1.458 (**ditto 2.421**) αὐτὰρ ἐπεί ῥ' εὔξαντο καὶ οὐλοχύτας προβάλοντο,
(5) 1.459 (**ditto 2.422; cf. 24.622**) They held up the [victims' heads] first, and then cut the throats and flayed them,	(5) 1.459 (**ditto 2.422; cf. 24.622**) αὐέρυσαν μὲν πρῶτα καὶ ἔσφαξαν καὶ ἔδειραν,

[9] I have separated these steps merely for ease in recognition. I see no precise grammar in ritual imagination, although I do see the inevitability of distinct rhythms.

(6) 1.460-61 (**ditto 2.423-24**) They cut out the thigh pieces and hid them under the fat, making two folds,	(6) 1.460-61 (**ditto 2.423-24**) μηρούς τ' ἐξέταμον κατά τε κνίσῃ ἐκάλυψαν δίπτυχα ποιήσαντες,
(7) 1.461 (**ditto 2.434**) They placed raw strips of flesh over [the thighs];	(7) 1.461 (**ditto 2.434**) . . . ἐπ' αὐτῶν δ' ὠμοθέτησαν·
(8) 1.462-63 The old man burnt them over split wood, and poured shining wine	(8) 1.462-63 καῖε δ' ἐπὶ σχίζῃς ὁ γέρων, ἐπὶ δ' αἴθοπα οἶνον λεῖβε
(9) 1.463 By him the young men held forks in their hands.	(9) 1.463 . . . νέοι δὲ παρ' αὐτὸν ἔχον πεμπώβολα χερσίν.
(10) 1.464 (**ditto 2.427**) But when they had burned the thighs and tasted the innards	(10) 1.464 (**ditto 2.427**) αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ κατὰ μῆρε κάη καὶ σπλάγχνα πάσαντο
(11) 1.465 (**ditto 2.428; cf. 7.317, 9.210, 24.623**) they cut the rest into bits and pierced it with spits,	(11) 1.465 (**ditto 2.428; cf. 7.317, 9.210, 24.623**) μίστυλλόν τ' ἄρα τἆλλα καὶ ἀμφ' ὀβελοῖσιν ἔπειραν,
(12) 1.466 (**ditto 2.429, 24.624; cf. 7.318**) They roasted it expertly, and drew it all off [the spits].	(12) 1.466 (**ditto 2.429 and 24.624; cf. 7.318**) ὤπτησάν τε περιφραδέως, ἐρύσαντό τε πάντα.
(13) 1.467 (**ditto 2.430, 7.319**) But once they had ceased their labor and prepared the feast,	(13) 1.467 (**ditto 2.430, 7.319**) αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ παύσαντο πόνου τετύκοντό τε δαῖτα,
(14) 1.468 (**ditto 2.431,7.320**) they feasted, and no spirit went lacking the equally divided feast.	(14) 1.468 (**ditto 2.431,7.320**) δαίνυντ', οὐδέ τι θυμὸς ἐδεύετο δαιτὸς ἐΐσης.
(15) 1.469 (**ditto 2.432, 7.323, 9.222, 24.628**) But when they had sated their desire for food and drink,	(15) 1.469 (**ditto 2.432, 7.323, 9.222, 24.628**) αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ πόσιος καὶ ἐδητύος ἐξ ἔρον ἔντο,

Despite the fixity of many verses, it is possible to see in these sacrifice scenes more than a memorized verse sequence; instead there is an underlying performance pattern that audiences must have associated with the pleasure of a feast. To be sure, the pattern is both reified and abstracted. It is reified by its busy detail, sequential precision,[10] and repeatability, as well as by its concluding verses expressing satiety—clearly the final point of a commensal sacrifice. It is abstracted because in all five commensal scenes the victim's blood, an implicit element in battle scenes[11] and an explicit element in several major theories of sacrifice (for example, Burkert 1983:2-12; Girard 1979:33-36), is never mentioned, nor are the animal's last gasps and collapse. These omissions must be poetic fictions, given the presumably bloody and noisy work of slaughtering a large mammal. The victim's struggle is suppressed seemingly to highlight the bustling preparations and a gratifying meal. Johann Huizinga once wrote that a ritual is like play, in that it steps out of real life into a marked-off playground or ritual stage, assumes a fixed, culturally ordained form, and in an imperfect world brings temporary perfection (1950:19-20). So would seem the commensal ritual of Book 1.

[10] 25 finite verbs in 15 verses; a ratio of 19:6 aorist to imperfect verbs.

[11] On its actual rarity and its implications when explicit, see Neal 2006.

Oath-sacrifice too is quite patterned, with eleven basic steps. (See Chart 2.) Yet its mood is radically different.

Chart 2: Oath Sacrifice

(1) 3.268-70 . . . But the high-born heralds led up the trusted oath-sacrifices for the gods, and mixed wine in bowls, then poured water over the hands of the kings.	(1) 3.268-70 . . . ἀτὰρ κήρυκες ἀγαυοὶ ὅρκια πιστὰ θεῶν σύναγον, κρητῆρι δὲ οἶνον μίσγον, ἀτὰρ βασιλεῦσιν ὕδωρ ἐπὶ χεῖρας ἔχευαν.
(2) 3.271-72 (**ditto 19.252-53**) Atreides, drawing with his hands the *machaira*, which always hung by the great sheath of his sword,	(2) 3.271-72 (**ditto 19.252-53**) Ἀτρεΐδης δὲ ἐρυσσάμενος χείρεσσι μάχαιραν, ἥ οἱ πὰρ ξίφεος μέγα κουλεὸν αἰὲν ἄωρτο,
(3) 3.273 he cut hairs from the heads of the lambs,	(3) 3.273 ἀρνῶν ἐκ κεφαλέων τάμνε τρίχας·
(4) 3.273-74 . . . and then the heralds distributed them to the best of the Trojans and Achaeans.	(4) 3.273-74 . . . αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα κήρυκες Τρώων καὶ Ἀχαιῶν νεῖμαν ἀρίστοις.
(5) 3.275 Before them Atreides prayed, holding up his hands;	(5) 3.275 τοῖσιν δ' Ἀτρεΐδης μεγάλ' εὔχετο χεῖρας ἀνασχών·
(6) 3.276-80 "Zeus Father, counselor from Ida, best and greatest, and Helios, you who see all and hear all, and the rivers and earth, and those who from beneath punish men having toiled, whoever swears a false oath,you be witnesses, and protect the trusted oaths."	(6) (3.276-80) "Ζεῦ πάτερ, Ἴδηθεν μεδέων, κύδιστε μέγιστε, Ἠέλιός θ', ὃς πάντ' ἐφορᾷς καὶ πάντ' ἐπακούεις, καὶ ποταμοὶ καὶ γαῖα, καὶ οἳ ὑπένερθε καμόντας ἀνθρώπους τίνυσθον, ὅτις κ' ἐπίορκον ὀμόσσῃ, ὑμεῖς μάρτυροι ἔστε, φυλάσσετε δ' ὅρκια πιστά·"
(7) 3.292 (**ditto 19.266**) So he said, and he cut the neck of the lambs with the pitiless bronze.	(7) 3.292 (**ditto 19.266**) Ἦ, καὶ ἀπὸ στομάχους ἀρνῶν τάμε νηλέϊ χαλκῷ·
(8) 3.293-94 And he put them on the ground, gasping, depleted of life, for the bronze had taken away their strength.	(8) 3.293-94 καὶ τοὺς μὲν κατέθηκεν ἐπὶ χθονὸς ἀσπαίροντας, θυμοῦ δευομένους· ἀπὸ γὰρ μένος εἵλετο χαλκός.
(9) 3. 295-96 Drawing wine from bowls with cups, they poured it out, and prayed to the gods who always are,	(9) 3.295-96 οἶνον δ' ἐκ κρητῆρος ἀφυσσόμενοι δεπάεσσιν ἔκχεον, ἠδ' εὔχοντο θεοῖς αἰειγενέτῃσιν·
(10) 3.297 and this is how each one of the Achaeans and Trojans prayed;	(10) 3.297 ὧδε δέ τις εἴπεσκεν Ἀχαιῶν τε Τρώων τε·
(11) 3.298-301 "Zeus best and greatest, and all the other immortal gods, whosoever should first violate the oaths, so let their brains run to the ground like this wine, and those of their children, and let their wives become the spoil of others."	(11) 3.298-301 "Ζεῦ κύδιστε μέγιστε, καὶ ἀθάνατοι θεοὶ ἄλλοι, ὁππότεροι πρότεροι ὑπὲρ ὅρκια πημήνειαν, ὧδέ σφ' ἐγκέφαλος χαμάδις ῥέοι ὡς ὅδε οἶνος, αὐτῶν καὶ τεκέων, ἄλοχοι δ' ἄλλοισι δαμεῖεν.

Clearly there is a limited variability and shape in the order of the steps. The two most lethal verses, those for drawing the *machaira* (a knife never mentioned in commensal sacrifices) and for killing the victim (steps two and seven), are identically or nearly identically rendered.

Those for praying to gods and invoking the Erinyes, also profound acts, differ only minimally in word order and in the substitution of a descriptive phrase for the Erinyes in Book 3. Unlike in commensal sacrifice, in oath-sacrifice the death of the victim is central, and the animal is never eaten. This is not a bustling event. Rather than conclude with the sating of appetites, the ritual in Book 3 concludes with curses that reverberate ominously into the successive battles, because the oath is indeed violated. Oath-sacrifice is a somber killing ritual within and surely outside the epic.

The Significance of Pattern

It would be foolish to insist that there was never any rote memorization in oral performance traditions around the world, but a glance at Book 9's commensal scene is helpful for disproving the rote hypothesis in the case of the *Iliad*'s commensal sacrifices. Similar to the scenes in Books 1 and 2, Book 9's commensal scene is distinctly detailed. Considering the usual poetic dictum of one indicative verb per verse, the activity behind this commensal scene is busy, with 20 finite verbs in 16 verses (9.206-22).[12] Yet this commensal scene also includes novel features: at its inception, guests are welcomed and seated on couches with purple covers (9.200) —seating being a typical gesture in hospitality scenes (*Od*. 5.86; 10.314-15; *Il*. 18.389, presumed at 24.597).[13] Patroklos is instructed to pour strong wine (9.201-03). The animals are already slain, and merely need to be cut (verses 9.208-09 distill a menu of meats). The fire's brightening and dying are noticed. Skewers are rested upon stones and meat is salted. But then, identically to the scene with Achilles and Priam in Book 24, bread is taken up and put on trays in lovely baskets (two half verses with Patroklos at 9.216-17; two half verses with Automedon at 24.625-26), Achilles divides the meats (9.217; 24.626), and the participants stretch their hands to the ready refreshments before them (9.221; 24.627). The event concludes with the formulaic verse that is a virtual flag for the end of a feast: "but when they had sated their desire for food and drink" (9.222, identical with 24.628, 1.469; 2.432, and 7.323). The commensal events at the tent of Achilles in Books 9 and 24 are more domestic than the formal feasts conducted by Agamemnon, but, given the identical closing formulae and the bustling preparations suggested by a preponderance of finite verbs, they would appear to describe variants on widespread hospitality traditions that we know permeated ancient Mediterranean societies. Ritual performance expectations, not rote memorization, explain the pattern of these commensal scenes.

If not rote, the ritual pattern might be imagined instead as its own "word," following John Miles Foley (2007). According to the "word" hypothesis, the entire pattern of a ritual scene may be argued to "idiomatically convey its traditional meaning, glossing the specific by adducing the generic, explaining the time-bound by evoking the timeless" (16). The ritual "thought-byte" correlates with the phenomenon Parry and Lord encountered when the Yugoslavian bards insisted that the song did not change per performance, while the recorders of Parry and Lord

[12] 11:9 ratio of aorist to imperfect verbs. Compare the 25 finite verbs in 15 verses in the commensal sacrifice of Book 1, where the ratio is 19:6 aorist to imperfect verbs.

[13] For discussion see Edwards 1975:51-72.

would attest otherwise. There is felt to be an underlying *Gestalt* even within the multiplicity of particular performances (Nagler 1974:64-130). Foley's thought-byte or word-hypothesis coincides easily with ritual theory. Glossing the specific by adducing the generic is a lateral way of explaining what Tambiah would make layered: the Ur-form emerges through a particular performance in the way an underlying shape emerges through an abstract work of art. But rhythm is more elusive than patterning.

Rhythms in Sacrifice Scenes

There is a rhythm in ritual, however elusive to recognition within dactylic poetry. This is in part because rhythm is essential to bodily expression and infectious in group dynamics. Any marked rhythm, claim Tambiah (1981:113), Rappaport (1999:226-28), and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown (1964:249), exerts upon those submitted to it a constraint that impels them to yield to it and to permit it to direct and regulate movements of the body and even of the mind. Simply put, it is easier to dance than to resist the beat. Maurice Bloch compares resisting a ritual to resisting a song (1974; 1975:6-13): the rhythms and communicational registers of both ritual and song elicit a respond-in-kind engagement that promotes acceptance and discourages open challenge of their premises. As seen by evolutionary anthropologists, both music and ritual stimulate neurophysiological responses that intensify experience,[14] kindle emotions,[15] and promote social bonding before events such as battle, in the *Iliad*. At many levels, then, both music and ritual induce rhythmic pacing and group cohesion.[16]

Discerning ritual rhythms in the poems is complicated because, of course, they are already rhythmic. Dactylic hexameter traditionally has been seen as imposed on natural speech (Maas 1923), but we need not simply accept this hypothesis anymore. Marcel Jousse observed that musical rhythms permeate human vocal and bodily expressions (Sienaert 1990); Paul

---

[14] See Alcorta and Sosis 2005:336: "Music has important neurophysiological effects. As a 'rhythmic driver,' it impacts autonomic functions and synchronizes 'internal biophysiological oscillators to external auditory rhythms.' The coupling of respiration and other body rhythms to these drivers affects a wide array of physiological processes, including brain wave patterns, pulse rate, and diastolic blood pressure. This 'coupling effect' has been shown to be present in humans at a very early age. Music amplifies and intensifies this effect through the use of instruments, or 'tools,' thereby providing a means of synchronizing individual body rhythms within a group. Recent work by Levenson has shown that synchronized autonomic functions, including such things as pulse rate, heart contractility, and skin conductance, are positively and significantly associated with measures of empathy."

[15] See Alcorta and Sosis 2005:337: "The ability of religious ritual to elicit both positive and negative emotional responses in participants provides the substrate for the creation of motivational communal symbols. Through processes of incentive learning, as well as classical and contextual conditioning, the objects, places, and beliefs of religious ritual are invested with emotional significance. The rhythmic drivers of ritual contribute to such conditioning through their 'kindling effects'."

[16] See Alcorta and Sosis 2005:339: "Like the phonemes, words, and sentences of language, the use of musical instruments to produce sounds permits the combining of such sounds to create emotionally meaningful signals. These, in turn, can be arranged and rearranged within encompassing musical structures. The formality, sequence, pattern, and repetition of such musical structures themselves elicit emotional response through their instantiation of ritual. Music thereby creates an emotive 'proto-symbolic' system capable of abstracting both the signals and structure of ritual."

Kiparsky noted in natural speech "bound expressions" with favored sentence localization patterns, rhythms, and phonemic resonances (1976); and the bard Suljeman Makić explained to Parry and Lord that his *gusle* was his mnemonic device (Lord 1960:99-100). In short, music and rhythm penetrate poetic vocalization thoroughly. The integration of dactylic hexameter and natural rhythm is especially artful when *polla d' ananta katanta paranta te dochmia t' êlthon* (23.116)[17] mimics the sound of galloping mules.[18]

But Homeric expression is more than a natural meshing of music, rhythm, and poetry. The grouping of spondees and dactyls in Homeric hexameter also elevates the poetic register and helps to encrypt the poem as traditional art. A similar assertion may be made about the rhythms in ritual performances. Degree of behavioral formalization marks off the rhythms in ritual from the rhythms of ordinary expression and encrypts the ritual as a hallowed event.[19] Although compression into hexameter may be expected to muffle the rhythms of ritual to some extent, still we can trace in the poem two of the formalized features by which anthropologists have identified ritual rhythms. Those features are pacing (dancing to the beat, per Bloch 1974:55-81) and group contagion (social bonding, per Alcorta and Sosis 2005).

Protracted behavioral pacing and intense group contagion are illustrated in the oath-rituals of Books 3 and 19. In Book 3, a pause initiates the ritual and seems to prepare participants for bonding toward a common goal. As indicated in Chart 2, before the oath-sacrifice both sides rejoice at the possibility of ending the war through the oath and the duel to follow (3.111-12), so they dismount chariots and remove armor, which they pile on the ground so that "little was the ground around them" that is, an implicit unity, whether of armor (Leaf 1900:322, line 7.342; Seymour 1891: lines 3.113-15) or warriors (Kirk 1985:279) (3.113-15).[20] Before the oath of Agamemnon in Book 19, the Argives all sit where they are, in silence, according to custom, listening to their king (19.255-56).[21] In both cases, the pause appears infectious: the participants unite in intention and await the action to come.

Perhaps the most suspenseful moment is when Agamemnon draws his *machaira* (3.271; 19.252), a ritual knife that always hung by the sheath of his sword (3.272; 19.253). This verse, identical in both scenes, conceivably retards the ritual pace in order to dramatize the moment: a stall is implied by the phrase specifying where the *machaira* always hung. Furthermore, the act

---

[17] πολλὰ δ' ἄναντα κάταντα πάραντά τε δόχμιά τ' ἦλθον.

[18] Nicholas Richardson notes the striking preponderance of a-sounds in this verse (1993:180), and I have pointed out elsewhere that the string of participles is also Hittite (2008:218).

[19] Stanley Tambiah points to an abundance of marked speech in rituals—rhymes, spells, mantras, demon languages, and other forms of "hitting with sound"—as well as a remarkable disjunction between profane and religious language in world religions, whose liturgies often are built on sacred languages associated with a period of revelation or on spells whose power is based on analogical attribution or magical conveyance (1981:176-93). As already noted, Alcorta and Sosis argue that rhythms in ritual stir audience response at subliminal levels (2005:339).

[20] Ὣς ἔφαθ', οἱ δ' ἐχάρησαν Ἀχαιοί τε Τρῶές τε | ἐλπόμενοι παύσασθαι ὀϊζυροῦ πολέμοιο. | καί ῥ' ἵππους μὲν ἔρυξαν ἐπὶ στίχας, ἐκ δ' ἔβαν αὐτοί, | τεύχεά τ' ἐξεδύοντο· τὰ μὲν κατέθεντ' ἐπὶ γαίῃ | πλησίον ἀλλήλων, ὀλίγη δ' ἦν ἀμφὶς ἄρουρα· (3:111-15). Comments by Seymour are available on these lines at http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=3.115&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0087.

[21] τοὶ δ' ἄρα πάντες ἐπ' αὐτόφιν ἥατο σιγῇ | Ἀργεῖοι κατὰ μοῖραν, ἀκούοντες βασιλῆος.

of distributing the hairs cut from the lambs by this knife, in Book 3 (3.273-74), implies cohesion, since in accepting them leaders from both sides agree to the terms of the oath. But in Book 19, with the *machaira* Agamemnon merely cuts hairs from the boar for himself (19.254), as his is the only destiny affected by that oath-ritual.

Then comes the prayer, introduced by a nearly identical phrase in both scenes: raising his hands, he prayed (3.275; 19.254-55). With Richard Martin, I see no reason to suppose that bards would have performed all speech acts in exactly the same tone or identically to other reported actions, despite the hexameter. Plato's *Ion* and comparative epic suggest otherwise (Martin 1989:6-7; 45-46). This speech act reported by *euchomai*, unlike an *epos* or even a *muthos*, is likely to be intoned with great solemnity and a sustained pace, particularly considering that the formal gesture of raising the hands precedes and introduces it. As traditional speech, the prayer summoning divine witnesses is likely to retain archaic features. Hence Zeus is invoked with a whole verse of epithets, and Helios too, described as a judge and overseer—presumably an Anatolian reflection, as is the invocation of rivers to witness the oath (Puhvel 1991:9-12). As auspicious speech it is likely to be somber. Hence the punishing role of the Erinyes is spelled out in a verse and a half, so also prolonged. The pacing of this ritual speech is *largo*.

Cutting the throats of the lambs and boar is a climactic moment (nearly identical at 3.292 and 19.266), a dramatized cruelty designed to compel identification with the victims and to elicit a shudder of horror for potential perjurers—the horror would be contagious. Audiences would be left dangling were the drama to end abruptly after this event; hence in Book 3 the next two verses extend the horror by fixing on the death experience. The lambs are laid on the ground gasping and deprived of life, as the bronze has stripped them of vigor (3.293-94). In Book 19 the fate of the boar is also specified: it is thrown into the sea to become food for fish (19.267-68). Although the ritual in Book 19 ends at this point, the next ritual act of Book 3 is explicitly collective, wherein they draw cups of wine and pour it on the ground, praying that the brains of perjurers and their families be poured out as well. That the prayer is collective is signaled by the iterative *eipesken*, which appears to have distributive force, as Leaf observes also of the participle for drawing.[22] These last acts, from the death spectacle to the distributive curse, are evidence for ritual contagion, if it were not already evident from the initial pause. The net effect of the oath-ritual's rhythm is to set apart the action and to fix the attention of the group.

The pacing of the scene for commensal sacrifice could not be more contrasting. It is lively (see Chart 1). In our fullest account, the hecatomb is even said to be swiftly prepared (1.447-48). The entire ritual is replete with finite verbs, on average two per verse, suggesting a series of rapid micro-actions. Excluding the prayer—presumably its own order of micro-ritual—here there are only two participles to the whole ritual account, among 25 indicative verbs (19 of them aorists) and all within 13 verses. By implication, this is a bustling event, very *allegro*.[23] In comparison, the oath-sacrificing verb sequence is ponderous. Not counting the prayers, the indicative verbs in oath-sacrifice number 14 in 24 lines, slightly more than one per two verses,

---

[22] See comment on the participle at http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0056%3Abook%3D3%3Acommline%3D295.

[23] This is reminiscent of Egbert Bakker's observation that the performance of sequential aorists may, as it were, bring the mountain to Mohammed, not Mohammed to the mountain (2005:154-76, n.b. 173).

and that is including the active verb describing the hanging *machaira*—which arguably does not belong to the action. The action of the commensal sacrifice is almost four times busier! These two ritual type scenes could not be more different. Pacing separates them from each other and also elicits different traditional associations.

The only relatively prolonged moment in the commensal sacrifices of Books 1 and 2 is the prayer, which is adapted to context. Superficially, the prayer of Book 1 seems to unify participants. It is introduced with the same formula: "holding up his hands he [Chryses] prayed" (1.449; cf. 3.275, 19.254-55). As in the oath-prayer, the god is described by an epithet and known behaviors, here his responsiveness to Chryses' request that a plague befall the Achaeans. Chryses' is a thank-you prayer, which continues for four lines. The new request is short-order: "now too bring to fruition this my wish, and protect the Danaans from unseemly ruin"[24]—very simple, perhaps less than heartfelt given the bitter history. Agamemnon's prayer in the commensal sacrifice of Book 2, however, is extended by malevolent wishes for the utter destruction of Priam's family and citadel (2.410-18). While the moods vary, the prayers in commensal sacrifices superficially emphasize group commitment. The commensal sacrifices are also unifying on their faces, as they conclude with formulaic lines indicating as much: "Once they had completed their labor and prepared the feast, they feasted, and no one's *thumos* went lacking the balanced feast" (identical at 1.467-68, 2.430-31, and 7.319-20).

Thus, considering pacing, the two ritual scene types appear to mimic the rhythms of actual ritual performances, with their very different tempos. One is busy; the other is ponderously slow. The differences suggest underlying performance patterns based on lived traditions. Considering unity—the other ritual marker—commensal and oath rituals are not intrinsically different. Participation in both kinds of ritual intensifies group cohesion, in marked contrast to the apparent discord that surrounds the ritual scenes—battlefield wrangling, leadership uncertainty, and so on. If the anthropologists are right, the group cohesion and different pacing implied in the scenes rings true of ritual events beyond the poem.

Condensation in Ritual Scenes

Condensation is not altogether separable from patterns and rhythm, but nonetheless has its own poetic implications. Tambiah sees condensation in ritual as dialectically related to redundancy. Both can intensify meaning, and also diminish it (1981:130-33). Redundancy—repeating an expected sequence of events—may diminish the impact of a ritual event, presumably because it implies predictability. We expect commensal rituals to end with feasting and the sating of appetites. We expect oath-rituals to display ominous words and acts and to engage the attention of participants. Redundancy arguably weakens a ritual's force.

Yet, and this applies especially to literature, because the ritual sequences are also condensed—notice that both scenes contain very little extraneous information—and because oath

[24] κλῦθί μευ, ἀργυρότοξ', ὃς Χρύσην ἀμφιβέβηκας | Κίλλαν τε ζαθέην Τενέδοιό τε ἶφι ἀνάσσεις· | ἠμὲν δή ποτ' ἐμεῦ πάρος ἔκλυες εὐξαμένοιο, | τίμησας μὲν ἐμέ, μέγα δ' ἴψαο λαὸν Ἀχαιῶν· | ἠδ' ἔτι καὶ νῦν μοι τόδ' ἐπικρήηνον ἐέλδωρ· | ἤδη νῦν Δαναοῖσιν ἀεικέα λοιγὸν ἄμυνον (1.451-56).

and commensal ritual traditions radiate their distinct cultural significances, there is also proportionality between the condensation of a scene and its evocative power. We see this correlation when a predictable ritual step, or several of them, is skewed by the poet to introduce nuance. It just makes sense that the more condensed the sequence of traditional elements, the more startled will be audiences privy to the usual order when they hear a perversion of it. Condensation of elements within a ritual translates to economy and power within a ritual scene, as I argue below.

In 1976 Leonard Muellner distinguished ritual scenes by their plenum of indicative verbs and minute detail, which he interpreted as representing a series of behavioral micro-adjustments typical of sacred acts. As already noted, commensal sacrifice is comprised of a series of finite verbs suggesting just such a sequence of minute acts, whereas oath-sacrifice has the opposite tempo and communicational register. However, both are relatively bare of figurative embellishment and reflect great economy in relating ritual steps.

Just a glance at the verses of commensal sacrifice (Chart 1) illustrates both micro-detail and economy. Step 2, the preparation, involves washing hands and taking up barley—two indicative verbs in one verse. In step 4, identically in two scenes they finish praying and throw barley—two indicative verbs per verse. In step 5, representing the actual slaughter, condensed into one simple verse is what must have been a very time consuming event. The animal's head is held back, its throat cut, and the animal is flayed: three actions in one verse, identical in two of the scenes and nearly so in a third. Similar is step 6, with its two indicative verbs depicting the cutting of thigh pieces and hiding them in fat. We have two verbs in step 8, in step 10, and the same pattern of two indicative verbs per line all the way to the end of feasting at step 14, each step replicated in other scenes beyond our showcase in Book 1. What Muellner sees as minute ritual adjustments would appear in this case to reflect the kind of ritual sequencing that Tambiah recognized as a component of constituting and regulating rituals (1981:127-28). Constituting and regulating rituals tend to culminate with practical business such as dining in the present case.

Notice also the relative dearth of non-essential information. The only conceivable figurative expressions I can see are *daitos eisês* and *aithopa oinon*. The "equal feast"—*daitos eisês*—is definitely a formula, occurring six times in the *Iliad* at the end of the line. *Eisês* is what Parry called in 1928 a particularized epithet (1971:155-65), affixed but not empty of significance. Attached to *daitos* it resonated with the traditional attributes and rhythms assigned to the poetic character of feasts. For Gregory Nagy it would be a distinct epithet: "like a small theme song that conjures up a thought-association with the traditional essence of an epic figure, thing, or concept" (1990:23). The same may be said about "shining wine"—*aithopa oinon*. Nine times in the *Iliad* wine is shining, whether libated, poured, or drunk, and eight of those nine it falls at the end of the verse, as here. On the other hand, *eudmêton peri bômon,* "around the well-built altar," at the start of the ritual, occurs only here and *eudmêton* does not appear to be formulaically affixed to *bômon*. I can only presume that altars are essential furniture for religious work, so their sturdiness is worth noting, and poetically weighty because the sacrifice of Book 1 signals appeasement of the god and reconciliation between foes.

Bearing in mind this constellation of indicative verbs, meaningful detail, and paucity of figurative language in both types of ritual scenes, now contrast ritual scenes with killing scenes. Killing scenes have their own stylistic peculiarities, of course, but among them is prosodic

flexibility. Advocates of composition by single words, such as Edzard Visser (1988) and Egbert Bakker and Florence Fabbricotti (1991), have noted that killing verses typically are built around a semantic nucleus denoting "X killed Y"—subject, indicative verb, object, plus a mandatory conjunction—and these tend to be localized in the initial part of the verse. But then there is a remarkable prosodic variety in the rest of the verse, specifying, for instance, whose son is the victim, where he is struck, what strikes him, how he dies or bereaves his parents. These might be comprised of any variety of supplementary participles and instrumental datives and can extend for verses beyond the killing verse. The peripheral expressions represent details semantically inessential to the act of killing and show that the poet was able to compose with great lexical freedom.

Commensal scenes could not be less flexible. Not only is each element ritually essential, but the ends of each verse, far from semantically peripheral, designate constituent ritual features, such as hecatombs, altars, wine, or significant actions reported in indicative verbs (see Chart 1). There are only two participles at the ends of verses in Book 1's elaborate commensal scene, not counting the speech acts. Even the formula of the entire concluding verse is culturally weighty. Sating one's desire for food and drink is nothing short of a flag for the feast. I am not arguing that commensal sacrifice scenes are the least poetic constructs in the poem, but rather that their aesthetic quality is determined in part by the features that show actual ritual performance, such as condensation—these compressed and meaningful details; rhythm—replicated by finite verb sequences and micro-steps; and patterning—wherein we see the Ur form emanating through the particular performance.

Oath-sacrifices also reflect a condensation of essential features. While there is not the same preponderance of indicative verbs—as noted, this is presented as a much less busy event—*every act and word matters*. The preparatory verse in Book 3 designates the bringing in of oath-victims, *horkia pista* being not just a poetic metonym but a ritual one, while in Book 19 the boar is named as such. Being more elaborate, the oath-sacrifice in Book 3 reports heralds mixing wine and purifying the hands of participants, two collective acts lacking in the shorter oath of Book 19. The identical lines in which Agamemnon draws his *machaira,* "which always hung by the great sheath of his sword," are not extraneous bits of information but embellish a religious act; the *machaira* is a specialized sacrificial implement, the very hallmark of oath-sacrifices,[25] and never mentioned in Homeric commensal sacrifices. That it is worn in one's belt appears to signal authority, an emergent authority the third and last time it is mentioned, in the belts of young men dancing alongside marriageable maidens on Achilles' great shield (18.593-98). It may seem odd that the *machaira* cuts hairs of the boar in the oath-sacrifice of Book 19, since they are not distributed to anyone. But, as noted, this is a meaningful exclusion, since only Agamemnon risks perjury in this oath.

The prayer, reported with the verb *euchomai*, is a constitutive act for oath-making, accompanied by a constitutive act for praying, raising the hands. The speech act is not part of a fluid exchange between peers, but an appeal to the gods. Hence the language is ceremonial and somber. Even so it requires strengthening by a ritual gesture that conspires with the speech act to heighten ritual effect. As Rappaport notes, words by themselves sometimes feel just too

[25] Its possible link with healing was explored in Martin 1983.

ephemeral, so a commissive gesture is required to seal them into time (1999:141). The *euchê*, introduced by raising the hands, introduces some of the most lethal language in the whole *Iliad*: it invites self-destruction by gods should participants be lying. Following John R. Searle (1974), J. L. Austin (1975), and Rappaport (1999), we may see such speech acts as perlocutionary: they change the organization of reality by putting the ritual participants at deadly risk.

But the apex of the oath-ritual follows the prayer: "So he said, and he cut (*tame*) the throat of the lambs/boar with the pitiless bronze." *Tamnô* is of course a simple verb and a range of cuttings are attested for it. But it is missing from commensal sacrifices, where the killing is rendered by *sphazdô* (1.459, 2.422; 9.467, 24.622),[26] a verb apparently specialized for the occasion. *Tame* is simple but unmistakably deadly when it occurs with its instrumental dative *nêlei chalkô* ("with the pitiless bronze"), which it does four times in the *Iliad* (3.292, 13.501, 16.761, 19.266; variations on *tam-* and *chalkô* occur elsewhere). "With the pitiless bronze" is the single figurative phrase in oath-sacrificing scenes. Although it occurs 12 times at the end of a verse, it is hard to imagine that the power of the phrase could ever have been unfelt, since its context is always lethal. Richard Martin saw in these short formulae theme fragments, which the story would fill out (1993). In Book 3, it is filled out when the lambs are laid on the ground gasping, deprived of life, because the bronze—a second metonym—has taken their vigor. This action is followed in Book 3 by a collective prayer with the analogical pouring of wine and, as I have argued elsewhere, it conscripts participants to support the oath (2005:146-51). Then the curses on oath-breakers reverberate through the poem with the six-time reference to "those who were first to violate oaths" (slight variations among 3.300; 4.65-67; 4.71-72; 4.236; 4.271; 7.351-52).

So this scene type also is condensed, with a paucity of figurative language and a fixed sequence of behavioral adjustments. Nothing is extraneous—no nuclear center or inessential periphery. Even the unitive *te* at the end of 3.297 conceivably serves the distributive-iterative aspect of *eipesken*, "they said," that launches the curse and renders all the participants witnesses to the oath. All of this supports the claim that ritual scenes are configured differently than are scenes that report battlefield events.

[26] Also, one time by *hieuro* (7.314).

The Exception that Proves the Rule[27]

One commensal ritual that violates these expectations is the funeral feast at the start of Book 23 (Chart 3). Ostensibly spirit-soothing, and eventually rounded off with the formular feasting lines wherein no *thumo*s went lacking the equal feast (23.56-57),[28] this sacrifice is nonetheless perverted, conceivably for poetic effect. It begins after a chariot tribute to Patroklos and the infectious wailing that Thetis stirs up among the Myrmidons. The pre-feast slaughter is noisy and profuse. Only here do we hear many white bulls bellowing (*orechtheon*) around the iron, as they are being slaughtered by *sphazdomenoi*, and we may also hear bleating goats if *mêkades* is not solely an ornamental epithet. In the four other scenes with *sphazdô,* the animals' struggles and dying are not acknowledged at all. Perhaps most importantly, blood, absent in the other commensal scenes, here is so plentiful that it could be caught in cups. It runs all around the corpse (23.29-34). The blood and apparent agony of the animals break the patterns of traditional sacrificial feasts. Why is this so?

---

[27] It should be pointed out that not all commensal scenes are explicit sacrifice scenes. Consider the meal at Agamemnon's hut when Nestor and others coax Agamemnon to offer *apoina* ("treasures") to Achilles (ca. 9.90). There is no sacrifice there, even though the feast is spirit-soothing (μενοεικέα δαῖτα) and we hear the famous formular lines: they all put their hands to the good foods before them, but when they had sated their desire for food and drink (9.91-92: οἱ δ' ἐπ' ὀνείαθ' ἑτοῖμα προκείμενα χεῖρας ἴαλλον ׀ αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ πόσιος καὶ ἐδητύος ἐξ ἔρον ἔντο). The scene at 7.466-81 is lacking most steps as well; they slaughter cattle and take a meal (7.466: βουφόνεον δὲ κατὰ κλισίας καὶ δόρπον ἕλοντο), then the Achaeans and Trojans simply feast all night long. The mood is strange: Zeus thunders ominously and the Trojans libate him with wine. In Phoenix's story about longing to leave his father's house, his friends try to entice him to stay home by sacrificing (πολλὰ δὲ ἴφια μῆλα καὶ εἰλίποδας ἕλικας βοῦς ׀ ἔσφαζον, πολλοὶ δὲ σύες θαλέθοντες ἀλοιφῇ ׀ εὐόμενοι τανύοντο διὰ φλογὸς Ἡφαίστοιο, 9.466-68), but no dining and good cheer are mentioned, and he finally escapes (9.457-79). Other dining scenes are reported at 10.577ff., 11.620ff.; 11.769ff., in passing at 12.310ff., 19.314. Curiously, Trojan feasts refer only obliquely to sacrifice, except perhaps at 8.504-49. Experts deny the authenticity of 8:548 and 8:550-52, which refer to hecatombs to the immortals (see Kirk 1990:340 and Leaf at http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0056%3Abook%3D8%3Acommline%3D548). Nonetheless, smoke is reported to rise to the heavens at 8.549.

[28] δαίνυντ', οὐδέ τι θυμὸς ἐδεύετο δαιτὸς ἐΐσης. / αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ πόσιος καὶ ἐδητύος ἐξ ἔρον ἔντο.

Chart 3: Funeral Feast of Book 23

. . . αὐτὰρ ὁ τοῖσι τάφον μενοεικέα δαίνυ.	But he prepared a spirit-soothing funeral feast for them.
πολλοὶ μὲν βόες ἀργοὶ ὀρέχθεον ἀμφὶ σιδήρῳ (30)	Many white oxen bellowed around the iron as they were
σφαζόμενοι, πολλοὶ δ' ὄϊες καὶ μηκάδες αἶγες·	slaughtered, and many sheep and bleating goats;
πολλοὶ δ' ἀργιόδοντες ὗες, θαλέθοντες ἀλοιφῇ,	many white-toothed swine teaming with fat
εὑόμενοι τανύοντο διὰ φλογὸς Ἡφαίστοιο·	being singed were stretched across Hephaestus' flame;
πάντῃ δ' ἀμφὶ νέκυν κοτυλήρυτον ἔρρεεν αἷμα.	all around the corpse ran blood, cupfuls of it.
Αὐτὰρ τόν γε ἄνακτα ποδώκεα Πηλεΐωνα (35)	But the kings of the Achaeans led the swift-footed lord, son of
εἰς Ἀγαμέμνονα δῖον ἄγον βασιλῆες Ἀχαιῶν	Peleus, to godlike Agamemnon
σπουδῇ παρπεπιθόντες ἑταίρου χωόμενον κῆρ.	With difficulty they persuaded him, still vexed at heart for his
οἱ δ' ὅτε δὴ κλισίην Ἀγαμέμνονος ἶξον ἰόντες,	companion. When they led him to the hut of Agamemnon, at
αὐτίκα κηρύκεσσι λιγυφθόγγοισι κέλευσαν	once they ordered shrill-voiced heralds
ἀμφὶ πυρὶ στῆσαι τρίποδα μέγαν, εἰ πεπίθοιεν (40)	to set around the fire a great tripod, if the son of Peleus would
Πηλεΐδην λούσασθαι ἄπο βρότον αἱματόεντα.	be persuaded to wash off the bloody filth.
αὐτὰρ ὅ γ' ἠρνεῖτο στερεῶς, ἐπὶ δ' ὅρκον ὄμοσσεν·	But he refused vigorously, and swore an oath:
"οὐ μὰ Ζῆν', ὅς τίς τε θεῶν ὕπατος καὶ ἄριστος,	"Not by Zeus, who is the highest and best of the gods,
οὐ θέμις ἐστὶ λοετρὰ καρήατος ἆσσον ἱκέσθαι,	it is not sanctioned for water to come near my head
πρίν γ' ἐνὶ Πάτροκλον θέμεναι πυρὶ σῆμά τε χεῦαι (45)	before I put Patroklos in the fire and pour a *sêma*
κείρασθαί τε κόμην, ἐπεὶ οὔ μ' ἔτι δεύτερον ὧδε	and cut my hair, since not a second time
ἵξετ' ἄχος κραδίην, ὄφρα ζωοῖσι μετείω.	will such grief come to my head while I go among the living.
ἀλλ' ἤτοι νῦν μὲν στυγερῇ πειθώμεθα δαιτί·	But come and let us be persuaded to the hateful feast.

It is not just because funeral feasts are a different order of feasts—however likely[29]—but conceivably because poetic considerations have overwhelmed ritual performance expectations, which we can appreciate because of the condensation typical of commensal rituals. Whatever the poetic tradition's initial vision of this pre-funeral feast, it has become represented as a commensal sacrifice—hence the use of *sphazdô* and the formular verses for satiety at its conclusion. But it swerves from the commensal pattern when, notably, the sacrifice is broken at verse 35. Achilles is called away to the tent of Agamemnon right in the middle of the ritual (23.35-36). And here is the crux: despite the commensal ritual markers *sphazdô* and the concluding formular lines for satiety, the interruption loosens the pattern and the condensation, and dissipates the rhythm of commensal sacrifice, allowing other themes to penetrate the ritual scene.

Which themes? In addition to Achilles' still unmitigated grief and thirst for revenge, there is the theme of oath-making. It emerges at the tent of Agamemnon when Achilles swears not to bathe until Patroklos is buried (23.46-47) and triggers an echo of the eight other oaths or would-

[29] For the possible Anatolian background, see Kitts 2008.

be oaths between Books 19-24.[30] In fact, as ritual leitmotifs, some oath-making features may have penetrated the actual scene of commensal sacrifice: hence the oath-like death rattle of victims and the blood—compare the gasping lambs of Book 3 and the "blood of lambs" as a trope for the oath-sacrifice later: "In no way barren is the blood of lambs, the unmixed libations, and the right hands in which we trusted" (4.158-59). Even if there were invisible historical reasons for this slaughter and blood, the perversion of the usual expectations for commensal sacrifices, based on our five examples (referenced in Chart 1), must have startled audiences and highlighted the other themes that penetrate the scene. The condensation of traditional elements in commensal sacrifice is arguably proportional to this startling effect.

Evidence for the brokenness of this ritual is also apparent on its face. Although the ritual begins among the Myrmidons only, the formular concluding verses (23.56-57) apply to the wider circle of men at Agamemnon's tent who, in response to Achilles, are persuaded to partake of "the hateful feast" (23.48). Thus, condensation is an important and predictable feature of ritual scenes, presumably based on performance expectations. Audiences privy to those expectations will react when the ritual performance goes awry.

Formality in Ritual Scenes

The last performance feature of rituals is formality**,** by which is meant a high performance register. This may be gauged by a ritual's marked features, hallowed authority, and resistance to structural change over time. Marked features are evident in the previously discussed killing acts as well as pacing, unique per sacrificial scene type (for example, *sphazdô* vs. *tamnô;* plenum of aorists vs. few). Hallowed authority is supported by an apparent meticulousness in performance, which may be sensed in the aforementioned condensation and also in the relative fixity of patterning reflected in Charts 1 and 2.

As for the resistance to structural change, Roy Rappaport and Maurice Bloch both have observed that audiences respond to rituals on a scale of increasing formality and decreasing spontaneity, with the most punctilious performances generating an intangible sense of power that discourages open challenge (Rappaport 1999:34, 1996:428; Bloch 1975:6-13). This power may be enhanced by evocative, grotesque, and dissonant features (Alcorta and Sosis 2005:331); hence the apparent shock value in Book 3's gasping, dying lambs, which, conjoined with the spilled wine and curses, surely riveted the attention of audiences to oath-sacrifices. Commensal sacrifices have been shown to be equally fastidious, although their sway over participants is based on different, presumably more pleasant, cultural associations.

---

[30] See these instances: 19.215-37: Odysseus essentially coerced Achilles into participating in the oath-sacrifice with Agamemnon; 19.203-14: Achilles vowed to fast until vengeance was paid; 21.1-125: Oblique oath-making leitmotif with the *deirotomia* of Lykaon (see Kitts 2005, 2007, and 2008); 21.285-86: Hera and Poseidon bound themselves by oath to support Achilles in battle; 22.119-21: Hector contemplated an oath before senators to renew the oath of Book 3; 22.252-59: Hector urged Achilles to swear an oath that the victor respect the loser's corpse; 23.46-47: Achilles vowed not to bathe before he has cut his hair and buried Patroklos; 23.576-85: Menelaos challenged Antilochus to swear an oath that he did not cheat during the chariot race; 24.671-72: Achilles promised Priam to withhold the raid of Troy until Hector was buried.

Because rituals performed in high registers discourage challenge to the basis for the rituals in the first place, rituals tend to perpetuate and instantiate the conventions they perform. This is obvious in oath-making rituals. Once made, they bind. In ancient Near Eastern statecraft, for instance, ritualized commitments (for example, treaties) cannot be superseded except in kind, by performing new rituals. The high register of such a ritual emanates a power proportional to the felt threat of violation, which explains the elaboration in the oath between the Achaeans and Trojans in Book 3.The untrustworthiness of the sons of Priam is a veritable trope between Books 3 and 7, intoned repeatedly in "those who were first to violate the trusted oaths" (for example, 3.300-301; 4.65-67; 4.71-72; 4.234-39; 4.269-71; even 7.351-52).[31]

The tension is different in commensal sacrifices, which likely reflected pleasure instead of dread. Despite the different tension, commensal sacrifices also bind participants, by cementing relationships through hospitality. A violation of hospitality is the ostensible reason for the war in the first place, and several encounters—Diomedes and Glaucos, Achilles and Lycaon—remind us that dining together, ancestrally or personally, is expected to ensure an enduring bond. Leonard Muellner has shown that a suppliant (*hiketês*) is in essence a guestfriend (*xeinos*) in need of his first favor (1976:87-88),[32] and famous scenes of failed supplication (especially Lycaon to Achilles (21.74-96)), evoke guestfriendship by inversion, startling audiences who expect the convention to bind.

The high register of ritual performance is supported by authorities felt to be ancient and profound. The gods support hospitality conventions in the *Iliad*, and also subscribe to them (for example, at 1.597-604 and 18.385-410). Oath-rituals, also primordial in origin, bind Zeus (1.524-27; 19.108-13), Hera, who invokes the River Styx (15.36-40), and also humans, under threat of punishment by Zeus, the Erinyes, and a host of natural forces (for example, at 3.276-80 and 19.260-61). The lethal punishment for violation of oath and commensal traditions is clearly dire, as the entire *Iliad* attests—first in its aetiology of violated guestfriendship (at 3.351-54 and 13.622-27), and second in the reiterated theme of Trojan perfidy in regard to oaths.

The power and antiquity of oath-making rituals are indisputable also outside the *Iliad*, which supports the claim of formalization within it. In formula and form Homeric rituals share features traceable to early second-millennium Anatolia, Mesopotamia, and the Levant. The oath-making formula "friendship and trusty oaths" (3.73, 3.94, and 3.256)[33] is a hendiadys of international significance, given similar collocations in Hebrew *(bryt šlwm, bryt wsd;* covenant and peace/grace), in Aramaic (*'dy' wbt*'; bond and goodness), in Akkadian *(riksu salïme, adê salïme*; bond and peace), and in Hittite (*išiul and lingai-;* bond and the oath)[34] (Beckman 1996;

---

[31] This by Antenor, who observes that "now we are fighting as those who have violated the oaths sworn" (7.351-52).

[32] On the theme, see also Herman 1987 and Reece 1993.

[33] φιλότητα καὶ ὅρκια πιστὰ.

[34] The notions of oath and friendship would also seem to be at least collocated in Tudahliya IV's pact with Kurunta: "when my father saw the friendship (*aaššiatar*) between us (Vs. II. 46), . . . he caused us to be bound by oath (*lienganuut*)" (47) (KBo 86/200) (Author's translation).

Weinfeld 1990:176-77), and "cutting oaths" (for example, at 3.73, 3.256, and 3.94),[35] metonymic in some of our earliest treaties,[36] continue to be a dramatic act among first-millennium Aramaeans and Neo-Assyrians: "Abba-an is under oath to Yarimlim and also he cut the neck of a lamb. He swore: I shall never take back what I gave you"; "This shoulder is not the shoulder of a spring lamb, it is the shoulder of Mati-ilu, it is the shoulder of his sons, his magnates, and the people of his land. If Mati'-ilu should sin against this treaty, so may, just as the shoulder of this spring lamb is torn out . . . the shoulder of Mati'ilu, of his sons, [his magnates] and the people of his land be torn out . . . ."[37] There is clearly a shock and awe quality to these enactments, which speaks to the commanding register of oath-making rituals across the ancient Near East (Hillers 1964; Kitts 2005:100-14), even when oath-gods are not bound as cosmic enforcers.

Commensal and hospitable conventions are similarly visible in nearby Anatolian traditions, although sacrificial slaughter is played down. Only two known Hittite myths refer to human feasting, both indirectly.[38] But commensality among gods seems to echo the hospitality traditions we see in *Iliad* 9 (the embassy to the tent of Achilles) and to some extent in Book 18 (the visit of Thetis with Hephaestus). For example, in a Hurrian-Hittite bilingual tablet the storm-god visits Allani, an underworld goddess, who seats her guest on a throne and sets his feet on a footstool. Then she girds him with something (a bib?), and slaughters 10,000 oxen and 30,000 sheep, lambs, and billy goats. Her bakers prepare bread, her cooks bring in meat, her cupbearers cups. The storm god sits down to eat, with the former generation of gods seated to his right. With long and lovely fingers, the goddess serves food to her guest. The broken end of the text includes words about good things and thriving (KBo XXXIII 13)—not exactly "and they feasted, and no spirit went lacking the fine feast," but a thought-provoking inclusion nonetheless. Hospitality is clearly important.

The same paradigm is present but perverted in other examples. The goddess Inara entices the monster Illuyanka and his offspring to a feast, after which they fall into a drunken stupor and her mortal boyfriend Hupasiya, or alternatively the weather god, kills them (KBo III 7). Her hospitality was a hoax. In a prayer to the dying god Telepinu, his refusal to accept food offerings is equated with anger and disappearing bounty from the land (KUB XXIV 2). Ishtar of Nineveh (also known as Sauska), initially paralyzed with fear about the monster Hedammu, cannot bring herself to accept an offered throne, food-table, and cup (KBo XIX 112 5a and 5b), while Hedammu is invigorating himself on thousands of oxen, horses, lambs, kids, and even fish of the plains (conceivably pollywogs) and dogs of the rivers (otters) (KUB VIII 67:7-9).[39] Divine feasting appears to represent divine thriving.

---

[35] οἱ δ' ἄλλοι φιλότητα καὶ ὅρκια πιστὰ ταμόντες/τάμωμεν.

[36] On what is cut, exactly, see, for example, Bickerman 1976, Finet 1993:135-142, and also Giorgieri 2001. On the persistent logic, see Burkert 2006:28.

[37] Both may be found in Arnold and Beyer 2002:101.

[38] Appu despairs because he has no son to bring to the feast (CTH 360), and the fisherman and his wife connive to get gifts of food by pretending a child is theirs (CTH 363). Both texts are available in translation by Hoffner (1990:63-65).

[39] These summaries are based on my translations.

If degree of detail in commensal rituals supports their formality, it is worth noting the comparable detail in the elaborate display of hospitality at the sixteenth day of the Hittite AN.TAH.SUM festival, wherein the king plays host to gods and deified things. His offerings are sumptuous, not only to gods but to sacred loci, such as door bolts, deified thrones, window sills, and the Inanna instruments, while entertainment includes singers, apparent clown men, callers, and so forth. Tables before the gods are laden with the raw flesh of bulls, cows, sheep, and goats, with bread, and with libation containers of wine. Couches are brought in. The king, flanked by royal functionaries, is greeted by entertainers wearing white powder and playing instruments. The cook places meat at the deified throne, the war god, the hearth, the wooden throne, the window, the bolt of the door, and again at the hearth. Cooks libate three times before the deified throne and the war god, clean the table, then again libate the hearth, the deified throne, the window, the doorbolt, the hearth, and the image of Hattusili-deified. The king bows, entertainers speak, callers call, and the king, standing, "drinks" to the throne god and the war god. He offers wine to the Inanna instrument, singers sing, entertainers speak and the king and queen sit on the throne.[40] Notice that offerings extend frequently to the hearth, which is an apparent matrix for human-divine discourse, given "As by day, oh hearth, humankind continuously surrounds you, by night the gods surround you" (KBo XVII 105).[41] All of the aforementioned examples speak to a traditional power of ritual engagement through hosting and dining.

These tiny snippets illustrate Walter Burkert's point that borders are likely locations for cultural cross-fertilizations culminating in shared conventions (1992:68). Treaty-traditions, while probably not introduced to Homer by the Hittites, clearly share binding powers across the Mediterranean world. Rappaport would see this phenomenon as due to an inherent slipperiness in human promises (1999:13).[42] Oaths are the one universal convention across cultures (Rappaport 1999:132), presumably because commitments by words are so intrinsically fragile. They must be reinforced by the most formal of sealants, which dramatic acts illustrate through sacrifice and other ritual cruelties that threaten perjurers and bind participants as witnesses. Hospitality conventions would seem equally binding, largely because of the inherent danger in trusting a stranger. In both cases—oath-making and hospitality—it would seem to be the highly formal nature of these rituals that makes them binding.

In 1990 Gregory Nagy hypothesized that bardic recomposition before successive panhellenic audiences would have resulted in gradual patterns of fixity in which regional

---

[40] Summary of KBo IV 9 I:1-III:26, based on author's translation and notes.

[41] The hearth is a veritable metonym for the human domicile in Hittite law 24, which demands payment to the former owner of a slave who has escaped "to the hearth" of a benefactor, apparently for protection. A parallel valuation of the hearth and compassion is implicit when Nestor scolds the Achaeans for forgetting about the hearth: "Without clan, without law, and without hearth is he who loves chilling civil strife" (*aphrêtôr athemistos anestios estin ekeinos, / hos polemou eratai epidêmiou okruoentos*) (9.63-64). References to the "meal of Demeter" have the same valence at 21.76 and 13.321-25. Hittite offerings to the hearth are analyzed by Archi (1975).

[42] Similarly, Burkert refers to an unbearable lightness of language (2006:29).

elements were eclipsed by a reach back to protomaterial.[43] Combining this insight about protomaterial with the tendency toward fixation in rituals at this high level of formality, we may speculate that features of Homeric rituals are also traceable into very early times. Anatolian traditions were famously syncretistic, combining Hurrian, Hattian, Luvian, and presumably Nesite (Hittite) customs. A number of excellent studies have outlined the trajectories of influences from Mesopotamia west and Greek influences east to Mesopotamia.[44] It is therefore not a stretch to suppose that ritual traditions as we have them in the *Iliad* may preserve traditions traceable to even older ones due East. Formality in performance surely helped to preserve these. As Rappaport implied, the higher the ritual performance register, the more likely it is that the performance tradition will resist the vagaries of change over time (1999:129-30).

Conclusion

Gregory Nagy once speculated that favorite phrases over time may have generated favorite rhythms, around which hexameter poetry was built.[45] Stretching through Indo-European language families, his evidence was not simple, but the simple implication was that in the imaginations of the composing poets, theme remained primary, phraseology and metrical constraints secondary, and yet they evolved together in performances integrating themes, formulae, and meter into a rhythmic event before audiences who came to expect a traditional shape to all of it.

A parallel route may be imagined for ritual. The event was primary, but patterning, rhythm, condensation, and formality colluded to congeal ancient ritual traditions for generations of participants. Conceivably, poets integrated the performance features they knew, at least implicitly, into ritual scenes. Over successive poetic performances, the telltale ritual features became encrypted within the fixed texts we now possess. So, for instance, whereas peer to peer conversations on the battlefield likely came to be couched in idioms contemporary to audiences (Martin 1989:45ff.), ritual scenes preserved ancient and auspicious speech, with whole line epithets and formulae. It is arguable that ritual scenes, similarly to formulae and auspicious speech acts, resisted narrative exigencies for the most part and preserved some of the oldest cultural formations in the *Iliad*.

Hawai'i Pacific University

---

[43] "The wider the diffusion, the deeper the tradition must reach within itself: the least common denominator is also the oldest, in that a synthesis of distinct but related traditions would tend to recover the oldest aspects of these traditions" (1990:24). He compares the poet, evolving by Classical times into a rhapsode, to an ethnographer who in facing multiform traditions would attempt to reconstruct back to the prototype. The epic synthesis, thus, "operates on the diachronically oldest recoverable aspects of its own traditions" (1990:56).

[44] See, for instance, Suter 2008, Gunter 1990, Villing 2005, and Bachvarova et al. 2008.

[45] "Predictable patterns of rhythm emerge from favorite traditional phrases with favorite rhythms; the eventual regulation of these patterns, combined with syllable count in the traditional phrases, constitutes the essentials of what we know as meter . . . its origins are from traditional phraseology" (1990:30).

References

Alcorta and Sosis 2005 — Candace Alcorta and Richard Sosis. "Ritual, Emotion, and Sacred Symbols." *Human Nature,* 16:323-59.

Alexiou 1974 — Margaret Alexiou. *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Alexiou 2002 — _____. *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Arnold and Beyer 2002 — Bill Arnold and Bryan Beyer. *Readings from the Ancient Near East*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Archi 1975 — Alfonso Archi. "Il Culto del Focolare presso gli Ittiti." *Studi Micenei ed Egeo-Anatolici*, 16:77-87.

Austin 1975 — J. L. Austin. *How to Do Things with Words*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bachvarova et al. 2008 — Mary Bacharova, Billie Jean Collins, and Ian Rutherford. Eds. *Anatolian Interfaces*. Oxford: Oxbow Books.

Bakker 2005 — Egbert Bakker. *Pointing at the Past*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bakker and Fabbricotti 1991 — _____ and Florence Fabbricotti. "Peripheral and Nuclear Semantics in Homeric Diction." *Mnemosyne,* 44:63-84.

Beckman 1996 — Gary Beckman. *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*. Atlanta: Scholars Press.

Bickerman 1976 — E. J. Bickerman. "Couper une alliance." In *Studies in Jewish and Christian History, 1*. Leiden: E. J. Brill. pp. 1-32.

Bloch 1974 — Maurice Bloch. "Symbols, Song, Dance and Features of Articulation: Is Religion an Extreme Form of Traditional Authority?" *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, 15:55-81.

Bloch 1975 — _____. "Introduction." In *Political Language and Orality in Traditional Society*. London: Academic Press. pp. 1-28.

Bloch 1989 — _____. *Ritual, History, and Power.* London: Athlone Press.

Burkert 1983 — Walter Burkert. *Homo Necans*. Trans. by Peter Bing. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Burkert 1992 — _____. *The Orientalizing Revolution.* Trans. by Margaret E. Pindar and Walter Burkert. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Burkert 2006 — _____. "Ritual between Ethology and Post-modern Aspects." *In Ritual and Communication in the Graeco-Roman World*. Ed. by Eftychia Stavrianopoulou. Liège: Centre International d'Étude de la Religion Grecque Antique. pp. 23-35.

Crotty 1994 — Kevin Crotty. *The Poetics of Supplication*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

CTH — *Catalogues des textes hittites*.

Derderian 2001 — Katharine Derderian. *Leaving Words to Remember.* Leiden: Brill.

Detienne 1989 — Marcel Detienne. *The Cuisine of Sacrifice among the Greeks*. Ed. by Jean-Pierre Vernant. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Detienne 1994 — _____. *Gardens of Adonis*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Edwards 1975 — Mark Edwards. "Type-Scenes and Homeric Hospitality." *Transactions of the American Philological Association,* 105:51-72.

Edwards 1987 — _____. *Homer, Poet of the* Iliad. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Faraone 1993 — Christopher Faraone. "Molten Wax, Spilt Wine, and Mutilated Animals: Sympathetic Magic in Near Eastern and Early Greek Oath Ceremonies." *Journal of Hellenic Studies,* 113:60-80.

Finet 1993 — A. Finet "Le sacrifice de l'âne en Mesopotamie." In *Ritual and Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East* (OLA 55). Ed. by J. Quaegebeur. Leuven: Peeters. pp. 135-42.

Foley 2007 — John Miles Foley. "Reading Homer Through Oral Tradition." *College Literature*, 34:1-28.

Giorgieri 2001 — Mauro Giorgieri. "Aspetti magico-religiosi del giuramento presso gli ittiti e i Greci." In *La Questione delle influenze vicino-orientali sulla religione greca*. Ed. by Sergio Ribichini, Maria Rocchi, and Paolo Xelle. Roma: Consiglionazionale delle ricerche. pp. 421-40.

Girard 1979 — René Girard. *Violence and the Sacred*. Trans. by Patrick Gregory. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press.

Gould 1973 — John Gould. "Hiketeia." *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 93:74-103.

Gunter 1990 — Ann Gunter. "Models of the Orient in the Art History of the Orientalizing Period." In *Achaemenid History, 5: The Roots of the European Tradition*. Ed. by S. Sancisi-Weerdenburg and J.W. Drijvers. Leiden: Nederlands Institutuut Voor het Nabije Oosten 1. pp. 131-47.

Herman 1987 — Gabriel Herman. *Ritualized Friendship and the Greek City*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hillers 1964 — Delbert Hillers. *Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets*. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute.

Hoffner 1990 — Harry Hoffner. *Hittite Myths*. Atlanta: Scholars Press.

Huizinga 1950 — Johann Huizinga. *Homo Ludens*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Karavites 1992 — Peter Karavites. *Promise-Giving and Treaty-Making*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.

KBo — *Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi*.

Kiparsky 1976 — Paul Kiparsky. "Oral Poetry: Some Linguistic and Typological Considerations." In *Oral Literature and the Formula*. Ed. by Benjamin Stolz and Richard Shannon. Ann Arbor, MI: Center for the Coordination of Ancient and Modern Studies. pp. 73-105.

Kirk 1985 — G. S. Kirk. *The Iliad: A Commentary: Vol. 1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kirk 1990 — _____. *The Iliad: A Commentary: Vol. 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kitts 2002 — Margo Kitts. "Sacrificial Violence in the *Iliad*." *Journal of Ritual Studies,* 16:19-39.

Kitts 2003 — _____. "Not Barren is the Blood of Lambs: Homeric Oath-sacrifice as Metaphorical Transformation." *Kernos,* 16:17-34.

Kitts 2005 — _____. *Sanctified Violence in Homeric Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kitts 2007 _____. "Bulls Cut Down Bellowing: Liturgical Orders and Ritual Leitmotifs in *Iliad* 23." *Kernos,* 20:1-25.

Kitts 2008 _____. "Funeral Feasts and Ritual Leitmotifs in *Iliad* 23." In *Transformations in Sacrificial Practices*. Ed. Eftychia Stavrianopoulou, Claus Ambos, and Axel Michaels. Berlin: LIT-Verlag. pp. 217-40.

Kitts 2010 _____. "Poinē as a Ritual Leitmotif in the *Iliad*." In *Ritual Dynamics and the Science of Ritual*, 3. Ed. by Margo Kitts et al. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz. pp. 7-31.

KUB *Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi*.

Lateiner 1997 Donald Lateiner. "Homeric Prayer." *Arethusa,* 30:241-72.

Leaf 1900 Walter Leaf. Ed., *The Iliad: Edited, with Apparatus Criticus, Prolegomena, Notes, and Appendices, 1*. London: Macmillan. 1900. Online resource at Perseus.edu. http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.04.0056:book=7:commline=342

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

Martin 1983 Richard Martin. *Healing, Sacrifice, and Battle*. Innsbruck: Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft, 41.

Martin 1989 _____. *The Language of Heroes.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Martin 1993 _____. "Telemachus and the Last Hero Song." *Colby Quarterly,* 29:222-40.

Maas 1923 Paul Maas. *Greek Metre*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Muellner 1976 Leonard Muellner. *The Meaning of Homeric [Euchomai] through Its Formulas*. Innsbruck: Institut für Sprachwissenschaft der Universität Innsbruck.

Nagler 1974 Michael Nagler. *Spontaneity and Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Nagy 1990 Gregory Nagy. *Greek Mythology and Poetics*. Cornell University Press.

Neal 2006 Tamara Neal. "Blood and Hunger in the *Iliad*." *Classical Philology,* 101:15-33.

Parks 1986 — Ward Parks. "Flyting and Fighting: Pathways in the Realization of Epic Contest." *Neophilologus,* 70:292-306.

Parry 1971 — Adam Parry. Ed., *The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Puhvel 1991 — Jaan Puhvel. *Homer and Hittite*. Innsbruck: Institut für Sprachwissenschaft der Universität Innsbruck.

Radcliffe-Brown 1964 — A. R. Radcliffe-Brown. *The Andaman Islanders*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

Rappaport 1996 — Roy Rappaport. "The Obvious Aspects of Ritual." Rpt. in *Readings in Ritual Studies*. Ed. by Ronald Grimes. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. pp. 427-40.

Rappaport 1999 — _____.*Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Reece 1993 — Steve Reece. *The Stranger's Welcome*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Richardson 1993 — Nicholas Richardson. *The Iliad: A Commentary: Vol. VI*. Cambridge University Press.

Seaford 1994 — Richard Seaford. *Reciprocity and Ritual*. Oxford University Press.

Searle 1974 — John R. Searle. *Speech Acts*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Seymour 1891 — Thomas D. Seymour. Ed., *Homer's Iliad: Books I-III*. Boston: Ginn and Company. 1891. Online resource at Perseus.edu. http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=3.115&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0087

Sienaert 1990 — Edgard Richard Sienaert. "Marcel Jousse: The Oral Style and the Anthropology of Gesture." *Oral Tradition*, 5:91-106. http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/5i/sienaert

Suter 2008 — Ann Suter. Ed., *Lament*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tambiah 1981 — Stanley Tambiah. "A Performative Approach to Ritual." In *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 65. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 113-69.

Thornton 1984 — Agathe Thornton. *Homer's* Iliad*: Its Composition and the Motif of Supplication*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht.

Tsagalis 2004 — Christos Tsagalis. *Epic Grief*. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Tylor 1871/1958 — Edward B. Tylor. *Primitive Culture.* New York: Harper and Rowe. Rpt. 1958.

Valeri 1985 — Valerio Valeri. *Kingship and Sacrifice*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Villing 2005 — Alexandra Villing. Ed., *The Greeks and the East*. London: The British Museum Press.

Visser 1988 — Edzard Visser. "Formulae or Single Words? Towards a New Theory on Homeric Verse-Making." *Würzburger Jarbücher für die Altertumswissenchaft,* 14:21-37.

Weinfeld 1990 — Moshe Weinfeld. "The Common Heritage of Covenantal Traditions in the Ancient World." In *I Trattati nel mondo antico: Forma, ideologica, funzione*. Ed. by Luciano Canfora, Mario Liverani, and Carlo Zaccagnini. Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider. pp. 175-91.

Whitehouse 2004 — Harvey Whitehouse. *Modes of Religiosity*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.

Oral Tradition Volume 26, Number 1

About the Authors

Moradewun Adejunmobi
Moradewun Adejunmobi is Professor of African Studies at the University of California, Davis. She does research on popular media, literacy, performance, and intercultural communication in West Africa. Some of her recent publications include "Nollywood, Globalization, and Regional Media Corporations in Africa" (2011) and "Technorality, Literature, and Vernacular Literacy in Twenty-First Century Africa" (2008).

Ildikó Bellér-Hann
Ildikó Bellér-Hann studied in Budapest, Cambridge, and Berlin. She has worked as a researcher at various British and German universities and is currently Associate Professor at the University of Copenhagen. Her recent publications include *Community Matters in Xinjiang 1880-1949: Towards A Historical Anthropology of the Uyghur* (2008), and "The Mobilisation of Tradition: Localism and Identity among the Uyghur of Xinjiang" in *Ethnicity, Authority, and Power in Central Asia: New Games Great and Small* (2011).

Margo Kitts
Margo Kitts is Associate Professor of Humanities and Coordinator of Religious Studies and East-West Classical Studies at Hawai'i Pacific University on Oahu. Her research interests include Homer, ritual studies, religious violence, and the anthropology of revenge. Kitts is the author of *Sanctified Violence in Homeric Society* (2005, 2011) and co-editor of *State, Power, and Violence* (2010), *Princeton Readings in Religion and Violence* (2011), and the *Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence* (forthcoming).

Paul Koerbin
Paul Koerbin's doctoral research in the School of Communication Arts at the University of Western Sydney focuses on Turkish Alevi song and particularly aspects of function and meaning in the self-naming convention employed in the lyrics. A former professional musician and a performer on the *bağlama*, he currently works at the National Library of Australia and has published a number of articles on various aspects of web archiving.

Christopher Livanos
Christopher Livanos is Associate Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. His publications discuss the literature and religion of the Byzantine Empire and medieval Italy, while his research interests include the Classical tradition in medieval literature and the history of relations between Eastern and Western Europe. His recent publications include *Greek Tradition and Latin Influence in the Work of George Scholarios* (2006).

Robert Mann
Robert Mann is a writer and researcher in Jupiter, Florida. Besides novels (*The Master and Marmeladov* and *Where the Ice Never Melts*) and short stories, his published work includes studies of Dostoevsky, Andrei Bely, Isaac Babel, Russian folk epics, and the twelfth-century Igor Tale. His commentary on the rare Golovin redaction of the *Skazanie o Mamaevom poboishche* recently appeared as Volume 8 of *Monuments of Early Russian Literature*.

Minako Sakata
Minako Sakata received a doctorate in Area Studies from the University of Tokyo. She is currently Research Associate at the University of Tokyo, and teaches undergraduate courses at Hosei University. Current interests include inter-genre referentiality in Ainu oral literature and Ainu ethnohistory. Among her recent publications are "Tukupita no shucho no monogatari: Ainu Ethnohistory o sozo suru" (2011) and *Ainu kosho bungaku no epistemology: rekishi no hoho toshiteno Ainu sanbunsetsuwa* (in press).

Raushan Sharshenova
Raushan Sharshenova is Associate Professor in the English department at the Kyrgyz State University in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. She and Ildikó Bellér-Hann have collaborated several times in their studies of Turkic oral traditions.

Eric Shepherd
Eric Shepherd is Assistant Professor of Chinese and Director of the Chinese Section in the Department of World Languages at the University of South Florida. He is the author of *Eat Shandong: From Personal Experience to a Pedagogy of a Second Culture* (2005) and has published articles on teaching Chinese, interpersonal relationships, etiquette, and oral traditions in China. He was trained as a Shandong fast tale performer by master storyteller Wu Yanguo and performs professionally in both China and the United States.

Aaron Phillip Tate
Aaron Phillip Tate is a visiting instructor and Coordinator of Classical Art and Archaeology Visual Resources at Cornell University. His research topics include comparative oral epic and lyric (ancient Greek and South Slavic), ancient Greek music theory, Presocratic philosophy, European philology and folklore relations ca. 1700-1900, comparative historical linguistics, and the musical techniques of oral epic performers. Recent articles have appeared in the journal *Folklore* and in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*. In 2008 he was an invited lecturer at the Institute of Ethnic Literatures in Beijing, China.