

## Editor's Column

May 3, 2013 marked the first anniversary of the loss of John Miles Foley and a period of mourning at the Center for Studies in Oral Tradition. This issue proffers to you, the readers, additional evidence of one dimension of John's extraordinary legacy, the establishment and nurturing for more than a quarter of a century of *Oral Tradition*.

We open with Nina Livesey's study of Romans 4:9-12, a dialogue between the apostle Paul and a fictitious Jewish teacher whose interpretation vexed scholarly analysis concerned with the ethnic identity of the people mentioned in Rom 4:12. At issue is the presence of a purportedly "anomalous" dative article that New Testament scholars have resolved on grammatical, ideological, or theological grounds by simple deletion. Drawing on Hellenistic authors' attentiveness to euphony and sound mapping techniques systematized by Margaret Lee and Bernard Scott, Livesey identifies six structural periods coinciding with the passage's dialogical form and elaborates compelling analyses of them. The map of acoustic patterns identifies recurring sound groups that provide an overarching structure within which certain recurrent metonyms, particularly terms for "circumcised" and "foreskinned," are located. The placement and prominence of the sound patterns authenticate the legitimacy of the dative article and direct attention toward the sense of the passage, rhetorically framing the apostle Paul's assurance to the Gentiles that the uncircumcised may by faith be legitimate heirs to Abrahamic rectitude since God declared Abraham righteous before his circumcision.

Next, four successive articles cluster around the theme Archiving Orality and Connecting with Communities of the 2010 World Oral Literature Project workshop. Under the aegis of Cambridge University's Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities, the workshop explored professional and ethical issues entailed by the dissemination of oral arts through traditional and digital media.

First in this group, Carole Pegg and Erkinova Elizaveta Yamaeva report and interpret fieldwork with Altaian speakers in their practice of Ak Jang ("White Way") rituals. Biannual spring and fall rituals at the *küree* ("place of gatherings") temple complex in a recondite locale above the village are conducted for the purpose of maintaining universal order and tranquility, clan and family harmony, and personal happiness. Led by ritual specialists who are expert in ancient Altaian epic and unfolding in pre-liminal, liminal, and post-liminal phases, the ceremonies connect participants with historico-mythical space and time while also anchoring them in the present, creating a phenomenological, topographic space; a numinous performance space, and a sense of "being-in-place." This sense of being-in-place emanates from the worshippers' awareness that earth, mountains, sky, ancestors, epic heroes, temple complex, gods, planets, kin, and community are all living entities that ground Altaian personhood. Participants report experiencing "the arrival of energy and good fortune encircling them with a constantly rotating belt." An eCompanion presents photos of ritual sites and worshippers.

Next, John Meza Cuero tells Margaret Field a trickster tale in the Tipaay dialect of the Kumeyaay language (and in Spanish) in Baja California, Mexico, prompting a joint reflection on ethical questions regarding a cultural group's preferences for usage of audio or video recordings of the community's heritage. For instance, in Mexico a prevailing "variationist" attitude that accords all dialects of Kumeyaay equal status appears to warrant the sharing of traditional verbal arts with outsiders while in the United States a "localist" language ideology keeps intangible heritage exclusively within the Kumeyaay community. Tale-telling doubly indexes group identity—the larger community by the tale and the local community by its idiom—and the authors urge researchers to maintain balance in intra-communal interests by judiciously publishing recordings from various dialect groups. Without such precautions unintended language standardization may undermine language revitalization schemes, and specific groups may perceive diminished local prestige with corrosive effects on collaboration. A video-taped performance of the Rabbit and Frog tale told by John Meza Cuero is available in an eCompanion for the viewer's delectation.

A Rajasthani folk epic, *Pabuji ki par/phad* ("Pabuji with the scroll"), is the focus for Elizabeth Wickett's study of some of the consequences visited on oral tradition by the explosion in modern media technologies. The unfettered circulation of audio and video recordings can imperil traditional performances, jeopardize artists' livelihood, and promote the incorporation of exotic forms into the traditional repertoire. For example, in response to new circumstances, musicians distinguish "ritual performance" from "tourist performance," and several epic singers have assimilated a folk song, "Banjari Nomad," into their repertoire, seemingly for use in tourist performances only. Nonetheless, technical innovations also have the potential to make new opportunities possible for the continuation of traditions. See, for example, the eCompanion offering photos and video of *Pabuji ki par/phad* in performance. Wickett advocates "polymodal" documentation and calls on ethnographers to devise schemes for transforming recordings of performances into income for performers by serving as their patrons, marketers, and partners. Technologies such as DVDs and the Internet have the potential to help financially maintain tradition bearers and forestall or prevent the collapse of traditions.

With the final installment in this cluster, Jan Jansen offers a critique of UNESCO's adaptation for the Masterpieces of Oral Intangible Heritage of Humanity of the principle of *droits d'auteur* that gives priority to *national* copyright laws, and argues that the basis for decisions regarding "ownership" of intangible heritage should recognize and conform with the tradition-bearing communities' cultural norms and values. The rationale is that a *cultural* framework is preferable to a *legal* framework. Jansen recounts his experiences with renowned reciters of the Sunjata Epic, the Diabate family of Kela, Mali, among whom one is a *kumatigi*, a "Master of the Word."

Traditional methods of teaching and learning to play musical instruments in the Black Sea region of Bolu, in northwestern Turkey, are the theme of Nesrin Kalyoncu and Cemal Özata, whose report of their fieldwork characterizes the master-apprentice relationship in its dimensions of family ties, teaching techniques, practice settings, and frequency of instruction. The authors observed fourteen teachers engaged in training students to play the violin, clarinet, *kabak kemane*

(“spike fiddle”), *bağlama* (“long-necked lute”), *darbuka* (“goblet drum”), and *davul* (“double-headed drum”). Teachers make abundant use of active and psycho-motor techniques, as well as directed physical contact while sharing the playing of an instrument; photographs of teachers working with their students are available in the eCompanion. Apprentices’ abilities advance by stages of listening, observing, memorizing, and performing. Memory plays a principal role in the apprenticeship, whose goal is to attain professional status and thus secure income; music as a recreational pastime is not a consideration.

Lastly, we present in English translation a paper jointly authored by Chao Gejin and John Miles Foley that frames five key questions for comparative oral epic studies sequentially in four traditions—Mongolian, ancient Greek, Old English, and South-Slavic—and explores the implications of each one’s idiosyncratic responses for understanding fine- and broad-grain features of epic dynamics. Each oral epic tradition posits a unique version of what constitutes poem, theme, line, formula, and register, and all rely on the nature of the given language and on “necessary connotations,” or to use a term coined by Professor Foley, “traditional referentiality.” With the authors’ exploration of these five questions across four epic traditions, this piece succinctly summarizes several of their most penetrating and productive insights into the variable operations of humanity’s verbal arts.

It is my pleasant duty to gratefully recognize the Center staff, whose joint efforts bring this issue to press. Associate Editors Lori Garner and Scott Garner, John’s former students, cheerfully coordinate production and correspondence, ensuring that the standards of excellence set 28 years ago by the founding editor continue undiminished. Mark Jarvis oversees all aspects of computing at the Center while the invaluable Hannah Lenon deftly administers its business affairs. Together with them, Justin Arft, managing editor, Darcy Holtgrave, Associate Editor of ISSOT, and editorial assistants Rebecca Richardson Mouser, Ruth Knezevich, and Elizabeth Janda, we bid adieu to our departing editorial assistant Morgan Grey, express our gratitude for her efforts, and wish her success in all of her future endeavors. I also recognize and sincerely thank all of the colleagues who have graciously accepted our invitation to review submissions and advise us as to their suitability for the journal. Your expertise and thoughtful comments reliably enrich the articles that *Oral Tradition* can offer its readers.

As is customary, we invite you to send us your best thinking on the world’s oral traditions. We review submissions with the benefit of guidance from a specialist and a generalist reader and normally come to a decision within 90 days of receipt. As you know, the journal appears online and is free of charge, meaning that your work is available in more than 200 countries and territories to a readership of more than 20,000. We look forward to learning from you.

John Zemke  
Editor, *Oral Tradition*

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