Folklore as an Integrated Discipline and Its Current Research Trends
คติชนวิทยาในฐานะศาสตร์แห่งการบูรณาการ: ขอบเขตและระเบียบวิธีการวิจัย

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Abstract

In this research paper, I want to examine the principles upon which the academic study of folklore, specifically in the United States, have been progressively established over years since 1888 when the American Folklore Society (AFS), the first professional folklore body, was founded. I also want to reconsider the directions of folklore studies indicated by those principles. I am going to examine the theories and methodological assumptions of the founders of American folklore studies by looking at their ideas in context and by exploring how those ideas have affected the ways in which folklore has been studied, preserved and presented. I hope this research paper will provide a comprehensive viewpoint of the theoretical and historical contexts for the development of folklore studies in America in a way that would be readily accessible to both folklorists and scholars outside the discipline.

บทคัดย่อ

ในบทความวิจัยชิ้นนี้ ผู้เขียนต้องการพิจารณาหลักการทางคติชนวิทยา โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งที่เกิดขึ้นในประเทศสหรัฐอเมริกา ภายหลังการจัดตั้งสมาคมคติชนวิทยาอย่างเป็นทางการในปี ค.ศ. 1888 ผู้เขียนยังต้องการศึกษาทิศทางของงานวิจัยด้านคติชนวิทยาในปัจจุบัน เพื่อให้บรรลุวัตถุประสงค์ดังกล่าว ผู้เขียนได้รวบรวมทฤษฎีและตัวอย่างกลยุทธ์ของงานวิจัยเพื่อชี้ให้เห็นขอบเขตและแนวคิดที่ถูกครอบคลุมอยู่ภายใต้การศึกษาแบบคติชนวิทยา ตลอดจนวิธีนำเสนอของนักคติชนวิทยาที่ผสมผสานความคิดจากศาสตร์แขนงอื่น วัตถุประสงค์คือเพื่อนำองค์ความรู้มาต่อยอดเป็นการศึกษาแบบบูรณาการ ผู้เขียนหวังเป็นอย่างยิ่งว่าบทความวิจัยชิ้นนี้จะนำเสนอมุมมองวงกว้างเชิงประวัติศาสตร์การพัฒนาของคติชนวิทยาในประเทศสหรัฐอเมริกา ที่จะเป็นประโยชน์ต่อทั้งนักคติชนวิทยาเองและนักวิชาการในสาขาต่าง ๆ

Introduction

This research paper is written based on an assumption that a discipline of folklore studies would not have emerged without the cooperation and participation of professional and non-professional scholars, of academics and those individuals who work outside the academy, and of people from widely diverse backgrounds. Despite space limitations and the variety of topics included in folklore studies, I am going to organize this research paper in such a way that it creates a conceptual history. The paper is divided into three sections. The first, "Folklore and Other Disciplines," addresses the diverse backgrounds and commitments of scholars from a variety of academic fields whose eclectic interests have produced contemporary folklore scholarships.

The second, "The Concept of 'Folk' and the Shift of Concentration to 'Lore,'" is a revisiting of the different ways in which the word, "folklore," has been defined and redefined since it was coined in 1846 by the British writer William J. Thoms to replace the term, "popular antiquities." In the third section, "Different Approaches to Folklore Research," I reflect upon the development of methodologies that have been employed in the study of folklore, and the movement from textual

analysis to a performance-centered approach. I try to situate these different approaches in the history of the discipline to find out why one particular approach has been a better fit than the others at different times.

Hopefully, the conceptual framework of broad section headings will allow me to address a wide range of issues in historical perspective. While this research may not touch every base of American folklore studies in general, I hope that it effectively reminds folklorists of their source of origin, where they have come from, as well as inform non-folklorists that the discipline of folklore studies has a distinguished record of accomplishment. Throughout its history, American folklore studies have proved distinctive among scholarly activities not only for the cultural materials that are studied, but the appeal that folklore studies have to a broader group of audiences.

Folklore and Other Disciplines

Folklore is a relatively new field of academic study that was introduced in the late twentieth century in the United States. In college, folklore is taught in different departments, and the professors who are interested in folklore studies come from a wide range of academic backgrounds. Graduates of folklore programs have been employed in many different professional fields. Due to its heterogeneous background, contemporary theory and practice in folklore is influenced by other prominent academic disciplines. The academic fields that have contributed to the intellectual stance of folklore studies in the States include, but are not limited to, literary studies, anthropology, linguistics, and history. This close interaction with other disciplines helps create scholarships that are unique to folklore studies.

The professionalization of the study of folklore in the United States was signaled by the formation of the AFS in 1888, which was composed of scholars representing a broad range of university departments (Bronner 2007). When American scholars first adopted folklore scholarship, a celebratory tone was often a feature of their studies. My hypothesis is that they did not want to offend tradition bearers. On the one hand, it is great to hear that the importance of folklore was acknowledged widely. On the other hand, the fact that the study of folklore was scattered all over the place did not allow folklorists to get a comprehensive outlook on the field, dialogue with other colleagues across disciplines, and theorize their approaches (Dorson 1971).

Stith Thompson joined the English department at Indiana University in 1921 and introduced the first folklore course there in 1923. Then, he founded the first U.S. doctoral program in folklore in 1949. The folklore program at Indiana University was elevated and expanded to a greater extent to receive departmental status in 1963 by Thompson's successor, Richard M. Dorson (Green 1997).

With his Ph.D. in Middle English literature, MacEdward Leach helped introduce the second U.S. doctoral folklore program at the University of Pennsylvania in 1959 and trained a significant number of folklorists. American folklore study is still young – one that is still establishing its identity, value, and necessity in the scholarship realm. Today the Folklore and Mythology program at the University of California, Los Angeles, which was founded in 1954, has become a hub of folklore studies on the west coast and conducts both M.A. and Ph.D. programs in folklore and mythology,

in which students are allowed to select courses from diverse departments and tailor them to fit their research interests. These three universities are just a few examples. There are almost a hundred institutions in the United States that offer a folklore major and minor or a concentration in folklore under the aegis of other disciplines, such as English, Anthropology and American Studies (Green 1997). It should also be noted that the attempts to study folklore in the United States during the second half of the twentieth century have become more critical than reflective.

A. Folklore and Literature: The Rivalry Siblings

During the first half of its history, folklore scholarships in the United States was heavily dominated by professors of literature, whose research focused primarily on the ballad and folktale. They studied folk narratives in order to find out how folklore complemented the study of the history of literature. Scholars whose work fit this category were, for example, Francis Child, George Kittredge, Archer Taylor, MacEdward Leach, and Francis Utley. Even the father of American folklore, Stith Thompson, taught in the English Department at Indiana University (Rosenberg 1991). Francis Child was the first scholar who built a harmonious tie between the studies of folklore and literature. Many attempts to bridge the gap between humanities and the social sciences had been made before him, but they were amateur pursuits.

Child's *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* is the largest collection of ballad texts from written sources. His use of systematization or a developmental outline of the ballad and the comprehensiveness of his headnotes exhibited a scientific tendency in the study of both folklore and literature. Child thus established the notion that folklore and literature can be "hard" fields of study based on empirical data and methods (1962). At the same time, his motivation to reveal the paralleled structure in the folksongs, *Märchen,* and myths of the Western world was a persistent attempt to combine anthropological research methods with literary studies of his time (Child 1962).

Georges and Jones (1995) wrote that the work of Child is the legitimate foundation of the historic-geographic school that dominated folktale studies in the first half of the twentieth century. The historic-geographical method was used as a means of approaching and displaying folklore material. It dealt with a still-valid model of research used in the comparative study of literary texts. The historic-geographical method organized the texts in geographical and chronological systems so as to discern which tale variant was the original and what was a later addition. Child employed the historic-geographic method so that he could determine the historical context, geography of a motif and its mapping in order to provide information that could be valuable for one or more cultures. Child's collection was influential on many of his successors who went on to document and index a massive collection. Kittredge's *Witchcraft in Old and New England* (1929), Taylor's *English Riddles from Oral Tradition* (1951), Whiting's *Dictionary of American Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases* (1958), Thompson's *The Types of the Folktale* (1961), and *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* (1955) transcend the legacy of the historic-geographic method that Child had initiated. These works also constitute a huge reference library for comparative folklore study.

Whereas this group of folklorists excelled at the historic-geographic method, many literary critics got tired of source studies and, as a result, redirected their attention to esthetic evaluation

(Gummere 1959). The tension between folklore and literary studies opened the doors for the introduction of new methods. Albert Lord successfully combined the best methods of folkloristic and literary scholarships. He conducted extensive fieldwork to collect oral performances that helped explain the oldest surviving works of western literature. In *Singer of Tales* (1960), Lord introduced the oral-formulaic theory, saying that an elaborate 9,000-line epic was composed in the moment of performance based on the frequent use of formulaic phrases. The key idea of the theory is that poets had a store of formulas, and they could rapidly compose and improvise a longer verse by linking the formulas in a conventionalized way. Lord advocated the idea that the most complicated form of literature arises from the simplest line of the oral tradition.

His oral-formulaic theory attracted the attention of many literary scholars, who debated it and later applied it, with varying success, in the study of narrative poems from different periods. For instance, Bruce Rosemberg's *Art of the American Folk Preacher* (1970) examines the oral-formulaic style of Afro-American sermons. David Buchan's *The Ballad and the Folk* (1972) conjectures that Scottish folksongs were once composed in performance. However, the oral-formulaic theory itself did not close the gap that divided folklore from literary studies.

B. Folklore and Anthropology: The Boasian Influence

It is noted that folklore studies in the late nineteenth century was dominated not only by literary but also by anthropological approaches. Zumwalt (1988) has discussed this great division, indeed conflict, between literary and anthropological approaches in American folklore scholarship. American literary folklorists limited themselves to studying European folklore whereas anthropological folklorists looked at different kinds of *exotic* peasant cultures. By having a strong hold on the Journal of American Folklore (JAF), the anthropological folklorists excluded works by the literary folklorists. In the same vein, by examining merely the written texts of literate populations, literary folklorists were ignoring the folk aspect of folklore and how culture impacts the texts.

The American Folklore Society is oriented towards the anthropological approach mainly because of the work of William Wells Newell and Franz Boas. Both were the major forces in the early years of the AFS. They believed in the conception of folklore as a division of broader science of anthropology. Newell (1963) attempted to professionalize folklore and distinguished himself from the nonprofessionals in folklore by including a significant portion of anthropological data in his research. He founded the AFS in 1888 and was glad to have Franz Boas as his ally; this gave him lots of freedom in AFS matters. Newell got control over the form of publication and published items more quickly.

Boas also benefited greatly from his relationship with Newell and the AFS. Unlike other anthropological journals, the AFS gave him as well as his students a platform and profound opportunities to publish their work. He tried to obtain positions of influence in the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the Bureau of American Ethnology, but his attempt failed due to his different approach to anthropology (Horton 2007). A major contribution in Boas' approach to folklore study was good fieldwork. Boas was trained to regard fieldwork as mere collecting. For him, fieldwork was far removed from typical nineteenth-century ethnographic

scholarship, which was defined as the comparison, analysis, and interpretation of materials. Boas' work provided a more systematic approach to folklore, which entailed the collection of firsthand materials with intensive interviews.

Boas usually relied on one single informant from a community that he wanted to study, which was a very unusual practice in his day. In *Tsimshian Mythology* (1916), Boas suggested that folklorists should not restrict their work only to "star" informants or to the "correct" version of an item when variants occurred. Boas believed that folklorists should enter their fieldwork with an open heart and without any preconceived ideas about their informants and their societies. Every culture has its own concepts, categories, and biases; the folklorist's assumptions would only serve to hinder their judgment. Boas claimed that accurately recorded data would direct the interpretation and a true understanding of another culture. In addition to his published works, Boas was a very influential figure in the field of anthropological folklore as a teacher. Some of his notable students include A.L. Kroeber, Robert Lowie, Martha Beckwith, Ruth Benedict, and Melville Jacobs.

Boas' influence on American folklore scholarship had both positive and negative results. One negative aspect of his influence was an overemphasis on Native American folklore. He focused primarily on the bygone traditions, the so-called "memory culture," and therefore saw no need to learn more about the living bearers of a tradition. His interest in Native American culture reinforced the existing idea that folklore only existed among people outside the mainstream of civilization. He believed that primitive man was our ancestor, and folklore offered vital insights into primitive thought. For Boas, folklore translated into the primitive arts and had importance only as a means to an end. Through a study of "aboriginal" lore, we can eventually arrive at what he called "original culture."

C. Folklore and Linguistics: From Boas to Hymes

Another interesting idea about fieldwork that Boas used in *Tsimshian Mythology* (1916) is that the texts were collected in their native language with the aid of skilled interpreters whenever necessary. This proposal required that folklore intersect with linguistics. Boas was concerned that any recorded text would remain a primary source of material also for contemporary folklorists, whose interests might not necessarily be the same as those that motivated the original collector. One of Boas' best-known students in linguistics, Edward Sapir, placed a similar emphasis on situating language within its cultural contexts. Sapir supported the idea that we need to consider myth, tale, and everyday conversations as social and cultural products that did not just mirror reality but were constitutive of it (1999). The contribution Sapir made to linguistics and folklore went beyond the contextualization of materials.

Both Boas and Sapir saw linguistics and anthropology as united. Folklore texts can be used as primary sources to answer questions about language, grammar, diffusion and expressive behavior. Another folklorist who contributed greatly to the intersection of folklore and linguistics was Dell Hymes. He pioneered and produced excellent work in the field of ethnopoetics. The term, "ethnopoetics," was coined in the late 1960s by Jerome Rothenberg (1968), who was looking for a better means of translating oral poetries, specifically from Native American cultures. Rothenberg found out that

many translations of Native American oral traditions were inadequate. They failed to encapsulate the power and beauty of the oral performance on a written page; often times, translators changed Native American poems through the use of Western poetic styles.

For those Native American languages that are still alive, publication is generally feasible. But many Native American languages have disappeared with there no longer being any native speakers left. Dell Hymes, in *Foundations in Sociolinguistics* (1974), noticed some difficulties in accommodating oral speech to the demands of orthography. Thus, Hymes was driven to investigate ways in which orthography could be adjusted to translate the nuances of native speech more accurately (1974). His work was with texts that could no longer be checked with native speakers of the language. His effort in the ethnography of speaking sets up a good model for an entire group of his graduate students to appreciate the difficulties of translating the spoken word into print. Hymes' linguistic approach to folklore study is often tied as part of the precursor to performance.

D. Folklore and History: The Indistinct Connection

Some might find it surprising that folklore, with its emphasis on tradition and interpretations of the past, has had no formal disciplinary connection with history. This was particularly true in the early years despite the fact that folklorists employed the historic-geographic approach in their research. On the other hand, historians used folk materials to provide information about the past that was unavailable from any other source. The lack of formal tie is likely because historians did not get involved in leadership roles in the AFS, unlike anthropologists and literary scholars. In addition, the AFS had not met with historical organizations as often as it had with both the American Anthropological Association and the Modern Language Association. A lot of historians simply doubted the oral versions where folklorists saw them as a legitimate source of information. However, things began to change when the AFS and the Mississippi Valley Historical Society met jointly in 1953 to form an unofficial policy of nonintercourse (Parker 1976). It was not until the 1980s that historians started looking seriously at oral history as a legitimate methodology.

In spite of the lack of formal correlation, both folklorists and historians produced scholarship on many of the same materials. Their interactions through texts and materials center around two viewpoints. Firstly, many scholars see folklore as an outgrowth of historical events, experiences and conditions, and suggest that folklore can be understood more fully only when it is placed in its proper historical context. The leading scholar for this school of thought is Richard Dorson. Dorson (1952, 1959, 1973, 1981) suggested that American folklore has been shaped by different historical phenomena, including colonization, the encounter with Native American cultures, the frontier, slavery, immigration, regional development, and industrialization.

Moreover, Folklorists have used historical contexts to study specific genres or groups. Roger Welsch (1972) argued that American tall tale humor exhibits the historical and geographic conditions on the American frontier in the nineteenth century which carry on to survive in the West and Midwest nowadays. In *Belle Gunness, The Lady Bluebeard* (1985), Janet Langlois convincingly wrote that different versions of the Gunness legend in the community's history reflect economic

conditions and value systems at the particular times when the stories were recorded. In sharp contrast to those folklorists and historians who use folklore as evidence in historical reconstruction and interpretation, scholars who analyze folklore in its historical context have not necessarily been concerned with the historical content of the folklore materials they use. It is this approach that has produced most of the work in folklore-and-history scholarship.

In opposition to this school of thought, there is another group of folklorists and historians who see folk traditions as historical evidence and use them as primary sources of historical information that is missing from written documentation. There are quite a few scholars who subscribe to this view. For instance, Thomas D. Clark gathered traditional games and humorous stories of the folklife of the trans-Appalachian West for his book, *The Rampaging Frontier* (1939) and Lynwood Montell put together the unrecorded history of a rural black community of southern Kentucky after the Civil War in *Saga of Coe Ridge* (1970). These studies show that social historians can use folklore to help them articulate the role of the folk in history.

E. Folklore and Cultural Studies: A Signifier of National Identity

Last but not least, folklore is employed as a medium to observe the promotion of nationalism in the field of cultural studies. The interconnection of folklore and national identity started when National Socialists of the Third Reich used folklore as a way to gain control over the German people and unite them under fascism. Emmerich (1994) pointed out that the folklore used by National Socialists was built on myths, a mythos that disguised reality with ideology, and that fascism "applied social and historical myths for the first time" (35). The folklore used by National Socialists was not just about invoking Germanic-Aryan or Nordic community for national solidarity; it was also about erasing Jews and Jewish folklore. It built myths around the Jews through anti-Jewish folktales, songs, etc.

Daxelmüller (1994) pointed out that the dismissal and extermination of the Jews literally wiped out those Jews who worked to preserve and share Jewish folklore. During this time, the word, "race," became a powerful tool, specifically in the anti-Semitic racial teachings of the National Socialists. Daxelmüller added that Jews recognized the danger of race classification and referred to themselves as a "tribe" rather than a race. By talking about racial theory in the context of Jews, the Jews brought more attention to it. This example illustrates how folklore can perpetuate images about groups, whether true or not. It also raises the question of how those groups can counter the effects without bringing more power and attention to the damaging images.

On the contrary, folklore might be used as a uniting force – as reminder of shared humanity and identity. Reuss (2000) wrote that folklore provided emotional solace in difficult times of war and conflict and helped ease the burdens of toil and misery. One crucial reason that Germans felt drawn towards the movement was the workforce shift from centralized farming communities to industrialization and job segmentation. Industrialization had the effect of dehumanizing its workers. People became replaceable and the existence and importance of communities and family life entered a state of decline. This feeling of loss of community encouraged Germans to grasp onto

the movement towards making people important by reuniting them with their common history and folklore (Bausinger 1994).

In the 1930s, because of the Great Depression and the Second World War, American people had lost their belief in the American dream. A group of historians tried to redefine American national characteristics. They examined Appalachian traditions to look for elements that would encourage a sense of hope and unite the people. The Jack tales stood out. The character of Jack is unique and perfectly fits the circumstance. He has no parents, no past, no life cycle, no marriage, and no children. Jack creates his own future and finally becomes successful (Chase 1943, McCarthy 1994). Jack was promoted as an American national hero and remained a role model. The secret of America's sovereignty lay in its rejection of its European past. The Jack tales seem to offer independent confirmation that the American folk hero is a new man shaped by a new land.

The Concept of "Folk" and the Shift of Concentration to "Lore"

During the nineteenth century, European scholars used the term, "folk," in a very particular sense. The term referred to the uncivilized element in a civilized society or the illiterate in a literate society. The folk groups were mainly peasants who lived in rural, marginalized communities. Dundes, in an article "Who are the Folk?" (1980), pointed out that primitive peoples were not considered as folk then. The European scholars believed primitive peoples had mythology whereas civilized peoples had folklore. Anthropologist Robert Redfield (1955) seconded this European-oriented outlook saying that the concept of folk should not be applied to primitive societies since they were self-sustaining and had no communal ties with other social configurations or the external world.

The concept of folk has been transforming tremendously since the foundation of AFS. Newell once announced that the major purpose of the *Journal of American Folklore* was to collect and study the fast-vanishing remains and dying traditions of folklore in America. Newell implicitly was talking about the "Old English" traditions. So, many folklorists identified folk groups as those settlers of early America and their descendants who came from Great Britain, especially Scotland and Northern Ireland, and who settled in the remote, isolated areas of Appalachia and other hillbilly regions.

In the first issue of JAF, Newell (1888) expressed his belief, which has usually endorsed by other scholars, that "Old English" folklore could be collected in the States more easily than in its native British Isles. He proposed that the collection of such traditions should become a major mission of the AFS. Newell was only interested in fossilized imports and cultural relics and did not recognize the possibility of a living American tradition. Following Newell's proposition, a music teacher, Cecil Sharp, went to the mountains of North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia to document as many traditional ballads and folksongs as possible, almost all of which he later published in a two-volume edition of *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians* (1932).

In the same article, Newell (1888) called for the collection of the Indian Tribes' traditions claiming that "their picturesque and wonderful life will soon be absorbed and lost in the uniformity

of the modern world." Newell extended the meaning of folk groups to include not only European peasants in isolated regions but also the "noble savages." The quantity of Native American folklore was monumental probably more than Newell would have thought possible. The pioneering ethnographic works that served Newell's premise are, for example, Schoolcraft's *The Indian Tribes of the United States* (1884), Mathews' *Navaho Legends* (1897), and Fletcher's *Indian Story and Song from North America* (1900). Yet, the collection seemed to have limited value since the ethnographers did not pay attention to context, meaning or function of the materials.

Then, Franz Boas and his students joined Newell. Boas and his students did not necessarily share Newell's above-mentioned views, but they were interested in the same folk groups – the Native American Indian Tribes. The period roughly from 1900 to 1940 was a golden age for Native American folklore. Boas, in *Anthropology in North America* (1915), deemed Native American lore as autobiography of the tribe whereas one of Boas' most respected students, Ruth Benedict (1923), used Native American folklore materials to explain how traditional narrative may be a reflection of culture. There were at least thirteen collections and analyses of Indian folklore that were published from 1898 to 1940. Anthropological folklorists contributed profusely to these collections, in addition to Boas, prominent names were Elsie Clews Parsons and Morris Edward Opler.

The rigor of Native American folklore studies was interrupted by the introduction of textual analysis in 1950s and 1960s. Scholars were intrigued and eventually distracted from their fieldwork by the idea that they could go to the library and compile folklore. At the same time, many anthropological folklorists withdrew from the AFS and were replaced by individuals from other disciplines. Due to the transformation of folklore methods and the replacement of anthropological folklorists, folklore research moved away from Native American traditions and toward Anglo-American lore. Yet some studies continued. Barre Toelken and Larry Evers (2001) reconsidered collaborative folkloric work done in and on Native American communities and reflected upon previous practices. Coffin (1961) put together the structural typology of North American Indian folktales and other articles.

The image of the "folk" as "noble savage" was applied not only to Native Americans but also to African Americans. When Newell (1888) declared his mission statement in the first volume of JAF, he categorized "negro music and songs" and "beliefs and superstitions" as ones of the fast-vanishing remains. He (1888) wrote that they constituted "a race who for good or ill, are henceforth an indissoluble part of the body politic of the United States." The works that perpetuated the image of black Americans as African savages and regarded them as a culturally inferior group were, for example, Jones' *Negro Myths from the Georgia Coast* (1888) and Christensen's *Afro-American Folk Lore* (1892). Recent publications provide a much more sensible analysis of African American folklore.

The 1920s marked the emergence of the concept of African Americans as rural southern peasants who were bearers of a Jim Crow culture. Collections of folktale such as Hurston's *Mules and Men* (1935) and Brewer's *The Word on the Brazos* (1953) are prime examples of contemporary studies of rural southern folklore in African American literature. One of the most important works that offered a more humane image of black folks as the bearers of traditions is *Up from Slavery,* which was written by Booker T. Washington (1965), the former slave who rose from poverty to prominence.

Perhaps the reason why African American folk culture became a focal point was that they embodied the folk aspect that drew attention from anthropological folklorists. African Americans were enslaved, did not perfectly fit in the white society which most scholars came from, and thus were regarded as the "marginalized others." At the same time, African Americans inherited reading and writing literacy from European culture. Books from formerly enslaved Africans, such as Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass* (1963), included plenty of narratives that were of major interest to literary folklorists. Zumwalt (1988) argues that the same material could mean different things to a folklorist of the literary or anthropological school; the key is the frame of reference in which the material is placed.

The main question in African American folklore scholarship from the 1930s to the 1950s focused on whether African American spirituals evolved out of African American culture or were adapted from white southern culture. The debate continues, but there is general agreement that African-American spirituals show both African preservation and Anglo-American influence. The 1960s marked the birth of the notion of African Americans as *urban dwellers* that are bearers of *fluid, living* traditions. Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1966) represents African Americans in a more realistic light.

Native Son documents an angry, foolish and young Black man named Bigger Thomas. He had big dreams of becoming an aviator, but the lack of opportunity forced him to live in a rat-infested room with his mother and two siblings. He just wanted to be left alone but his suffocating world would soon torture him with relentless attention. He was just like many young black men who had to struggle against the prejudice during the age of segregation. The perception of the African American has shifted from African savages to urban, civilized civilians in folklore scholarships in the past hundred years. (Abrahams 1978). A more recent emphasis on their urban lifestyle is reflected via the studies of African Americans in popular media and by the analysis of black stereotypes.

The question, "who are the folk?" is another crucial question that was central to early academic discussions of folklore. Since the primary statement that Newell made, the concept of folk has altered immensely. Alan Dundes (1980) called for the re-definition of folk groups. Dundes convincingly argued that the "folk" were not only the rural, pre-literate, primarily European peasant classes. Rather, everyone was a member of numerous folk groups and participated in the creation and/or perpetuation of a group's traditions in a passive or active way or somewhere in-between. Folklore was not dead or dying. Folklore was vibrant; it was all around us; and, it was part of the creative expression of individuals who lived their lives in all sorts of groups.

It is this view of folklore as dynamic, as something people create and recreate, as participatory and pervasive, that underlies the modern field of folkloristics. "Folk" is not the only part that has acquired a more inclusive meaning. The term, "lore," has been through many different re-characterizations, from tangible to intangible heritages. Lately, attention has been given to the context and transmission of lore rather than simply the "lore" itself. This is because of the introduction of the performance-centered approach in which scholars look at folklore as communication. The unit of analysis increasinly moves toward a micro level and focuses on how folklore is performed in a situated context. New types of lore have been multiplied, including bodylore, net-lore, and xerox folklore.

The term, "folklore" is an improvement over the original, "popular antiquities," which misled people by making them think of tangible collectible items that people find valuable. Blake (2000) addressed this terminological problem, using the terms, "cultural heritage," expanded from "cultural properties," which implies culture is a commodity and can only be discovered. The statement conveys a negative connotation; it suggests that folklore is static and exists in the past and that folklore is a "falsify, wrongness, fantasy, and distortion" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995). This misunderstanding positions the field of folklore as unprogressive and requires it to rely on history.

Seal (1989) suggested that the study of folklore should not be restricted merely to tangible heritages. Given his basis of semiological analysis, Seal divided folklore into four major categories: verbal, behavioral, material, and non-verbal forms. Bauman (1992) took the next step to categorize the sub-genres. He wrote that verbal form includes folktale, myth, proverb, riddle, song, oral poetry, speech play, insult, and gossip. The behavioral form consists of belief, tradition, game, ritual, festival, and celebration. Clothing, food, mask, and artifact are all sub-types of the material form. The non-verbal form ranges from gesture, dance, mime, to graffiti.

Folklore is not static; it always adapts and adopts new transformations that are needed for its survival in a modern society. Ben-Amos (1971) stated that folklore is an "organic phenomenon," meaning it can travel from one culture to another and across language boundaries. When folklore forms are created, "their indigenous environments and cultural contexts are not required for their continuous existence... [T]he materials of folklore are mobile, manipulative, and transcultural." In the course of its journey, folklore retains traces of similarities and at the same time welcomes conflicting narratives. The only context that folklore needs is not the one that it originated from, but it is the situated context in which it is performed (Hufford 2003).

Titon (2003) wrote that text, which is a script or written document in this sense, appears as unimportant. Text for folklorists means the performance itself or what Titon called "knowing texts." Folk artists know a plot of what will happen by heart, and their narratives are based on knowing these texts. They adjust their stories to fit the responses from the audiences they have at particular moments. One part of their narratives might be stretched for an hour with one group if people seem to be really involved whereas the same section might be told in a few minutes if another audience does not render the same eager response. Lancaster (1977) observed a folk performance that had been running in northern Thailand for at least 12 years. There was never one time that it was performed exactly the same way as it had been before.

Folklore scholarship in the United States came into a clearer development during the 1970s when a group of young folklorists began to question and argue against the item-focused theory and collection-centric activity that had been proposed by Toelken (1979). They moved toward to a focus on context and performance. This group of young folklorists objected to the text being "extrapolated" from its context in language, behavior, expression, communication, and performance. This move, from viewing folklore as artifact to viewing it in its social context, re-established folklore among the social sciences and began to lay a stronger foundation for the field. Several of these folklorists, who contributed to the new perspectives, are known as the young Turks: they include

Roger Abrahams, Alan Dundes, Dan Ben-Amos, Robert Georges, Kenneth Goldstein, and Richard Bauman. These scholars have been recognized as the intellectual leaders in folklore studies in the second half of the 20th century.

The young Turks outlined a distinct way of making an analysis, and in the special issue of the JAF entitled, "Toward New Perspectives in Folklore," established distinct ways of approaching the study of folklore and theories of folklore scholarship. The Young Turks emphasized the role of identity in folklore, how to embrace the power of folklore through material as well as expressive means, and how folklore can take public and personal forms that bring about both continuity and change within a group (Abrahams 1971). Folklore is deployed as a way of communicating identity (Ben Amos 1971), as a way to understand individual identity, group identity, and the world (Dundes 1972), and to expand, refine, and clarify our definition of groups (Bauman 1972). Taken together, this group of rising folklorists has argued for a re-orientation of folklore as a discipline, a redefining of its province, and a rejection of conventional boundaries of genre and theory.

The Young Turks claimed that the main purpose of cultural preservation was to allow the younger generations to determine a new group identity. They argued that folklorists should be directed to how folklore is performed in different societies, spaces and times, and how the performances constitute new meanings (Goldstein 1972, Hymes 1974, Rappoport 1989, Oring 1994, Readings 1996). Moreover, they maintained that folklore also used to reach out and communicate with a larger group of people and helps bring about a strong sense of community. Rawlence (1979) pointed out that folklore responds to certain needs of people that cannot be met by institutions and new media. A person can watch television at home by himself and enjoys an ongoing program. However, for a story to be told, we need at least two people to form a group: one as a storyteller and the other as a participant.

Folk performance encourages a collective experience and active response. A talented storyteller usually dialogues with his audiences, asks questions, and sometimes asks his audiences to help a character make a decision. Neal and Robidoux (1995) argued that the phenomenological approach to the study of folklore allows audiences to develop shared experiences as well as become co-authors. Their role is not passive. They feel connected, have control over the narratives, and should be able to claim their subjectivity through the narratives (Benjamin 1968, Jackson 2002). The communication between a storyteller and the audiences are a two-way street; they are able to give feedback to one another and equally take turn to become a message sender and receiver (Lerner & Nelson 1977).

Kapchan (2003) reviewed the nature of a folklore performance in any expressive culture and concluded that it consists of four basic characteristics. They are (1) "Performance is public; it needs audience," (2) "Performance is set apart from practice," (3) "Performance is participative," and (4) "Performance is transformative." Any gifted storytellers is able to break through tradition and restrictions and offer alternative interpretations in various contexts. According to Linda Dégh (1969), it is vital that we know how these individuals get their hands on their stories, and how they formulate and perform their texts under the influence of personal motivations and social situations.

Different Approaches to Folklore Research

The early study of folklore used to be done in a celebratory manner as folklorists feared they would offend bearers of folk tradition, and thus refused to make a critical judgment. Critical ethnography is conventional ethnography with a political purpose; it has led folklore study in a whole new direction. Critical ethnography has convinced folklorists to believe there is a way to be critical and respectful while talking about either their own or different cultures. And, it is important to do that if they want folklore to be recognized as a legitimate and grounded field of study (Sims and Stephens 2005). Many critical approaches have been applied to conduct folklore research since the late twentieth century. The following are some examples of different approaches that have been usefully and successfully practiced in the field.

In 1846, the British scholar William Thoms coined the term, "folklore," which drew people's attention to a new realm of uncollected and unsystematic data. Hundreds of folk narratives were collected. Early methods of folklore study dealt with how to categorize them in a more systematic order. The two most important works were Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* (1932-36) and Aarne's *The Types of the Folktale* (1928), which displayed the similarity of tales throughout the world and underlined the common elements in them. Their collections remain standard references particularly for comparative folklore research nowadays.

When folklorists had a solid collection of traditional narratives and saw recurring patterns in different versions, they began to wonder what constituted such variations and what happened during folklore transmission. The two dominant approach to the study of folklore at that stage were the **historic-geographic method** and the **theory of tale transmission. The historic-geographic method** was developed by a Finnish folklorists, Kaarle Krohn. In *Folklore Methodology* (1971), he identified the use of the same folklore motif to show where the tale came from in terms of their regional and ethnic subtypes, and possibly to theorize the archetypes. However, Krohn's method was criticized on the grounds that it did not explain the social role and goal of the tale.

Linda Dégh (1969) said that the social role and goal of the tale could only be detected through a fieldwork study in a living storytelling community. The formation and continuation of tradition (tale) is determined mostly by tale bearers. In a society, in which storytelling is not an important activity, a tale can be reduced to "a sterile version of the mere plot," yet gifted storytellers can bring these lifeless skeletons to life and equip them with new motifs. She acknowledged that storytellers have to work with social restrictions and their creativity is "controlled by tradition" (44). The historic-geographic approach had isolated texts and elements of texts, and mapped them in terms of age and geographic location as part of a system of scientific classification.

The clearest example of the application of the **theory of tale transmission** is a study of the tale of Cinderella, which has been told in many different languages all around the world. A collection by Sierra (1992) alone contains up to 25 version of the tale from many regions, yet there are a lot more stories, which have been left unrecorded. The most well-known and standard version of the Cinderella tale was written by Perrault (Zipes 1997). Perrault's version, nevertheless, does not close up further possibilities in retelling the story. In fact, it has provoked a lot of new adaptations. An ideal

goal of the theory of tale transmission is to bring a mutual understanding of the standards of behavior or cultural pluralism of various ethnic culture groups.

The story of Cinderella is anonymous. Nobody can tell exactly what the original one is. Yolen (1982) quoted Joseph Jacobs, who was an "indefatigable Victorian collector," who said that the Cinderella story is "an English version of an Italian adaptation of a Spanish translation of a Latin version of a Hebrew translation of an Arabic translation of an Indian original" (297). Dundes (1982) wrote that it was not until 1932 that a complete version of Cinderella was introduced to the western world because of a relentless effort by R.D. Jameson.

There are two major possibilities why the Cinderella tale has been transmitted all over the world. First of all, it fulfills "a fundamental dream" of human beings (Kitzhaber 1968; Taylor 1982). Mei (1990) stated that it is "a middle class myth," in which people try to romanticize a dream of middle-class women (117). It is so not a coincidence for her that all variants tend to share the same story line. The second reason is that the story was transformed in different countries through a borrowing process during the time of colonization (Gardner and Newell 1960).

Another dominant approach to folklore studies was **structuralism**. An attempt to make a connection between folklore and structuralism was first made by Vladimir Propp in the mid-twentieth century. Structuralism looks for hidden patterns, implicit rules, as well as underlying dynamics that structure various areas of human activity; it underlines the significance of textual analysis (Mead & Métrau 1953). No single element in the system has meaning except as an integral part of a set of structural connections. In *The Morphology of the Folktale* (1968), Propp studied the narrative structures of several Russian folk tales by breaking them down into analyzable elements, or "morphemes." By putting them into their smallest narrative units, or "narratemes," Propp was able to arrive at a typology of narrative structures. Propp's approach to folklore was a breakthrough both in folklore and linguistics. He had influences on his contemporaries, including Claude Lévi-Strauss and Roland Barthes.

Lévi-Strauss (1963) studied the interconnections in myth and serial drama. The structure of both was divided into integral compartments that repeat in a cyclical structure. These interconnections are said to be binary in nature and are viewed as the permanent, organizational categories of experience. For example, in order to understand mythical language, we have to decode the binary oppositions in serial drama. Myth does not necessarily need a happy ending and or a resolution to conflicts that have happened whereas serial drama often requires poetic justice – that good is rewarded and bad punished. Lévi-Strauss (1973) maintained that this phenomenon was caused by the fact that modern men violated the order of nature. As a cultural product, serial drama is an endeavor of modern men to purge their soul or get back to nature. Like myth, serial drama serves to create a moral order here.

An approach that followed structuralism was **functionalism**, which was developed through the lens of anthropology. Functionalism complicated the issue of textual analysis versus contextual analysis. A leading scholar in functionalism was Bronislaw Malinowski, who insisted that ethnographers must keep close, regular contact with their informants if they wanted to adequately record the imponderabilia of everyday life. Malinowski (1971) embraced the value of studying everyday life in even its mundane aspects. For him it was not enough to simply record what tribal members said about their religious

beliefs, sexual practices, marriage customs, or trade relationships. A more important thing was to study how this measured up to what they did in every day life.

Functionalism prepared folklorists in the second half of the twentieth century for a radical departure from previous folklore scholarships. They abandoned the tendency to examine folklore only as transcribed texts or as items isolated from the original contexts. A group of young folklorists established a **performance-centered approach**. It was with the publication of *Toward New Perspectives in Folklore* (1972) by Richard Bauman and Américo Paredes that clearly positioned folklore as performance and communication. They articulated the approach as a fruitful framework for the documentation and analysis of traditional materials.

Before this radical shift in trends and directions, there were a few scholars who had tried to incorporate performance theory to a study of culture. Dégh (1969) introduced a performer-centered approach, in which she argued that storytellers had a key role in any folk performance and folklorists should establish a close relationship with them in order to find out how their lives shaped their narratives. In addition, Goffman (1959) gave a remark on factors that determined human responses on various situational contexts. He wrote, "A performance may be defined as all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants (15). One of Goffman's major arguments here is that there is no such a thing as an *absolute truth* behind human mask. If there is a truth, it lies in a performance at that particular moment.

The young Turks took a step forward and suggested that each performance is complete in itself. Background knowledge of where a performer comes from and how his native culture shapes his act is a compliment to the interpretation. The bottom line is that when people perform a story, they may or may not bring parts of their identities to the story and, at the same time, invent pseudo-selves only for that performance. Dell Hymes (1981) introduced the term, "ethnopoetics," when they argued that the vibe of oral performance cannot be documented through transcription. There is a loss in translation. The rhymes, rhythms, pauses, and intonations that are probably most valuable in a performance are omitted. Hymes wrote that the transcription helps audiences to understand what is being said during the performance, but it does not convey how it is said. The transcription may give a cultural context, in which a performance is held, but it does not explain a situated context.

Bauman (1977) discussed the situated context in details, using a performance of an oral epic as his instance. A producer of the performance or a person who was in charge wanted to situate different groups of audiences in exactly the same pattern. Therefore, a performer was trained to memorize the lines and practiced the intonation and pauses. He added that the idea of folk performance was to counter the fixity of written texts and "bring about a major reconceptualization of the nature of the text" (40). A well-trained performance of an epic might indicate excellent production planning; nonetheless, it fails to elevate a written text to a more meaningful level. In agreement with Bauman, Briggs (1988) said that "folkloric performances are not simply repetitions of time-worn traditions; they rather provide common ground between a shared textual tradition and a host of unique human encounters, thus preserving the vitality and dynamism of the past as they endeavor to make sense of the present" (xv).

There is a huge collection of significant scholarships on folklore as performance and communication – far too much to mention here. Goldstein and Ben-Amos co-edited *Folklore: Performance and Communication* (1975), which contains Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett's "A Parable in Context" and Dell Hymes' "Breakthrough into Performance." Hymes published a monumental key text, *The Ethnography of Communication* (1964), which discusses ways in which communication is conventionalized in a given community of users. Even though the performance-oriented folklorists tend to give their attention to verbal art forms, some have used performance theory to study other folklore genres, such as games and festivals.

All of the abovementioned examples use research methods that have been used in contemporary folklore scholarships in the past hundred years. Some of them still need a re-definition. A good thing about folklore being a relatively new discipline is that folklore scholars have plenty of room to experiment, question, and re-visit their research methods. Folklorists seem to agree on one simple remark – that they do not get to choose an approach. It is very likely that the decision for an appropriate research method has already been determined for them by the nature of their research projects and the culture that they seek to study.

Epilogue

When folklore has been bent to serve a political purpose, and the meaning of lore has been fundamentally changed, it must be hard to see the original shape of that folk artifact. Dorson (1972) wrote that folklore scholars tried to advance their discipline to make it as respected as the other social sciences with which it competed and was compared to, such as sociology, anthropology, and history. Ethnography may still be the primary means of study, but the subject matter of people, events, culture, and material is much greater than just *arts and crafts* (Dundes 1989, Jackson 1987). In addition to the ethnographic works which constitute its major component, contemporary folklore research demands several in-depth ways of analyzing data that folklorists collect.

In order for folklore to gain acknowledgement as a rigorous standalone field of study, theories, structures and metrics arose to give credibility to folklore's viability as a social science. Many folklorists entered the dispute and gathered their followers. The subsequent debates and testing of the assumptions gave rise to new theories and new debates, but each new cycle of scholarship furthered the advance of the discipline and the sensitivity of its practice (Wilson 1989). Folklore scholars moved from the romantic nationalism of the nineteenth century to the twentieth century – many years of rebellion, practicing folklore in their own individualistic way. Contemporary folklorists are now beginning to examine and incorporate traces of folklore to form a more solid, stronger academic discipline that does not focus on one monolithic view, and which is working to ensure that the view of the nation-state and even public folklore institutions do not misuse and manipulate the legacy of the "folk" for their own interests (Burns 1989).

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