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Special Topic on “Fieldwork with Empathy”

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Main Abstracts

From “Item-centered” Fieldwork to Internet Ethnography: A Journey of Exploring the Research Methods on Contemporary Mythology in 30 Years

YANG Lihui

Taking the author’s 30-year process of exploring research methods on contemporary mythology as an example, this paper illuminates that the modes of fieldwork are not fixed; rather, they keep changing even in a certain folklorist’s career, and the key to decide the mode lies in the questions the author intends to answer and the theoretical perspective he/she adopts. The “item-centered” fieldwork focuses on the investigation of the history, structure, general practice process and the current existence condition of a specific folklore item, but not the situation and emic perspectives. Ethnographic fieldwork pays more attention to the context in which folklore item exists, especially the situation, and the emic perspectives of the practitioners. Folklore item, situation, and the interaction between the subjects are the “three key elements” of such fieldwork. Ethnographic fieldwork is still fundamental for studying the mythologism shaped by the cultural industry and electronic technology. However, due to the mobility and virtuality of the research object, it shows some special aspects, especially when being used to study the electronic media. The item-centered fieldwork and its “text-centered” perspective are still reasonable to some degree. Relevant research has prompted a clear present-facing orientation among Chinese mythology scholarship.

Key words: contemporary mythology; fieldwork; item-centered fieldwork; ethnographic fieldwork; internet ethnography

The Body in the Field: Fieldwork as an Embodied Practice

PENG Mu

Fieldwork is an embodied practice for fieldworkers. Early ethnographic theory of participant observation obscures not only the fact of the actual presence of the body of the fieldworker, but the so-called objectivity is based upon the subjectivity of the fieldworker and the field process. Examining theories and methodologies of fieldwork in the history of American folklore studies after the performance paradigm shift in the past century, this paper delineates how different ways of presence of the body are related to theoretical and methodological transformations in the discipline, especially how they shape and are shaped by the performance-centered approach. From transient collecting to involved participant, I further explore the potential and meaning of fieldwork for the discipline of folklore studies in general.

Key words: fieldwork; embodiment; field presence; transient collecting; involved participant; self; bodily knowing

Cattle Trade Customs and Commercial Networks in the Republican Period:

An Experiment in Wide-scale Interview Outsourcing

LIU Qinli, [US]Thomas DuBois

This article outlines the authors’ experience of outsourcing oral histories on China’s cattle trade before 1949, a topic that required a large number of oral history interviews conducted with local knowledge and in local dialect. Inspired by the virtual ethnographic methods that have arisen in response to Covid, we trained students to interview their family elders in a way that would provide usable information to the project organizers. Our operational model is efficient, reliable, and replicable to other sorts of ethnography. We close by reflecting on the role of virtual community in shaping the ethnographic relationship.

Key words: historical fieldwork; social media; oral history of cattle trade; outsourcing

Nomadic Imagination and Performance: An Interpretation of the Reconstruction Process of

***Aobao* Sacrifice in Inner Mongolia**

Menggedalai, LU Yilong

The current reconstruction of *Aobao* sacrifice in pastoral areas is not a simple phenomenon of cultural recovery, but a way for herdsmen in the real field to construct their own identity and ideal community, which has profound characteristics of the times. The livelihood problem and the risk of community deconstruction

brought about by the individualized operation caused the herdsmen's cognitive crisis for themselves and the pastoral area, and the *Aobo* sacrificial ceremony carrying the traditional culture just became the local resources to integrate the community and ensure the self-certainty. Therefore, the reconstruction of *Aobo* ceremony is not only a simple reflection of social structure, but also a process of performance and interpretation of the subject's self, community and social environment based on traditional resources in combination with current needs and future expectations.

Key words: grassland pastoral area; imagination; *Aobao*; herdsmen; performance

The Rural World in the Troubled Time and the Nightmare not Being Loosed:

Preface to the Photocopied Manuscript *Tuixiangzhai Diary*

ZHAO Shiyu

Scholars both at home and abroad have done some research in recent years on the *Tuixiangzhai* Diary written by a countryside elite Liu Dapeng in Shanxi and extracted later by Professor Qiao Zhiqiang. The photocopied manuscripts of this diary collected by Shanxi Province Library will be published. This diary originally of more than 200 copies is a "moral diary" imitating that of Zeng Guofan, and his record of the living world around him can be regarded as an expression of his life philosophy. Qing loyalist Liu Dapeng, who called himself "a man awakened from the dreams", regarded the new world he lived in, though rejecting it in his heart, as the dreamland. Therefore, Liu Dapeng's record of the living world in his diary has also to be regarded as a record of his dreamland. When people show the officialdom, public morals, institutional changes and events through the diaries, the particularity of the diary as a personal genre cannot be neglected.

Key words: Liu Dapeng; *Tuixiangzhai Diary*; the man awakened from the dreams

The Idea and Local Practice of Compiling the Catalogue of Chinese Precious Scrolls:

With *Changshu Baojuan* as an Example

CHEN Yongchao

It is necessary to compile a reasonable Catalogue of Chinese Precious Scrolls, but there are at least four dilemmas that require more attempts from scholars in both the textual perspective and the practical perspective. The former can be achieved by drawing on the general principles of bibliography and the existing experimental results, while the latter must be based on a long-term fieldwork of a fixed place, which has no precedent yet. Changshu has a large collection of precious scrolls, which is unique in terms of its variety and richness of changes. The compilation of a catalogue for it can not only present a general picture of the precious scrolls in a certain region, but also provide a reference example for the idea of the practical perspective. Among the classification issues, the most important one is how to maintain a good tension between ethnic genre and analytical categories so that we can fully display local knowledge on the public knowledge platform.

Key words: precious scrolls; the catalogue of Chinese precious scrolls; the textual perspective; the practical perspective; Changshu

Seiji Ito's Folklore Interpretation of Gods and Monsters in *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*

LIANG Qi, CHEN Yulin

Myths are closely related to folklore. Folklore items and folklore activities are the carriers on which myths exist and inherit, and myths are the spiritual core of folklore activities. The implication of myths can be seen from the perspective of folklore. Japanese scholar Seiji Ito's study of the gods and monsters in *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* is a model in this aspect. Guided by the theories and methods of the western cultural anthropology school and based on sympathetic witchcraft, he adopted the method of "confirming the ancient with the present" to deduce the connotation of the gods and monsters as well as the "morphological criterion" to distinguish the categories of the gods and monsters, thus promoting the study of *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* to shift from the traditional literature textual research to the interpretation of folk culture. His research not only helps to reveal the meaning of gods and monsters in depth, but also broadens the research horizon of *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*. But there are also shortcomings, such as neglecting the variability of folk

culture, ignoring the impact of spatial field on cultural differences, and even over-interpreting. Examining Ito's research can help the academic community to learn from its strengths and avoid its weaknesses, thereby contributing to the in-depth study of *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*.

Key words: Seiji Ito; *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*; folk cultural; paradigm meaning; academic review

Localization of Folklore: The Historical Study and Contemporary Value of Vernacular XIAO Fang, XI Hui

The concept of vernacular has a long history in Chinese culture. It refers to the relatively stable local life patterns and habitus of the people in a specific area. In the time dimension, the understanding of vernacular has not changed, but current studies mainly focus on the discourse of idioms in the context of linguistics. This paper focuses on the study of vernacular in the context of folklore studies. First, the paper distinguishes the similarities and differences between vernacular and folklore. The term "vernacular" emphasizes locality and staticity, while folklore lays stress on fashion mode, diffusion, and the aspect of the whole of the society. The relationships between "folklore" and "vernacular" are like the relationships between the common and the special. The folklore is the "socialized" vernacular, and the vernacular is the localized folklore. Secondly, as a cultural representation of local society, the vernacular plays an important role in shaping regional locality and building a sense of place for the people. In today's highly developed globalization, a correct examination of the vernacular can get a glimpse of the local society and try to understand it. The rational use of the vernacular is beneficial to local social governance and is helpful for realizing governance based on folklore and locality.

Key words: vernacular; locality; sense of place; governance with folklore

A Study on the Legend of "Yu Founded His Capital in the Town of Yang" LIU Zongdi, JIANG Shuai

There is a famous legend in ancient China that Yu the Great founded his capital in the town of Yang. This record was first mentioned in *Mencius*. Since there was a Yangcheng county in the Han Dynasty, which was located to the south of Song Mountain in Henan Province, Yangcheng County was taken as the capital of Yu, starting from *The Book of Former Han: Geographical Record*, which has become an important basis for the archeological research on the Ruins of Xia. However, the place named Yangcheng recorded in ancient documents is not only found in Henan Province. *The Spring and Autumn Annals and Zuo Zhuan* recorded that there are several places with "Yang" in their names in western Shandong Province. Compared with Yangcheng in Henan, these places in western Shandong have a longer history and are in the lower reaches of the Yellow River with frequent floods in history. According to the records of *Shan Hai Jing* and other documents, the legends of Gun and Yu's Flood Control also took place in the lower reaches of the Yellow River. Therefore, this area with several places named "Yang" in western Shandong is the capital of Yu in the legend and the location of Ruins of Xia.

Key words: Gun; Yu; the town named Yang; Ruins of Xia

Between the Temple and the School: A Discussion on the Space-time Structure of the

Confucian Temple Steles in the Tang Dynasty ZHANG Mengmeng, CAO Hong

Official schools in the Tang Dynasty all had Confucian temples. When the temple was completed, a stele was erected to record the construction process and commemorate the merits. The Confucian temple stele, which originated from the unique temple-school system, had become an important cultural landscape that showcases regional and contemporary thoughts. The Confucian temple stele of the Tang Dynasty used both the forms of material and text to exert influence in natural space, conceptual space and social space, thus constructing a multi-dimensional order containing a mixture of the sacred and the secular. The interpretation of this order from scholars and ordinary people largely varied based on their own experiences but had all led to the purpose of enlightenment and promoted the development of local culture and education. Furthermore, the two stylistic changes of the Confucian temple stele outline the clues of the shift in the focus of Confucianism over time, and provide detailed, practical, and vivid examples for observing the ideological and cultural changes in the Tang and Song Dynasties.

Key words: the Tang Dynasty; Confucian temple steles; temple-school system; space-time structure