

Main Abstracts

Toward a Definition of Folklore in Practice

[USA] Simon J. Bronner, trans. by CAI Lei

My title builds on Dan Ben-Amos's widely cited 1971 JAF essay in which he proposed a definition of "folklore in context": "artistic communication in small groups." It has stood as the main benchmark of a performance-oriented verbal folklore, even though Ben-Amos questioned his omission of tradition and others criticized its applicability to folklife and material culture work. Renewed questioning of the definition in the 21st century has been evident with the emergence of digital culture, re-thinking of the social basis of folklore, reevaluation of tradition as the keyword of folklore, calls for inquiry of folklore's cognitive sources, formulations of behavioristic and organizational concepts, and the "practice turn" in contemporary theory. I review these developments and propose a succinct tradition-centered definition in line with practice theory that retains a consideration of context but focuses attention to the knowledge domain, or cognition, at the basis of folkloric practices. This definition of "folklore in practice" is "traditional knowledge put into or drawn from practice."

Key words: tradition; practice; knowledge; cognition; definition of folklore

The Practice Theory of American Folklore Studies: Also on Simon J. Bronner's Related Interpretations

JU Xi, XU Qian

Simon J. Bronner held a series of academic lectures on the practice theory of folklore studies at Beijing Normal University in 2020. The rise of folklore studies in the world has profoundly affected American folklore studies, but the characteristics of the United States, which are different from Europe, have made American folklore studies emphasize individualism, linguistic approach, and artistic text for a long time, which has made American folklore meet numerous challenges since the arrival of Hyper Era. To solve these problems, Bronner introduced the tradition-centered practice theory of folklore studies. This theory requires our new understanding and new explanation of the key concepts, such as practice and tradition. We are also required to explain what motivate, inspire and generate the tradition in modern world from the perspective of mind and cognitive approaches. This research method emphasizes the combination of tangible culture and intangible culture in studies, as well as the discovery through comparing different cultures. In this series of lectures, Bronner has compared many folklore examples both from China and from the United States, and boldly proposed his own hypothesis. The practice theory he put forward and the hypothesis generated from the Sino-US comparison on folklore can both inspire Chinese folklorists.

Key words: American folklore studies; practice; tradition; material culture

From "Performance" to "Practice"? A Critical Analysis of Simon Bronner's "Practice Theory" WANG Jiewen

In order to meet the needs of the reorientation of Folkloristics in the digital age, Simon J. Bronner advocates replacing "performance theory" with "practice theory". His concept of "practice" refers to the behavior of social control and expression by applying "tradition". The focus of his "practice theory" is to explain the deep psychological mechanism of "tradition" (as a cognitive resource, structure and motivation). This research method not only deviates from the purpose of "practice theory", but also obliterates the potential of

“performance theory”. In fact, inspired by Habermas’ communicative behavior theory and Rorty’s new pragmatism theory, the ethical significance and practical value of performance theory can be well developed.

Key words: performance; practice; Kommunikative Rationalität; pragmatism

The Weight and Lightness of Tradition: Interpreting Repetitive Behaviors in Folklore Practice

Anthony Bak Buccitelli, LUO Wenhong

Beginning with the idea of folklore as involving a kind of feedback loop between frameworks for potential action and the action in practice, this article explores three different yet connected topics: 1) how we come to value repeated action in terms of its weight or lightness, 2) how we might usefully conceive of tradition as an interpretive framework for repeated action, and 3), and how a feedback loop model of tradition helps us to more clearly see how shifts in those valuational frames produce change within the larger system of tradition. 8130842

Key words: repetition; tradition; folklore; practice theory; performance theory

A Historical Anthropological Analysis on a Novel of Tang, *The Romance of Liu Yi*

ZHAO Shiyu

The Romance of Liu Yi (*Dongting Lingyinzhuan*) was a well-known novel in the middle ages and got much concern in the literature scholarship. In the history scholarship, there were still models that they raised up new points of view by the analysis on fictions or poems such as Gu Jiegang and Chen Yinke. When we start from the living world but not from the text and found the socio-cultural phenomenon which was less found before, we will find some new approaches and the hypothesis by re-examining those familiar texts. Therefore, we might find that *The Romance of Liu Yi* included the metaphor of the socio-cultural context for the boat-and-shed living people/the traders in the southern lake regions of the middle ages. Taking the fieldwork as the basis of text analysis is what the historical anthropology should do.

Key words: *The Romance of Liu Yi*; the boat-and-shed living people; historical anthropology

“The Predecessor of Confucius”: The Construction and Spread of the Worship of

Wenchang in Shandong in the Ming and Qing Dynasties

ZHAO Shuguo

The worship of Chinese gods has a long history, and its development and evolution are closely related to people’s lives, which often attracts the attention of the rulers, so its change process is easily affected by the mainstream ideology of the country. The worship of Wenchang originated from the worship of star, and later merged with the god of Zitong in the Bashu area under the promotion of Taoism and became the personality god who ruled one’s luck in literature (*wenyun*). This kind of worship was introduced to Shandong from the Yongle period of the Ming Dynasty, and gradually developed after the Jingtai period. The Wanli period prevailed in society until the end of the Qing Dynasty. The attributes of its divinity had always been questioned during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. While questioning, officials and scholars in Shandong tried to incorporate it into the Confucian system for interpretation and trumpeted it as the “Predecessor of Confucius”. They believed that adjusting the *Fengshui* of Wenchang’s scarifying site can revitalize *wenyun* of local society and publicizing the benevolence and filial piety of Wenchang God could be beneficial to the education of people, so that they actively promoted the worship of Wenchang to educate people as well as to strengthen their control over grassroots society.

Key words: Wenchang; Zitong Deity, Confucians; local officials; gentry

The Relationship Between Human Feelings, Customs and the Making of Rites

PAN Bin, ZHENG Lijuan

Jiang Yong's book *Dim Rites Follow Suit (Hunli Congyi)* refers to books such as *Family Rites (Jiali)*. This book took "adapting to the needs of the new era" as the guiding ideology and made a new thinking and design for the wedding at that time. Jiang Yong believed that human feelings in ancient times and at present time were different, and etiquette should be consistent with human feelings at present time. Jiang Yong argued that ancient etiquette was made for saints, but the etiquette made by saints was not perfect, so people could not copy the ancient wedding ceremony. When etiquette at present time was inconsistent with or in conflict with the ancient one, Jiang Yong sometimes took the present one as the criterion. Jiang Yong was aware of the important role of economic foundation in marriage. He was not afraid to talk about money. He also believed that money had positive significance in wedding. Jiang Yong's flexible spirit had a far-reaching impact on scholars in Anhui, such as Dai Zhen, Cheng Yaotian, Ling tingkan, Hu Peihui, and Sun Yirang, a scholar in eastern Zhejiang.

Key words: Jiang Yong; *Dim Rites Follow Suit*; etiquette

Malaria, Plague and Addiction: The Spread and Reconstruction of Areca Custom in the Change of Local Society

ZHANG Enxun, SHEN Lingling

Areca has been used as medicine, fruit, food and addictive substance in Chinese history. Malaria, pestilence and addiction are all the factors leading to the evolution of areca. Areca custom evolved in the interaction of local society and national process. This article argues that areca is not only medicine but also food, which connects the central and marginal society in China. It reflects the changes of local society and is a cultural symbol that reflects the differences between China and the West.

Key words: local society; areca custom; interactive logic

The Co-temporal Study of Folk Literature

SHI Aidong

System study in humanities is often called co-temporal study. Co-temporal study is not a method which merely excludes the effect of time and changes over time, it considers its object as a self-organizing system instead. It views a folk story as a structurally stable combination of function and a tree of life. Once a story starts its own life course, it grows, heals, blossoms and grows fruits. It changes as time and space change, and it will also die as the entropy increases. The three most important dimensions of system study are structure, element and relationship. Element plays the part of basis in the study, while relationship as focus, structure as platform. Essentially speaking, system study eliminates interfering terms brought by individuals, history and accidents, in order to focus on the most universal issues as structure and commonality.

Key words: co-temporal study; morphology of the tale; oral poetics; temporal study; system theory

Collecting and Writing the Context of Idioms: The Academic Criterion of Collecting and Collating Idioms

in the New Era: A Discussion on the Compilation of *Treasury of Chinese Folk Literature*

HUANG Tao

Traditional collection of idioms in history mainly focused on collecting and compiling the items of idioms, and seldom indicated the source, usage situation and related folk life of the idioms. This kind of idiom collection has the disadvantage of lacking necessary contextual information. Because of their short length and highly condensed

meaning, idioms often rely on context to express the “implied meaning” that “outsiders” do not know. Therefore, it is particularly important to collect, record and convey the contextual information of idioms. The collection and collation of idioms in the new era, represented by *Idioms in the Treasury of Chinese Folk Literature*, attaches great importance to the collection and writing of contextual information of idioms. Generally speaking, the context information of idioms mainly includes seven elements: subject element, time element, space or place element, behavior or event element, situation or background element, psychological or conceptual element, and functional element. A good interpretation of idioms that meets the requirements of folklore should have sufficient folklore quality. In fact, this kind of interpretation is a special type of folk literature. Its narrative subject is the combination of the narrator and the collector or the interpreter as a “folklore expert” of idioms. Its content is the organic combination of the folk life knowledge and local allusions told by local people and the interpretation by compilers.

Key words: idioms; proverbs; collection; context; *Treasury of Chinese Folk Literature*

Thoughts on the Orientation of Investigation and Study on the Dialectical Folk Words

WANG Xiang, SUN Jianyi

Dialectical folk words are the treasure of the research combining dialectical words and folk culture. Based on the investigation of dialect, established in the interpretation of folk culture, the investigation on dialectical folk words belongs to linguistic folklore, and it is an important supplement to the existing research on linguistic folklore. In recent years, the in-depth development of dialect investigation and language protection project have given birth to a number of achievements in the investigation and study of dialectical folk words, but theories are still insufficient. Its objects, values and methods all need to be further defined. A clear definition is conducive to giving full play to the unique advantages of this research. On this basis, we can carry out a systematic investigation and study on dialectical folk words, interpret the connotation of folk culture in combination with specific context, and present the regional folk culture in an all-round way, so we can furthermore carry out inter-regional folk culture comparison.

Key words: dialectical folk words; folk culture; linguistic folklore; regional; orientation

An Attempt at Characterization of the Hebei Dialect in Modern Times: Research of the Reference Books of the Late Qing Dynasty Dialectal Folklore Textbook *Rudiments of Speaking Chinese*

LU Mengya

In recent years, Chinese scholars have paid attention to the late Qing Jesuit *Rudiments of Speaking Chinese* (*Rudiments de parler chinois*) because of its prominent Hebei dialect, and have studied the work from the perspectives of linguistics, grammar and literary style. However, without a thorough examination of the Chinese texts, it is difficult to dissect the intrinsic value of its folkloricity. Through a reverse test of the written dialect, I conclude that the author of *Rudiments of Speaking Chinese* recorded local folk discourse and customs with the help of local literati, and the work has distinctive ethnographic characteristics. This highly folkloric Western textbook has a deep foundation in Chinese folk culture, linking Chinese folk society, the Catholic Church and Western academic circles. After gaining insight into all its references, it is worth continuing to delve into it from different angles.

Key words: folk discourse; Dialect du Hebei; Léon Wieger; Catholic Chinese literature; French sinology