Diverse Conceptions of 'Folklore'

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It may seem cliché to say that the term *folklore* is defined in different ways. Such definitional diversity is easily taken for granted and simply viewed as the negotiation of the concept. During the performance-oriented turn, for example, Dan Ben-Amos's oft-quoted description as "artistic communication in small groups" reflects his positioning in relation to earlier and contemporary tendencies "to describe folklore as a static, tangible object" (1971: 13). When folklore was both being assimilated by ethnology and also being defined for UNESCO – where it would be relabelled 'intangible cultural heritage' (Honko 1990 [2014]: 35–36) – scholars at the Nordic Institute of Folklore in Bergen opened it to non-verbal traditions and foreground its connections with group identity (Skjelbred 1986: 21). Simon Bronner's "traditional knowledge put into, and drawing from, practice" (2016: 15, emphasis removed) responds to more recent North American discourses on context and performance. And so on. Viewed in this way, 'folklore' is situated as a shared and more or less stable concept or empirical phenomenon, while the differences in definitions reflect both researchers' emphasis or interests and historical advances in understandings.

At the 2011 "Talking Folklore" panel at the annual meeting of the American Folklore Society (AFS), Barbro Klein commented that folklore studies in Europe and the United States is so different that it can be considered as different disciplines (see also Klein 2009). My own academic culture shock at AFS was then still fresh, and Klein's observation stuck with me. It gradually led me past the pronounced American orientation to engage contemporary societal issues and the prominence of public folklore to recognize that my disorientation went beyond finding my footing in a new ideological landscape: veiled beneath our shared vocabulary, the American concept of folklore was foreign to me. Shortly thereafter, Bronner referred to Klein's view that between "Europe and North America a theoretical gulf exists bigger than the Atlantic Ocean" (2012: 23) – a statement that underscores the significance of positioning his definition specifically in relation to North American discussions.

Here, I follow up on Klein's and Bronner's attention to *historically enduring* differences. Viewing the concept of folklore as shared links to feelings of solidarity among participants in academic discussion. This view easily accommodates enduring difference no less than the study of a particular proverb or folktale accommodates its variations. However, viewing the concept of folklore as shared is entangled with academic storytelling about the history of folklore studies, which has a subtle inclination to linearize the past as plot. The resulting narratives tend to trace the concept of folklore to a single point of origin, not unlike the phantom *Urforms* once imagined behind the many variants of folktales. Considering the potential *longue durée* of differences challenges those imaginations of the concept of folklore.

Narrating the Past

In the West, the metadiscourse of folklore studies adopted a critical reflexivity on the dicipline's own history. In the long shadow of World War II, this metadiscourse generated a compelling origin story that has spotlighted Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803) as a fountainhead. Herder's pivotal impact is identified with conceiving folklore as an expression of the spirit of a 'people' (*Volk*) – a vision of folklore as 'iconic-of' that ultimately led to its instrumentalization in National Romanticism and nation-building (e.g. Wilson 1976). A more recent narrative traces folklore back to the so-called antiquarians of the seventeenth century, among whom Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs (2003: 1–2, etc.) have spotlighted John Aubrey (1626–1697) as an emblematic actor. This story shifts focus from folklore's construction as 'iconic-of' to 'other' in dialectic with the construction of modernity. The new narrative's step back in time facilitated seeing beyond the saga of Herderian nation-building. The discipline's history as bound to the cultures of European states had eclipsed considerations of colonialism, which this step made it easier to bring into public light. Bringing colonialism into focus produced multiple levels of contrast with the nation-building narrative (Naithani 2010). Rather than being an independent enterprise, Diarmuid Ó Giolláin

highlights "how the colonial dimension was not only in the realm of ideas, but in the actions of European folklorists themselves" (2022: 17). Of interest here is a pattern of difference between nation-building discourses' valorization of traditions in accord with the Herderian paradigm while empires tended to position national folklore alongside colonial folklore as secondary to national high culture (Ahola & Lukin 2019: 51).

When looking across these perspectives, it is apparent that Herder's central role is particularly linked to the tales of folklore and nation-building, and his position is quite different in stories of folklore and colonialism (cf. Vermeulen 2008). Similarly, the antiquarian John Aubrey is extremely interesting in the story of folklore and modernity, yet antiquarianism was also a widespread trend in Europe. Already in 1630, when John Aubrey was only four years old, the King of Sweden appointed the first National Antiquarian (*riksantikvarien*), a post that soon developed into the National Heritage Board (*Riksantikvarieämbetet*) (Almgren 1931; see also Klein 2006: 58). Both Sweden and Denmark had state-centralized collection and documentation projects that recorded monuments, oral knowledge and traditions and collected old written texts. The British antiquarians represented an educated class that contrasted itself with other classes, producing a polarized opposition (Gal & Irvine 2019) in the construction of modernity (Bauman & Briggs 2003; see also Anttonen 2005). The Scandinavian projects were structured by the relation of the monarch or state to its subjects. They did not isolate certain source categories as emblematic of particular social classes or of being unlearned. Consequently, contemporary local knowledge about, and traditions inherited from, the past were not constructed as other in contrast to modernity, framing the latter as characteristic of belongingness to the kingdom's present. Already at this stage, folklore was being constructed differently in different milieux.

Acknowledging Diverse Contexts

These differences did not emerge in a vacuum. Klein highlighted that disciplines take shape and evolve in relation to the needs, concerns or other tensions within a nation or empire, which she illustrated through the case of Sweden (2006). This principle resonates with parallels between folklore research and societies today.

Current folklore scholarship in the United States, for example, exhibits prominent concerns about particular types of racism, colonialism and social inequalities and injustices. These concerns appear directly linked to polarized issues and their complex history within the nation. Finnish folklore scholarship's engagements with present and past political and social issues are much less prominent. They also tend to be tied up with the history of the nation and indigenous populations of Northern Eurasia that have long held interest in Finnish research owing to their identification with historically related languages (i.e. Uralic, earlier called Finno-Ugric). Differences in political concerns correlate with the prominent position of archival research and 'classic' folklore genres in Finnish research that largely disappeared in the United States. This contrast parallels Finland having an epic – the *Kalevala* – created by Elias Lönnrot in the context of National-Romantic nation-building (1835; 1849) while neither the United States nor Canada has a comparable symbolic cornerstone of national identity. The so-called performance-oriented turn (cf. Bauman 1975; Ben-Amos & Goldstein 1975) produced a more or less complete break from archival and related comparative research in (North) American scholarship (e.g. Dégh 1986, 80) that has reverberated for decades (e.g. Gabbert 1999; Bronner 2016). The *Kalevala* and the huge archival corpora that developed in relation to it as heritagized folklore were bound up with national interests and could not be similarly jettisoned; they instead became an integrated part of the trajectory of research development (cf. Dégh 1986). The point here is that such parallels and contrasts that may be observed in the present appear bound up with the past of the respective nations.

Looking back further, the state-centered heritage construction projects in Scandinavia emerged as competitive heritage construction projects between Sweden and Denmark. These projects took shape following the breakup of the Kalmar Union, which had united Denmark, Norway and Sweden until 1523, in conjunction with the rising status of the vernacular in the wake of the Reformation. Alongside geopolitical factors, it is possible to observe contrasts between the markedness of class differences in England and in the socialist-oriented Nordics today. This may be compared to the extreme social gap created in the Norman Conquest of England in 1066 and the much less pronounced gap in Scandinavia following the Viking Age. The co-construction of folklore and modernity among the British antiquarians may thus respond to tensions and ideologies linked to societal factors in the milieu that differed from those in Scandinavia, much as folklore studies in the United States today appears matched to current social issues and concerns within the country.

My point here is to highlight that the discourses constructing the concept of folklore were shaped by historical, societal and even geopolitical factors. The potential for a *longue durée* of difference in the concept can be viewed on that backdrop. People have engaged with international discussions through publications, written correspondence and mobility, and single individuals could have significant impacts through those networks. Nonetheless, mobility and written correspondence could be slow. Especially beginning from the nineteenth century, immediate interpersonal interaction was nurtured with the advance of academic institutionalization, which facilitated academic

training within national borders and in national languages. Locally centered discussion was also fostered by the formation of learned societies, which tended to be organized by nation and/or language. These factors supported the durability of differences – in tandem with development through dialogue – because disciplines are ultimately social phenomena, and they evolve within and in relation to milieux linked to societies and their complex histories.

Emerging Conceptions of 'Folklore' in the Nineteenth Century

Discussions of research history tend to take the concept of folklore for granted without realizing that it is anachronistic for discussing, for instance, the Grimms, let alone Herder. A number of developments in the eighteenth century fed into the emergence of folklore as a research object. The Russian Empire recruited young German scholars to document all things alive and dead among its holdings, including nations and linguistic-cultural groups that became generally referred to as 'peoples' (*Volker*, singular *Volk*). This and the parallel projects that emerged formed a foundation of modern ethnology, and shaped interest in cultures across Europe (Vermeulen 2008). Giambattista Vico (1668–1744) laid foundations for valorizing collective tradition through an argument about Homeric epics (1725). Robert Lowth (1710–1787), through an argument for an ethnopoetic approach to biblical poetry (1753), laid foundations for evaluating vernacular poetry on its own principles, as spiritually inspired but bound to a language and historical cultural milieu – an approach that became pivotal for evaluating vernacular mythology on aesthetic rather than religious terms (Bauman & Briggs 2003: 110; Frog 2018). Herder linked an image of a 'people' with the potential for its traditional (i.e. inspired) poetry and song to reflect a national spirit (1772), which enabled such traditions to be instrumentalized in nation-building. These ideas were later combined with emerging contrasts – also beginning with an aesthetic emphasis – between orality and literacy, the latter conceived as bound up with objectivizing scientific thinking (Wood 1775: 283, 285; Bauman & Briggs 2003: 14, 107). These various complementary and intersecting developments fed into the instrumentalization of traditions for nation-building, yet they still did not bring the concept of folklore into focus as a category of research interest.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, 'popular tradition' or 'vulgar tradition' was used in Romance languages to refer to traditions maintained by a people. However, such terms were used for traditions in any time or place, such as in the contemporary societies of Hesiod or Plato. The phrase was calqued in German as *Volksüberlieferung* ('popular tradition'), though the category itself was not of particular interest. It was also calqued in English, where, by the end of the century, it was complemented by 'popular antiquities', reflecting the particular interest in traditions of contemporary society with deep historical roots. In Scandinavia, only in the nineteenth century did *folkeliv* ('folk-life') come into use, first in Danish, followed by *folkminne(n)* ('folk-memory'), which would become the term for 'folklore', first used in Swedish in 1834.

Rather than the concept of folklore precipitating through Herderian ideology on the winds of Romantic Nationalism, it had to wait for nineteenth-century discourses of discipline formation. These discourses were tightly linked to the formation of learned societies and their accompanying journals. The Folk-Lore Society in England was established in 1877, the *Folkemindesamfundet* ('Society for *Folkeminde*') in Denmark in 1883, the *Société des traditions populaires* ('Society of Popular Traditions') in France in 1886, the American Folklore Society in the United States in 1888, the *Verein für Volkskunde* ('Society for *Volkskunde*') in 1891, and so on (see further Ó Goilláin 2022: 106–107). This period was a watershed for folklore studies. Bronner observes that it was part of a broader social trend, with over 200 learned societies formed in the 1870s and 1880s in the United States alone (1986: 17–19). In the case of folklore, several societies or their key members were concerned about defining the discipline as a 'science', and institutional recognition was advanced as an explicit goal of the Folk-Lore Society in England (e.g. Gomme 1885: 1). However, these discussions were not unified, as can here be illustrated through four examples.

In England

In England, contemporary folklore became a distinct focal point in discourse especially through Henry Bourne's (1696–1733) *Antiquitates vulgares, or the Antiquities of the Common People* (1725) and its reproduction and expansion in John Brand's (1744–1806) *Observations on Popular Antiquities* (1777). Whereas German-language research is fundamental to the construction of folklore studies as a discipline, British discourse constructed folklore as a research object in its own right, culminating in William Thoms' proposal that the "good Saxon compound" *Folk-Lore* replace "Popular Antiquities, or Popular Literature (though by-the-bye it is more a Lore than a Literature)" (1846 [1956]: 361). Thoms proposed *Folk-Lore* for both the research object and the discipline (1846 [1956]), which he imagined as a "branch of Archaeological study" (1850: 223). Thoms spotlights the second edition of Jacob Grimm's *Deutsche Mythologie* (1844), hoping "some James Grimm shall arise who shall [do the same] for the Mythology of the British Islands" (Thoms 1846 [1956]: 361). This concept of folklore was centered in contemporary vernacular society while its research was envisioned with an aim of reconstructing ancient heritage – especially linked to pre-Christian religion – from collected fragments through

detailed philological and comparative investigation (see also Roper 2008). Jonathan Roper highlights that the new word only gradually came into use: up through the 1870s it seems to have been used more frequently in connection with other cultural traditions around the world than for those of English language countries (2014: 202–203).

In the mid-1880s, the Folk-Lore Society's journal became a nexus of lively discussion over the definition of the concept of folklore and of the associated discipline. The vision of identifying evidence of lost myths and rituals produced an emphasis on narrative, 'customs' (i.e. enacted practices), superstitions and 'folk-speech' (Gomme 1885: 5–6). Although orality was Romanticized across the nineteenth century and thus literacy was often rendered invisible from sources of tradition, writing was deeply entangled with the sources and culture and thus did not distinguish folklore *per se*. A gap emerged between 'folklore' and 'folksong' (Dorson 1961: 302). This gap is rooted in the foundations of the concept, reinforced by a tendency to treat 'folklore' as a synonym for 'folktale' in popular use (see e.g. Nutt & Gomme 1884), and was eventually reified by the formation of the Folk Song Society in 1898 (Keel 1948).

Edward B. Tylor was a founding member of the Folk-Lore Society and his "doctrine of survival in culture" (1871 [1874]: v) was embraced as a theory that reciprocally defined folklore. Tylor subscribed to anthropological theories that all cultures proceed historically through a series of stages of development. Within this model, folklore was framed in terms of 'survivals' of earlier historical traditions, and thus by definition a type of cultural anachronism. Defining folklore through anachronism validated and supported its trending value as a resource for reconstructing mythology and rituals of ancient times. Tylor's framework simultaneously situated elite British culture at the apex of the Empire.

The Tylorian evolutionary model of culture was a lens for viewing similarities between traditions of different cultures. Parallels were interpreted as products of multigenesis – i.e. independent creations of the universal process of societal development. 'Survivals' belonged *by definition* to inherited culture, excluding the spread of traditions from one culture to another (see e.g. the discussions in Jacobs & Nutt 1892). Defining folklore in terms of 'survivals' required it to be anachronistic to the culture in which it was found. Consequently, traditions observed among British peasants could constitute 'folklore' while comparanda found among 'less culturally developed' peoples in the colonies were not. Comparison between folklore and these traditions of more 'primitive' peoples was used to shed light on the mythology or ritual behind such 'survivals'. The colonies thus presented endless echoes of earlier cultural phases on which British scholars could reflect for the reconstruction of their own heritage.

In (North) American Research

The word *folklore* spread into North American English, but the ideology of a nation's ethno-linguistic heritage being preserved among the common people did not map well onto the nations of the New World. The American Folklore Society defined its aims with specification of four varieties of folklore:

a. Relics of Old English Folk-Lore (ballads, tales, superstitions, dialect, etc.).

b. Lore of Negroes in the Southern States of the Union.

c. Lore of the Indian Tribes of North America (myths, tales, etc.).

d. Lore of French Canada, Mexico, etc. ([Newell] 1888: 3)

Although the 'American' label has nationalist connotations (see also Bronner 1986: 18–19), the society's concerns have a continental scope, explicitly including Canada and Mexico. The AFS took shape in a discipline ecology where there was a paucity of university support for anthropology. It drew anthropologists in "an emergent cultivation of professionalism" (Bronner 1986: 17), without initially setting out folklore as an independent discipline (1986: 16). The concept of folklore was also viewed through the lens of North American anthropology and its interests, which made it incompatible with the Tylorian characterization of folklore as 'survivals' or cultural anachronisms.

A polarized contrast of folklore with modernity also occurred in the North American milieu, yet it took markedly different forms. This is especially visible in the works of William Wells Newell, gatekeeper of *The Journal of American Folklore* (Bell 1973: 11), and the Smithsonian Institution Curator Otis T. Mason (1838–1908). As AFS President, Mason envisioned folklore as one of three branches of anthropology: material culture was studied in archaeology; written culture in history; and intangible culture in folklore (1891: 97). Rather than identifying folklore as opposed to modernity in terms of culture type or social class, he construed the opposition in terms of science and 'progress' (Bronner 1988: 21). Mason asserted that "[t]he folk are: (1) all savages, (2) the old-fashioned people, (3) the children, and (4) all of us when we are old-fashioned" (1891: 97). Accepting folklore as also part of modernized societies led to its combination with the idea that less advanced cultures generally borrow from more advanced cultures, producing Newell's theory that folklore's diffusion occurs from more advanced to less advanced cultures, with modernized societies and their elites at the apex (1895: 16). Although scholars such as Newell focused on oral traditions and beliefs, Otis and others engaged with the concept as more broadly inclusive of inherited practices, which was supported by the intertwining of folklore with anthropology and ethnology.

The change of generations and international exchange of ideas would marginalize viewing folklore as something in which 'all of us' participated. Nevertheless, the concept

retained great breadth, and it was not tethered to an ostensibly common, inherited, pre-modern culture as a nation's heritage, nor to the reconstructivist aims of identifying fragments of ancient myths and rituals.

In Finland

Finland was the eastern territory of Sweden, ceded to the Russian Empire in 1809. Finno-Karelian traditional poetry had already been brought into focus in the eighteenth century, but an enormous boom of interest occurred in the nineteenth century. The oral traditions were crucially significant for identity-building owing to the lack of medieval vernacular literature and ancient monuments, yet 'folklore' itself did not come into focus as a category.

Lönnrot's *Kalevala* (1835; 1849) played a pivotal role in the development of the concept of folklore. It was initially received as tradition no less than were the Grimms' fairytales. The epic was centrally composed from poetry collected from Karelians in territories of Karelia that have never been within the borders of Finland. Around 1870, the question was raised whether the *Kalevala* is really Finnish or only Karelian, producing a national crisis by challenging the validity of a central symbol of the state's emerging ethnocentric identity. A. A Borenius (1873) advanced a philologically grounded argument that the poems had originated in western Finland and spread from there to the inland territories of Karelia. This argument was a foundation of Julius Krohn's sophisticated comparative methodology for tracing the geographical diffusion of traditional songs and stories (1883). Julius Krohn's *magnum opus* distinguished Lönnrot's epic as a literary work and made the recorded oral poems the material for investigating the history of the tradition. The *Kalevala* and oral poetry connected his study to Friedrich August Wolf's (1795) evolution-type theory that Homeric epics developed from shorter poems that were gradually brought together into increasingly long and complex compositions. This set Julius Krohn's work apart from discussions of folklore in what would become Western Europe that focused on other genres. On the backdrop of national concerns, Wolf's theory validated Lönnrot's epic as the apex of the tradition's development, which was 'inevitably' contingent on the unifying vision of a single poet. Moreover, the mythological and ritual poetry from which Lönnrot built his *Kalevala* was found as living traditions, rather than imagined as fragments of traditions that had otherwise disappeared. In conjunction with Wolf's evolutionary theory, Julius Krohn's approach conferred value on more recent forms of traditions even when exploring questions of their history or origins.

Julius Krohn's evolutionary theory became the lens through which his son, Kaarle Krohn, interpreted the British concept of *Folk-Lore* in his doctoral dissertation on prose folktales, "[m]utta koska Suomenkielessä nimitys 'kansanrunous' on saman merkitys saanut, niin meidän ei ole syytä vieraskielistä sanaa käyttää" (1887: 2) ('but because the Finnish term *kansarunous* [literally 'folk poetry'] has been given the same meaning, we thus have no reason to use the foreign word'). At the first International Folk-Lore Congress in 1889, Kaarle Krohn criticized other contemporary approaches to folklore for treating it as derivative of something else – e.g. as the detritus of other more valuable mythology or ritual – and he advocated that it must instead be approached as a phenomenon in its own right (1891: 64). His interest in establishing folklore studies as a 'science' is reflected in his proposal of 'laws' of folklore already at that time (1891: 67). Some of these develop his father's ideas about 'mechanical' or 'unconscious' principles affecting synchronic variation (Krohn J. 1883: 584); others concern structural principles governing narrative traditions. The focus on principles governing folklore as it was documented set these apart from other 'laws' of folklore proposed in the nineteenth century.

In Finland, bringing the concept of folklore into focus became linked to an authenticity discourse. The 'people' (*kansa*) had already been integrated into Finnish discussions. Julius Krohn's reframing of the *Kalevala* as Lönnrot's creation alongside changes in documentation practices made the gap between the oral poems and the *Kalevala* a source-critical problem. Early collectors had often read the *Kalevala* to singers and this and other published works fed back into local traditions (e.g. Kallio 2014: 52). The traditions were seen as exclusively oral until nineteenth-century collection efforts and the impacts of the resulting publications, which were then viewed as corrupting researchers' data on traditions' geographical variation. It became of paramount importance to distinguish 'authentic' examples of traditions from those impacted by, or reproducing, written texts. This concern became polarized in Kaarle Krohn's methodology, reifying orality and literacy as an axis of differentiation (Gal & Irvine 2019) between folklore and modernity.

Kaarle Krohn was ultimately successful in his strategy to gain institutional status for folklore studies as both relying on a distinct methodology and its research object being governed by 'laws' specific to it. Whereas the American approach to folklore was broadly inclusive, this success in institutional recognition led to dogmatism, because changing the methodology challenged the validity of the discipline's independence.

In German-Language Research

The research that took shape in the Russian Empire produced *Völkerkunde* as a broad field that encompassed geography, history, and ethnography. In the twentieth century, *Volkskunde* could be used to denote research on 'our culture' as opposed to *Völkerkunde* on 'others' cultures'. However, the difference between singular *Volks-* and plural

Völker- seems initially to have depended on the number of cultures under discussion. The form *Volkskunde* ('study of a people') gained traction through W. H. Reichl's influential call to make it a 'science' (1858 [1862]). His use of the singular *Volks-* seems, however, to simply reflect his emphasis on particular cultures, whereas *Völkerkunde* extended to more general questions about linguistic and cultural diversity.

Reichl conceived the discipline as the study of *Volksleben* ('the life of a people') (1858 [1862]: 220), not of *Volksüberlieferung*. He attributes it with a long and noble lineage from Herodotus as *der Vater der Volkskunde* ('the father of *Volkskunde*'), who studied both his own and others' cultures through fieldwork and comparison (1858 [1862]: 205–206). Reichl did not frame the discipline either through modernity or as exclusively concerned with one's own culture. His concerns have complex relations to contemporary politics and heritage-building for German-speaking peoples, yet his 'science' is informed by the ethnological discourse that was evolving from the documentation projects of the Russian Empire. Both the discipline and its research object were thus quite different from Thoms' "branch of Archaeological study" (1850: 223).

Volkskunde seems only to precipitate into a discipline in response to the first International Folk-Lore Congress, held in Paris in 1889 (e.g. Weinhold 1890: 1). This event mobilized German researchers to form the *Verein für Volkskunde* ('Society for *Volkskunde*') with its accompanying journal (Weinhold 1891). National interests are saliently present in the discussions of *Volkskunde*, but the first number of the Society's journal includes an article on tales in contemporary China (Arendt 1891). Conflations of *Volkskunde* with *Folklore* became a concern (e.g. Köhler 1887: 335–336) and forceful assertions were made to distinguish German *Volkskunde* from what was studied by *die Folkloristen, wie sich diese Leute nennen* ('folklorists, as these people call themselves') (Weinhold 1890: 1). Folklore got viewed as a pointless or arbitrary area within *Volkskunde* (*loc. cit.*), or as simply a word for *Volksüberlieferung*, in which case *Folklore* as a name for a discipline could be criticized as nonsensical (Kossinna 1896).

Plural Concepts of Folklore?

The Herderian ideology valorized certain traditions without these forming a coherent collective category. Terms for 'tradition' did not distinguish contemporary from ancient milieux, nor did early researchers categorically isolate source materials by oral versus written media or contemporary versus past origin. *Traditions populaires* and *Volksüberlieferung* did not come into focus as categories of scholarly interest because they simultaneously included both less and more than was of concern in heritage-building research. Conditions in England seem to have brought into focus *antiquitates vulgares* ('antiquities among the commoners'), which cut through the category of 'traditions' temporally and also trimmed its breadth. Thoms' term *Folk-Lore* was no more than a synonym, but he also brought the category into targeted focus and precipitously advocated for its research to be distinguished as a discipline of the same name.

Thoms' term only gradually advanced in use across decades. The British concept became viewed through a theoretical lens that placed national folklore in an interpretive dialogue with more 'primitive' traditions (i.e. not 'folklore') in the colonies. North American English accepted the term; however, in a milieu where collective national identity was not built on a shared ancient heritage, the concept took quite a different shape. The AFS considered "the most promising and important part of the work [of the Society] to be accomplished" as the documentation and research of traditions among subjugated Native American populations ([Newell] 1888: 5) and the concept became broadly inclusive of inherited practices quite generally, though not concerned with 'folk speech'. The assimilation of the concept in Finland was on a foundation of Scandinavian philology rather than British and (North) American anthropology and involved still other transformations. It became much more text-centered, sharing the British interests in narratives and 'beliefs' and extended to oral (sung) poetry while not concerned with customs generally, as these were not of interest as traces of ancient ritual, nor with 'folk speech'. In all three milieux, the concept manifested a polarized contrast with modernity, yet the primary emblem of otherness was variously social class, non-scientific thinking and orality. The reconfigurations suited the concept to the interests and concerns of the new environment as well as to the current theories of those using it, as individuals selected and interpreted the features of the concept that they considered emblematic and adapted these to their research concerns.

Over time, the concept of folklore was transformed in all of these discourses through internal developments, international networks and cross-disciplinary shifts in interests and paradigms. The British concept waned and the whole discipline largely collapsed with Tylor's theory of survivals. The (North) American concept as intangible cultural heritage passed with the change of generations. Kaarle Krohn abandoned his father's evolutionary theory as the Folklore Fellows expanded its networks. German language scholarship tended to reject the term into the twentieth century. However, the term gained a foothold with the rise of the Folklore Fellows (Kaarle Krohn systematically used *Folklore* and its derivatives rather than *Volkskunde* in German), although the polarization of oral versus written media remained a stumbling block for applicability to national heritage (Bausinger 1966), and the concepts could blur as the terms were also sometimes used interchangeably or when translating *Volkskunde* into other languages.

The ebb and flow of international influences was always in relation to increasingly developed discourses and the respective milieux, where disciplinary institutionalization created durable structures in local discipline ecologies. This could situate folklore within the purview of anthropology or *Volkskunde*. Alternately, the Finnish language does not have separate words for 'tradition' and 'folklore', but the concept endured because folklore studies was defined through a methodology built on it, and other disciplines were defined in relation to folklore studies. Finnish ethnology was focused on material versus oral culture in a distribution of disciplinary labour that required a change in institutional structures to merge these as tradition studies. Although the concept of folklore has evolved continuously, deep structures of difference could still have a *longue durée*.

Perspectives

Looking beyond the positions taken by individual scholars in contemporary discussions and attending to the potential *longue durée* of differences accords with the multi-genealogical approach to folklore studies called for by Charles L. Briggs and Sadhana Naithani (2012). Considering a diversity of developments in parallel and their relations to different historical, societal and geopolitical circumstances leads to "a rhetorical approach to comprehend the way that frequently used terms in different social historical contexts reveal the philosophical basis of what folklorists do and how they think" (Bronner 2022: 1, on Valk 2003: 139). Especially in the humanities, such diversity is an organic part of broadly international disciplines. Disciplines may be locally institutionalized, yet they are ultimately social phenomena of people doing things, exchanging ideas and learning from each other in historical, societal and geopolitical contexts.

Disciplines are commonly characterized by ideals of being scientific and objective. Recognizing them as social phenomena is important because people are inclined to polarize difference. For example, the performance-oriented turn in American scholarship produced a protracted wave of "angry, intolerant housecleaning" (Dégh 1986, 80). Its counterpart in Finnish scholarship became a battle for defining the discipline, without recognizing that the dispute was over complementary and often intimately interconnected approaches (Frog 2013). Such polarizations have repeatedly produced biases, reimagining the disciplinary circle of solidarity in relation to particular developments in theory, interests, concerns and so forth. When the discipline is imagined as unified, a lens of advancement envisions an advance as a new apex to which others should aspire. Confidence in self-identification with a particular disciplinary positioning as scientifically, intellectually, ethically or morally superior leads to the devaluation of others as, for instance, 'problematic', 'outdated', 'not relevant', or simply 'not folklore' / 'not folklore studies'.

The examples above are from Western scholarship, including pre-Cold-War Russia. They are all within a cultural macro-region. Global diversity of folklore studies is no less various than the historical, societal and geopolitical circumstances in which the study of folklore has been adapted and evolved. Enduring diversity has been integral to folklore research from the outset. The examples above highlight that impacts and innovations are often tied to the ideas and agency of individuals, while individuals operate within and in relation to the social forms taken by the discipline. In their turn, the forms of folklore studies and their concepts of folklore rise and fall from positions of wide-ranging impacts. This pattern is visible across decades and centuries – a past which predicts that another form will take the international spotlight, resonating with interests and concerns of our changing times. In this age of ever-increasing connectivity, folklore studies has become a truly global field, and the next form of the discipline to have transformative international impact could be emerging anywhere. We must be open not only to diversity, but to change, or ours may be a form of folklore that will not develop but rather disappear.

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