

Editorial Comments

One of the distinctive features of an anthropological approach to human movement is to situate studies of dances and dancing (as well as knowledge about such forms of human action), in their appropriate socio-cultural and historical contexts. In this issue of JASHM we are pleased to present papers that achieve this in thought-provoking and interesting ways. Although the authors write about danced events as different as English folk dances and Hopi (American Indian) ceremonial events, both focus on the historical contexts of knowledge production and the subsequent usages of such knowledge.

Theresa Buckland's paper "Th'Owd [the old] Pagan Dance: Ritual, Enchantment and an Enduring Intellectual Paradigm" provides a rich, carefully documented ethnographic example of the ongoing influence of 19th century social evolutionism in explanations of the Britannia Coco-Nut Dancers (northern England). In the absence of accurate historical records, and heavily influenced by early anthropologists such as E. B. Tylor and Sir James Frazer, English folklorists attempt to account for the 'origins' of the Coco-Nut Dancers. This results in speculative historical statements, replete with unsupported assumptions about the dances as cultural survivals of a primitive ritual past. The contemporary repertoire is thus construed as a pre-modern relic of former pagan rituals. In this respect, Buckland's analysis complements and deepens Williams's discussion of problems associated with searching for 'origins' and erroneous notions of dances as survivals of 'primitive' or 'pagan' rituals (see Williams 1991, 2000).

Buckland goes on to describe how such explanations by folklorists begin to filter into the oral accounts given by the practitioners themselves. She charts the complex dialogical process (Bakhtin 1981) wherein dancers, folklorists and anthropologists entextualize certain narratives (i.e., stories, accounts, explanations) to explain current practices. We learn how such narratives — whether oral or written — are then taken up (or not) by different people in different ways for different cultural purposes, and these change over time.

'Dialogic' and 'entextualization' are terms currently used in American linguistic anthropology and elsewhere that emerge from the work of the Russian literary scholar and linguist Mikhail Bakhtin. They describe the process by which a given instance of ongoing social action — discourse or non-discursive semiotic action — can be subject to replication or reproduction in other contexts. As Silverstein and Urban (1996) put it, "[People] engage in processes of entextualization to create a seemingly shareable transmittable culture" (1996:2). Buckland cites the French semiotician Barthes, as follows:

... any text is an intertext, other texts are present in it, at varying levels, in more or less recognisable forms: the texts of the previous and surrounding culture. Any text is a new tissue of past citations Intertextuality, the condition of any text whatsoever, cannot, of course, be reduced to a problem of sources or influences; the intertext is a general field of anonymous formulae whose origin can scarcely ever be located; of unconscious or automatic quotations, given without quotation marks. (Barthes 1981: 39)

The term 'dialogic' can be somewhat misleading since it conjures up visions of a dialogue between different speakers. This is not what Bakhtin meant. He

wanted to draw attention to how a single strip of talk (an utterance, text, story) can juxtapose language drawn from, and invoking, other places, as well as a multiplicity of voices and forms of utterance (an example would be 'reported speech' in which the quoted speech of one person is embedded within the speech of another) Buckland illustrates this process at work as fragments of oral and written discourse become subject to processes of entextualization and recontextualization each time questions are asked about the origins and history of the Bacup Coconut Dancers.

The methodological implication of Buckland's paper is that contemporary fieldworkers cannot rely on local modes of explanation for the 'real' story, since a particular danced custom has probably been influenced by multiple written and oral sources, all of which constitute the ethnographic data. Practitioners, folklorists and anthropologists alike entextualize narratives according to theories about history and origins in processes of traditionalization (Bauman 1992) that systematically link present talk and action to a meaningful past.

Framing her analysis within a critical reading of the anthropological literature on the "invention of tradition," Buckland contributes to our understanding of why and how these dances remain important to many English people today — indeed, how the "heritage industry" as a whole is made possible. The paper contributes to this literature by showing that the power of choosing imprecise or erroneous historical narratives over more plausible ones lies precisely in the ambiguity and mystery they engender. This explains exactly how such traditionalizing practices might constitute a response to the negative effects of modernity. If this is indeed the case, then we might expect to find similar cases in the folkloric traditions of other European and European derived cultures, and perhaps elsewhere.

As Richard Bauman has noted, from the invention of the concept in the late 18th century, "folklore" has always been about the politics of culture:

Whether motivated by a romantic vision of traditional preindustrial ways of life as critical corrective to the discontents of modernity, or by a rationalist impulse to expose the irrational supernaturalist foundations of folklore as impediments to progress, students of folklore have valorized certain ways of life over others in the service of larger political agendas (Bauman and Sawin 1991:288, after Bauman 1989).

The quest for standards of "authenticity" and the problems of representation have thus loomed large in the folklore enterprise from the very beginning, although only recently have they become the focus of politically informed and analytically self-conscious examination (see Bauman and Sawin 1991 for further references).

The persistence of evolutionary questions about dances and dancing also raises the question of why outmoded, disproved, or abandoned ideas and theories within a discipline appear to have a remarkable half-life in other spheres? For example, one is led to wonder why any contemporary course on the history of dance (usually Western theatrical idioms) would start with a unit on 'Primitive Dance'? Or why outdated books such as Curt Sach's *World History of the Dance* continue to be used in academic settings (See Youngerman 1974)? As

with the Coco-Nut dancers and their supporters, it is reasonable to suppose that there is more going on in such cases than ignorance of current historical or anthropological paradigms. Perhaps for some dance scholars too, the power of choosing imprecise or erroneous historical narratives over more plausible ones lies precisely in the ambiguity and mystery they engender. Buckland's exegesis prompts the possibility that nostalgia for an imagined, pre-modern, authentic, ritual past — a *primordium* for the dance — assigns a powerful ambiguity and mystery to the dance *per se*, and therefore to its study. However, for a subject that is so often marginalized in the academic realm, rigorous scholarship rather than romantic nostalgia, would seem to offer a better strategy for accumulating cultural capital (Bourdieu 1977).

While Buckland's paper focuses primarily on the social and historical contexts of knowledge production, the second paper, "Representing the Hopi Snake Dance" by Leah Dilworth, addresses issues in the politics of representation. Dilworth documents and subjects to critical scrutiny the ways in which a particular Hopi ceremonial became subject to misrepresentation, not only by academic scholars but also the popular media. In doing so, she provides precisely the kind of politically informed and analytically self-conscious examination referred to above. Even though we move to the other side of the Atlantic, again we see the effects of 19th century anthropological theories of cultural evolution — this time through the writings of American scholars such as Lewis Henry Morgan and other ethnologists. In these cases, the often-erroneous interpretations by outsiders were exacerbated by media attention to the "exotic" and the "primitive."

Popularly known as "the Snake dance," the focus of attention was the climax of the nine-day Hopi Snake and Antelope Ceremony, a ceremonial complex usually performed in August to ensure abundant rainfall for the corn crops. It consisted of a processional dance in which Snake priests carried live snakes, many of them rattlesnakes, in their mouths. The ceremony ended with the snakes being let go and the participants' ingestion of an emetic. The ceremony was only one ritual in the annual round of Hopi ceremonies, but because it involved the handling of live snakes, it attracted widespread attention from non-Indian observers:

Ethnographers began publishing accounts of the Snake dance in both the popular press and museum monographs in the 1880s. By the early 1890s it had become a national ritual for newspapers and magazines to report on the "Weird Arizona Snake Dance" or "Hideous Rites" in their August issues. Photographs, drawings, and paintings of the Snake dance appeared in the press, on postcards, and as stereographs. The ceremony also became a major tourist attraction; thousands of people, including many celebrities and luminaries, descended on the Hopi mesas every year, and detailed accounts of the ritual appeared in travel narratives, guidebooks, and railroad promotional pamphlets. (Dilworth, page 451, this issue)

As a result,

Caught in the flurry of ethnographic, artistic, literary, and touristic interest in the Snake dance, Hopis quickly discovered that the proliferation of representations was just as threatening to their cultural practices as government schools, land allotment, and missionaries. By the early 1920s they had forbidden sketching and taking photographs of the ceremony, and eventually they closed it to outsiders altogether (page 452).

In providing this critical analysis of representations of the Snake and Antelope Ceremony, Dilworth aims to “defuse the power these images and texts exert over readers, viewers and the subjects depicted”(page 452). Rather than simply recapitulating the modes of representation that have proved so oppressive to Hopi people, the paper raises important questions about the power of representation as well as issues of intellectual and cultural property rights.

We are pleased to invite readers to view the visual representations to which Dilworth refers at www.anthro.uiuc.edu/jashm/dilworth (the JASHM website). We do not include any images that depict ritual activities inside ceremonial kivas since this is private, sacred knowledge. The author has only reproduced images of public parts of the ceremony crucial to the discussion “ ... in order to give readers a sense of the scope, content, and context of the spectacle of which these representations were a part”(page 452).

Dilworth also invites readers to examine our own responses to such images by asking what is it that fascinates or offends? And how are such personal reactions culturally and historically constructed? How might we disrupt the practice and politics of objectifying and appropriating Native American people and their spiritual practices? During a time when easy access through the media and new technologies makes indigenous knowledge ever more exposed to appropriation, the paper makes an important contribution to awareness of these issues, thereby becoming a part of the solution, rather than part of an ongoing problem.

In addition, Dilworth’s critical treatment of the early American ethnographers is admirable because she situates their works and lives theoretically and historically. This balanced treatment, albeit critical, provides a refreshing alternative to less informed writers who fall into an uninformed “anthropology bashing” because they fail sufficiently to contextualize earlier paradigms of explanation.

This issue concludes with a somewhat belated review of Sally Ness’s 1992 ethnography, *Body Movement and Culture: Kinaesthetic and Visual Symbolism in a Philippine Community* by Brenda Farnell. The review was solicited and accepted for publication in *Humanistic Anthropology* in 1996 but has yet to appear in print for reasons that appear to be related to the politics of representation of a different kind.

The Editors

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Errata:

We regret to announce that the following permission notice was inadvertently omitted from Adrienne Kaeppler's article in Volume 11(3):

This article was originally published in 1999 in *Dance in the Field*, (Ed. T. Buckland), New York, St. Martin's Press, and reprinted in *JASHM* 11(3): 377-386, with permission of Macmillan Ltd.

Additionally, in Volume 11(3), page 400, line 4 should have read "ontological existence of dances", not "to dances".