

Further, the examination of the various types of weaving is not omitted (pp. 85-97) which demonstrates in this section a developed and sensitive understanding of folk art. Comparisons and confirmations with regard to the Greek terminology for the loom and weaving can be made on the basis of the study by Alki Kiriakidou-Nestoros, *Weaving in Macedonia and Thrace* (in Greek), Athens, 1965, pp. 15-20, 23-30 (about the types of weaving, and so on).

The collection of the seven demotic songs about the loom continues to be remarkable (see also the musical rendering on p. 105). Of these seven songs, three are variations on the same theme (pp. 102-109); the concern chiefly of the theme is the detestation and abhorrence of the young girl for the loom, which she sees as a bad omen for illnesses and old age. The songs originate from the Albanophone Italian villages, namely, from S. Costantino Albanese (Potenza), from S. Paolo Albanese (Potenza), from Frascineto (Cosenza), as also from Perachora near Corinth.

In the last part of the book the writer tries to interpret the role of the loom, which is confined to only the woman's world, and to explain the beginnings of the weaving art among his Albanophone compatriots, and to stress, with an interesting bibliography as the basis, the ethnographic character in its traditional form within the community as it was created and developed by an ancient "machine".

From the linguistic viewpoint, and by extension the cultural, it is easy for anyone to observe Greek words or terms which are met dispersed throughout the Albanian text, or even foreign words which are likewise used by the Greeks and Albanians, such as: *alisdhe* (ἀλυσίδες = chains for the ball of thread ~ *anemi* (ἀνέμη = spinning wheel ~ *argalia* (ἀργαλειός = loom ~ *cungrana* (τσουγγράνα-χτένι = comb ~ *kamizollat* (Italian word) (καμιζόλα = woman's shirt ~ *kopani* (κοπάνι = pestle ~ *masuri* (Turkish word) (μασούρι = spool ~ *monofille* (μονόφυλλο = single leaf ~ *mbumbaku* (μπαμπάκι = cotton ~ *pani* (πανί = cloth ~ *tiligadi* (τυλιγάδι = reel ~ *hora* (χώρα = village, as capital village of a district ~ *furka* (Latin word) (φούρκα = distaff ~ *mitaret* (μιτάρι = threads running length-wise in the loom ~ *fitilet* (φιτίλι = wick ~ *manguri* (μαγκούρα = stick ~ *saita* (Latin word) (σαίτα = shuttle ~ *xhipuni* (Turkish word) (χιπούνι = waistcoat, and others.

The presentation of the content in the above two books is composed, I think, on account of their necessity and use for the future work of synthesis on the intercultural developments, generally, of the peoples of the East Mediterranean. We thus obtain two further interesting sources with evidence which confirm long-lived bonds between the ethnic communities which modern historical necessity has obliged to live apart.

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Ruth Finnegan *Oral Poetry: Its Nature, Significance, and Social Context*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977, pp. xii + 299 + 4 photos.

Professor Finnegan's book is in many ways quite unlike her earlier studies in the field of oral literature, most prominent among them *Oral Literature in Africa* (Oxford, 1970) and *Limba Stories and Story-telling* (Oxford, 1967). Those informative, carefully wrought works were concerned for the most part with a well-defined area or areas, and they treated their subjects in a direct, economical, and extremely knowledgeable manner. The title to the present volume, however, indicates how vast and interdisciplinary a task the author has set for herself this time around. A short quotation from the preface further describes her general aims:

"It does not pretend to be a comprehensive survey of the incidence and forms of oral poetry throughout the world. It is therefore not directed to specialists, but to those students of literature or sociology who would like to have some general introduction to the controversies and findings concerning oral poetry" (p. ix).

A few sentences later she continues:

"Finally, though this book is not aimed at experts it may be useful to those who specialise in one aspect of the subject and are not necessarily acquainted with others" (*idem*).

Unfortunately, Finnegan's study cannot qualify either as a primer or as a scholarly comparative study. Though unique in its collection of reference materials and therefore of importance as a bibliographical supplement to the Chadwicks and Bowra¹, the book is first too lax in taxonomy and finally too parochial and repetitive in approach to be of much use to either the beginner or the serious scholar in search of a "companion" to further study. In various ways it is misleading to both kinds of readers.

The primary problem with the author's compilation of material is its extraordinary and, from many points of view, unwarranted variety. She takes the designation "oral poetry" to include almost any sung or spoken poem, no matter what its origin, means of transmission, or mode of performance. Instead of the meticulous distinctions and applied theory which have characterized the Parry-Lord school² (an approach which receives heavy criticism throughout the book), we are faced with an unordered *mélange* of texts and references. Not only are various genres placed one alongside the other, with narrative and non-narrative materials often equated³, but songs of certain oral origin and those of certain literary origin are continually juxtaposed. Embarrassing incongruities arise, most blatantly comparison of Homer and the British rock group the Beatles; these incongruities all stem from the lack of selectivity in regard to relevant texts. As Lord and others have shown, there is much danger in admitting everything that smacks of orality into one's notion of oral poetry. Finnegan falls prey to her own want of definition and clear focus on this account: in demonstrating the tremendous variety of what she calls "oral poetry" and (so she assumes) debunking the ideas of many earlier theorists, she accomplishes nothing more than a grand and complex tautology. That her variegated sample of what she terms oral texts shows much variety is a circular argument; it cannot fail, but it tells us nothing.

The author's insistence on a comparative treatment is in theory laudable and eminently sensible, founded in the conviction that multiple instances in different culture contexts can tell us more than a single example. This much is surely true, as other researchers have shown⁴.

1. H. Munro and N. Kershaw Chadwick, *The Growth of Literature*, vol. I-III Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1932-40, rpt. 1968; C.M. Bowra, *Heroic Poetry*, London and New York, Macmillan and St. Martin's Press, 1952, rpt. 1966.

2. See especially the pioneering studies: *The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry*, ed. by Adam Parry, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971; and Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, 1960; rpt. New York, Atheneum, 1968. A summary of the work in various literatures through 1972 is available in Edward R. Haymes, *A Bibliography of Studies Relating to Parry's and Lord's Oral Theory* Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Printing Office, 1973.

3. The confusion of these two poetic modes is not uncommon among Africanists, who often seek to compare panegyric to epic narrative; see, for example, Jeff Opland, "Beowulf on the poet", *Mediaeval Studies*, 38 (1976), 442-67.

4. Parry and Lord originated the comparative method in the study of oral literature,

What seriously limits the implementation of this plan, however, are (1) the almost universal representation and analysis of texts and commentary in translation and (2) an over-dependence on the views of others. Not much needs to be said about the pitfalls associated with translated materials; the Homerist knows perhaps better than most others how superficial, almost useless even the best of renderings can be in approaching the art of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. It should be noted that such a secondhand access cannot be justified as a kindness to the beginner (because it misrepresents the reality of the poetry to the author, who must act as the sole interpreter for the student) or to the specialist (since, it is assumed, he does not control the language, he too is dependent exclusively upon the author for original insight). The Chadwicks and Bowra, who also come in for much criticism, worked in many more languages and literatures than does Finnegan; if their comments are out of date or too general, at least they were anchored in observations which the investigators made themselves by considering the original texts. We see the same lack of regard for *prima facie* evidence in the author's too frequent citation from the works of others. Consider the multiplication of uncertainties: she writes largely about texts and peoples whose languages she does not command, whose literatures she has read only selectively and in translation and whom she knows only through the published accounts of earlier writers. As she pursues this tack throughout the volume, one begins to feel that Finnegan owes much more to other studies than her criticism of them would indicate.

Against this background the author practices a joyful iconoclasm, attempting to frustrate earlier models of oral poetry by pointing to violations of their rules in her sample of material. Some of her arguments, such as that which takes to task the "romantic" or "primitivist" school of ethnographic and literary theory, are cogent and tenable. But, given the more than eclectic nature of her sample, this sort of thing is too easily done. What emerges overall is a negative tone (as Finnegan herself recognizes on p. 272) and a corresponding lack of positive observations. One of her counter-arguments deserves brief individual attention—her commentary on the Parry-Lord school and its central tenets. Finnegan first questions the conventional assumption on the part of scholars associated with these tenets, that a formulaic style is a sure sign that the involved poetry is oral, that the substitutable frames of traditional diction found in the Homeric poems and other texts are necessarily a part of oral composition. I agree, as have many others, that this assumption sorely needs modification, and the author's dubiousness is here quite appropriate. Though there exist other levels of traditional diction besides the formula *per se*, as it was defined for Homeric Greek and Serbo-Croatian poetry, the controversy surrounding the "formulaic equals oral" theorem has arisen from a too facile translation of definitions from one literature to another⁵. So far Finnegan's argument is relatively sound. But when she questions the nature of the formula, she does so for the wrong reasons and on the wrong bases, by making a show

and they have been followed by a host of scholars. Example works include: Ann C. Watts, *The Lyre and the Harp: a Comparative Reconsideration of Oral Tradition in Homer and Old English Epic Poetry*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1969; and *Formula, Character, and Context: Studies in Homeric, Old English, and Old Testament Poetry*, Washington, D.C. Center for Hellenic Studies, 1969.

5. So it was that Francis P. Magoun, Jr. brought the oral theory to Old English literature without modification of its definitions and theorems to fit the nature of Old English verse. See his "The Oral-Formulaic Character of Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poetry", *Speculum*, 28(1953), 446-67; rpt. in Donald K. Fry, ed., *The Beowulf Poet*, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1968, pp. 83-113. I use the pagination of the reprint below.

of expecting uniformity of occurrence across cultural-literary boundaries and then pointing to an absence of such uniformity as evidence against the Parry-Lord theory. But surely she must realize that the shape and variability of the formula, as well as of many other units, is tradition-dependent; that is, the data of composition take their form not from some universal archetype, but from the natural language features and metrical constraints of the particular tradition⁶. Here is the appropriate (I would say necessary) spot for her somewhat later discussion of "prosodic systems" (p. 90-102), if only it were sophisticated enough to make comparison true and meaningful. But even a glance discovers that it will not bear such weight:

It becomes clear that what in some languages or poetic cultures is achieved by a metre based on quantity is in others achieved by, say, alliteration; one can compare quantity in the Homeric hexameter with the elaboration of alliteration in Old English poetry (*Beowulf* for instance), assonance in the Old French epic, or the parallelism and word pairs of the Hebrew poetry in the Bible (p. 90).

Prosodic governance of diction is hardly so simple and uninteresting a phenomenon, and it should not be treated as such⁷. If she had intended to say nothing more scholarly than this, Finnegan should have eliminated discussion of prosody entirely.

Oversimplification of the linguistic and literary aspects of oral poetry is, however, a characteristic of this book, and it is nowhere more evident than in the apparently purposeful selectivity of bibliographical context. To take a striking example, consider Finnegan's quotation and re-quotation of Francis P. Magoun's long out-of-date aphorism: "Oral poetry, it may be safely said, is composed entirely of formulas, large and small, while lettered poetry is never formulaic,..." ("The Oral-Formulaic Character", p. 84). There have been a great many studies concerned with the possible oral and traditional nature of Old English poetry since Magoun's pioneering work in 1953, with the result that the criticism is now, quite naturally, in a much higher stage of development. But the author continues to quote Magoun as if his early work represented the present state of affairs in Anglo-Saxon scholarship; this is a gross distortion of fact, misleading to all readers not versed in that particular literature and commentary on it. Finnegan is no fairer with regard to Homeric criticism, the original locus for Parry's remarks and perhaps the most active and forward-looking of the "dead language" critical traditions. A large number of crucial studies are ignored, most of which could have been located by perusal of the Holoka or Haymes bibliogra-

6. Gregory Nagy, in his *Comparative Studies in Greek and Indic Meter*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1974, has furnished evidence that the Homeric hexameter is originally the diachronic product of formulas, rather than vice versa.

7. On the synchronic level at least (see note 6), formulaic diction is the typed issue of metrical patterns. These patterns are complex and individual entities, and cannot be glibly equated as in the quotation above. Oral literature studies point more and more to the singularity of meters and of formulaic phraseologies, and away from facile assumptions of equivalence. Compare, for example, Berkley Peabody, *The Winged Word: a Study in the Technique of Ancient Greek Oral Composition as Seen Principally through Hesiod's Works and Days*, Albany State University of New York Press, 1975, espec. pp. 66-117; Patricia Arant, "Formulaic Style and the Russian Bylina", *Indiana Slavic Studies*, 4(1967), 7-51; and John Miles Foley, "Formula and Theme in Old English Poetry", in *Oral Literature and the Formula*, ed. by B.A. Stolz and R.S. Shannon, Ann Arbor Center for Coordination of Ancient and Modern Studies, 1976. pp. 207-32.

phies⁸. Entries after 1970 are conspicuously absent, and not a few of these, such as the works of Nagy, Nagler, and Peabody⁹, are real advances in the oral theory. Only one recent study (significantly, it is one which suits her purposes) is cited¹⁰. While I defer to specialists in their respective fields to judge other aspects of her source work, the bibliographical context for Anglo-Saxon, Homeric Greek, and Serbo-Croatian oral poetry is lamentably incomplete and, as far as her arguments depend on its incompleteness, self-serving and misleading.

This brings us to consideration of an important facet of the volume: how Finnegan deals with the Yugoslav oral poetic tradition. I offer this measurement as an index of how she reports research on other living (or lately living) analogs. As far as the Yugoslav analogy goes, her description is full of misinterpretations. The argument posed for memorization of texts furnishes an example:

"Similarly, Parry and Lord recorded statements by Yugoslav singers of oral heroic poems in the 1930s that they could repeat exactly the same song that they had heard from another singer, "word for word, and line for line" (Lord, [*Singer*], p. 27-28); and a Somali reciter often makes it clear to his audiences that the poem he is delivering was composed not by himself but by another named poet (Andrzejewski and Lewis, [*Somali Poetry: an Introduction*], p. 46). Here, it seems, is definite evidence that the current performer is proceeding primarily by memorising an already formed text" (p. 53).

Had the author herself worked with Yugoslav *guslari* (as has Lord and, to a lesser extent, this reviewer), or had she consulted the recordings of singers' conversations preserved in the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature at Harvard University, or had she even looked at the published conversations in the *Serbo-Croatian Heroic Songs* series (vol. 1, a translation, is cited in her bibliography) and published variant texts, she would have known that the phrase *rečima po rečima* ("word(s) for word(s)") does not connote typographical accuracy, in the sense that a literate culture means and can ascertain that kind of accuracy. Indeed, had she read the very songs which singers claim are the same *rečima po rečima* (even in translation), her conviction that these texts must be memorized would have faded away. For what the *guslari* describe as identical songs turn out to be only similar, and large variations occur from one performance to the next. But the author has none of these things, and her comments on the Yugoslav analogy are invalidated by such oversights. And this is hardly the only lacuna: on p. 58 she calls a tradition with roots in medieval and pre-medieval "twentieth-century Yugoslav oral poetry"; on p. 65 she omits mention of the highest level of compositional unit, the "story pattern"¹¹; on p. 78 she misrepresents the extent of

8. James P. Holoka, "Homeric Originality: a Survey", *Classical World*, 66(1973), 257-93.

9. Michael Nagler, *Spontaneity and Tradition: a Study in the Oral Art of Homer*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1974. See also notes 6 and 7.

10. Joseph Russo, "Is 'Oral' or 'Aural' the Cause of Homer's Formulaic Style?" in *Oral Literature and the Formula*, pp. 31-54.

11. On the "story pattern", see A.B. Lord, "The Theme of the With-drawn Hero in Serbo-Croatian Oral Epic", *Prilozi za Književnost, Jezik, Istorija i Folklor*, 35(1969), 18-30; A.B. Lord, "The Traditional Song", in *Oral Literature and the Formula*, pp. 1-15; Mary Louise Lord, "Withdrawal and Return: an Epic Story Pattern in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter and in the Homeric Poems", *Classical Journal*, 62 (1967), 241-48; Nagler, espec. pp. 131-66; and John Miles Foley, "The Traditional Structure of Ibro Bašić's 'Alagić Alija and Velagić Selim'", *Slavic and East European Journal*, 21(1977), forthcoming.

repeated phraseology from one performance of a song to the next¹²; on p. 174 the name Ćor Huso Husein, the legendary singer about whom Parry was told, is twice misspelled; on p. 192 she omits the Orthodox singer from her portrait of the Yugoslav *guslar*; and so forth throughout.

All in all, *Oral Poetry* may serve a purpose as a reference volume, but its materials are so various, unorganized, and synthetically grouped that even that function may be called into question. As a beginner's book it would be at best unfortunate, since it misleads the non-specialist in many ways, as I have pointed out. As a "companion" to the study of oral literature for the specialist, it fails completely, never getting beyond the superficialities of translated texts and secondhand reports to the real substance and beauty of the poetries involved. The time is gone when an introductory survey like that of the Chadwicks is possible, even if Finnegan controlled the languages and general knowledge which they had mastered. And, since the appearance of Lord's *The Singer of Tales*, with its brilliant arguments and organization and its measured, modest scope, there is no longer need for a critical introduction. We now need works of a truly comparative sort, studies which treat oral poetry in depth studies which prescribe limits and standards on themselves and which are not based on translations, secondhand assessments, and tautologies. Translation and serious dependence on the observations of others may be necessary in presenting an explanation, but they are death to its original formulation. The rapidly evolving field of oral literature studies deserves a finer, more sensitive scholarship.

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David MacKenzie, *The Lion of Tashkent. The Career of General M.G. Cherniaev*, University of Georgia Press, 1974, pp. xx + 267.

Perhaps the most colorful of all the Russian Pan-slavs was General M. G. Cherniaev. His exploits first in Turkestan in the 1860s and then in the Balkans during the Serbo-Turkish War of 1876 made him a hero to Russian conservatives and an anathema to Russian liberal reforms. Professor MacKenzie has produced here the first biography in any language of this important figure.

Distinctly unsympathetic toward Cherniaev, MacKenzie traces out a military career marked consistently by false pride and excessive vanity. In both Turkestan and Serbia Cherniaev advanced what he thought was Russia's imperial responsibility, but underlying all his actions was a deeper drive for personal glory and recognition. Roughly the first third of the book describes Cherniaev's intrigues and clashes in Central Asia and it offers an interesting supplement to works by Seymour Becker and Richard Pierce on Russian expansion in Central Asia, which deal largely with high politics and institutional developments.

MacKenzie reserves his harshest appraisal of Cherniaev for the discussion of the Serbo-Turkish War of 1876. In general, in these chapters (8-11), MacKenzie elaborates on themes present in his earlier work, *The Serbs and Russian Pan-Slavism, 1875-1878* (1967). Cherniaev

12. The percentage repetition of lines, parts of lines, and passages varies a great deal from singer to singer, performance to performance, and song to song. Generalizations about the Yugoslav analogy which are unsupported by original language work must be dismissed.