

# LEGENDARY PERFORMANCES

## Folklore, Repertoire and Mapping

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Maps can play an important role in understanding the close connection between individuals, their lived environment and their story repertoires. The legend genre is particularly related to local environment. Although the original historic-geographic method proposed by Kaarle and Julius Krohn has been largely abandoned by folklorists, the role the map can play in advancing our understanding of the important relationships between teller, told and the environment should not be dismissed. A new approach to folklore repertoire is presented here. This approach makes use of digital archival resources and geographic information systems that allow folklorists to visualize and interpret aspects of folklore closely linked to the environment. This paper presents several small experiments based on the legend collections of Evald Tang Kristensen as an illustration of the power of this new historic-geographic approach.

*Keywords:* storytelling, repertoire, mapping, computation, geography

Legend, by its very nature, is closely linked to locality (Tangherlini 1990: 385). In legend performance, individual tradition participants explore, debate and ultimately reconfigure the landscape in which their daily lives are embedded. As Terry Gunnell astutely observes,

Legends are told within a particular space, and refer directly to that space however broadly or narrowly defined. And when they are told, remembered and passed on, referring to this and other spaces ... they ... have an effect on the way in which the environment they are told in is understood. (Gunnell 2008: 14)

Michel de Certeau's notion that stories can be seen as "repertoires of schemes of action" brings this nar-

rative reconfiguration of the environment into the ideological, since story performance can be seen as an examination of a locally situated scheme of action (de Certeau 1984: 23). William Labov and Joshua Waletzky's structural map of everyday narrative helps pinpoint the locus of the ideological in these stories (Labov & Waletzky 1966). When a storyteller proposes a strategy to combat a threat presented in the complicating action – a terrifying ghost or a threatening witch for instance – the choice of that particular strategy is an ideological endeavor (Tangherlini 1998, 2000). The resolution to the conflict can be seen as an endorsement or rejection of the proposed strategy depending on the story's outcome. Legend performances thus contribute to the ongoing negotiation between community members over the contours of a locally situated cultural ideology.

The performance of legend indicates that the social boundaries of the group, the physical boundaries of the community, delimitations of inside and outside, questions of belonging and not belonging, the location of both the dangerous and the safe and the projection of these concerns into the local environment are all in a state of constant flux. Features of the landscape – both natural and man-made – take on new and at times contradictory meanings as part of this dynamic process (Tangherlini 1999: 101–102). Interpreting legend in the context of the lives of those who create, perform, receive and re-create those stories requires an understanding of the shifting relationships between tradition participants, their story repertoires and the environment. Mapping these relationships using cartographic representations can play an important role in this interpretive process.

### From Historic-Geographic Method to Computational Folkloristics

The earliest folklorists were keenly aware of the power that visual representations of the underlying field data can have as analytical tools. Julius and Kaarle Krohn's methodology for the study of folklore variants, originally predicated on the study of oral narrative, but later adapted for most forms of folkloric expression, required the use of geographical representations – maps – as a means for understanding not only the distribution of variant forms, but also for tracing the historical development and geographic spread of those forms (Krohn 1926). The method, often referred to as the “historic-geographic method,” ultimately proved untenable, focused as it was on the discovery of *Urformen* (original forms) and a fairly simplistic – or at least unrealistic – model of stasis, change, transmission and distribution.<sup>1</sup> Given these goals, the method paid scant attention to the actual performance of traditional expression, and essentially no attention to the relationship between individual tale tellers and the environments in which they lived. Nevertheless, the method recognized the profound impact on thinking that the map can have as a means for understanding places related to memory, recollection and performance.

The method was codified by Antti Aarne in *Leitfaden der vergleichenden Märchenforschung* (1913; Chesnutt 1993: 236) and later presented in *Die folkloristische Arbeitsmethode* (Krohn 1926) as a how-to guide for applying the method to the study of a folk expression and its variants. Alternately labeled the “comparative method,” the “cartographic method,” the “historic-geographic method,” and the “Finnish method,” the adoption of this method by largely European folklorists in the first decades of the twentieth century as the defining approach in folkloristics resulted in a large series of studies, many published in FF Communications.<sup>2</sup> In its early years, FF Communications became a *de facto* factory for the dissemination of these results. Apart from Aarne's numerous monographs on various folktale types, the most impressive of these comparative studies in the first quarter of the twentieth century include Walter Anderson's *Kaiser und Abt*, considered among the most important applications of the method to the study of *Schwank* or jocular tales (1923); Waldemar Liungman's study of the princess in the earth mound (1925), perhaps one of the more thorough applications of the method; and Reidar Christiansen's study of the two travelers (1916). The method also led to the development of many of the standard reference works for the comparative study of tales, including the tale-type index, the motif index and the catalog of the migratory legends (Uther 2004; Thompson 1955–1958; Christiansen [1958] 1992). In more recent years, scholars such as Christine Goldberg have attempted to rehabilitate the method with some worthwhile results (1993, 1997).

It is interesting to note that the number of actual maps included in these studies is remarkably small. This paucity of maps can be attributed in part to the difficulty and costs associated with producing hand-drawn maps in the early decades of the twentieth century, and in part to the limited amount of data that researchers had at their disposal. These limitations were compounded by the relatively small number of map types – largely point-distribution maps – that made sense within the parameters of the method. In general, maps were used to illustrate where a particular folk belief, story type or various

motifs were attested. People – both collectors and tradition participants – were conspicuously absent from these graphic representations of tradition, an absence that paid implicit tribute to the super-organic perception of folklore that informed these studies.<sup>3</sup> Paradoxically, while mapping played a significant role in the method, the implicit goal of most of these studies was to erase the importance of place. The maps found in these studies are often nothing more than the simple outlines of political boundaries on which the data points are projected; in their simplicity these maps erase essentially all traces of the natural and man-made environments. As part of this reductionism, individual attestations of folk expressive forms appear as nothing more than icons on a map and are, as such, divorced from tellers, audiences and other aspects of the performance context. Consequently these comparative studies often elide not only the intimate connections between individuals, stories and place, but also collapse important local conceptual categories of place into a graphic representation in which experiences of common experiential phenomena such as distance and proximity, inhabited and uninhabited, wet and dry, high and low, passable and impassable disappear.<sup>4</sup>

Despite these considerable shortcomings, there are several important concepts from the historic-geographic method that can help elucidate the connection between traditional expressive forms and the processes by which traditions are created, circulate and change both in space and in time, and highlight how traditional expressive forms help individuals interpret and refigure the local landscape. Without too much trouble, these concepts can be incorporated into a more measured appreciation of the roles that history and geography play in conditioning traditional expression, and the role that traditional expression plays in shaping local conceptions of place and time. This shift in theoretical approach that aligns with the “spatial turn” in the social sciences and humanities significantly changes considerations of what and how to map, and also changes how one analyzes the resulting maps (Warf & Arias 2009). Instead of endorsing a superorganic view of traditional expression, the focus now rests on an awareness of

the relationships between individuals, place, history, and tradition. One consequence of this theoretical repositioning is the recovery of the mutually constitutive performance-centered aspects of tradition and place, even when those performances are echoes of the past housed only in archives.

An ongoing challenge for historical folklore scholarship is this need to rely on archival resources. Richard Schechner cautions that

[h]ard as it may be for some scholars to swallow, performance originals disappear as fast as they are made. No notation, no reconstruction, no film or videotape recording can keep them. What they lose first and most importantly is their immediacy, their existence in a specific space and context. Media recording abolishes these almost entirely. Restorations are immediate, and they exist in time/space as wholes; but the occasion is different, the audience is different, and the performers are different. ([1983] 1989: 50)

While Schechner’s observations on the nature of performance are undoubtedly true, the logical conclusion of his position would be to abandon the critical analysis of folklore altogether, as any analysis necessarily rests on a retrospective engagement with the performed.<sup>5</sup> A simple corrective to this position acknowledges that the individual performance has disappeared forever, but also recognizes that traces of that performance exist both in the archive and in the environment. A subsequent palimpsestic engagement with tradition in which the traces of performance are read both in the archive and in the environment allows for a rehabilitation of the archive. The challenge is to reconnect individuals to their repertoires and to situate them in their proper historical context – both environmental and social. Such an approach requires a great deal of archival research, and a great deal of access to data.

Starting in the mid-1990s, developments in computing made this approach tenable: inexpensive computers became increasingly powerful both in terms of computation and visual display; mapping software became far more user friendly; and large-

scale digitization projects made very large corpora available for study. One can now connect maps – the production of which had been largely a mechanical operation limited to highly trained cartographers – to large databases of historical data and, accordingly, one can reincorporate mapping into the study of folklore and performance. Connecting large amounts of “attribute data” (e.g. stories or songs) to digital, geo-referenced historical maps while recovering social data about individual informants provides a productive avenue for understanding how individuals perform the local even if those performances were recorded one hundred or more years ago (Tangherlini 2004).

Properly drawn, maps have the very real potential for revealing how individuals conceive of local geography. Performances of traditional expressive forms situated in that locally conceived – perhaps even idiosyncratically conceived – geography reconfigure unmarked “space” into culturally determined “place.” John Kasbarian notes that this understanding of the dynamic refiguration of geography,

revamps long-held notions of space and landscape as inert platforms, grids, or containers upon or within which social relations unfold, and instead treats them as fluid dynamic forces which are produced by – and in turn produce – social relations. Indeed, viewed in this way, space and society become inseparable; second, they enlarge the purview of geography to embrace spaces not only bound up with material “objective” patterns and processes, but also spaces of a metaphorical “subjective” kind that may play equally impressive roles through cultural production and ideological formation. (Kasbarian 1996: 530)

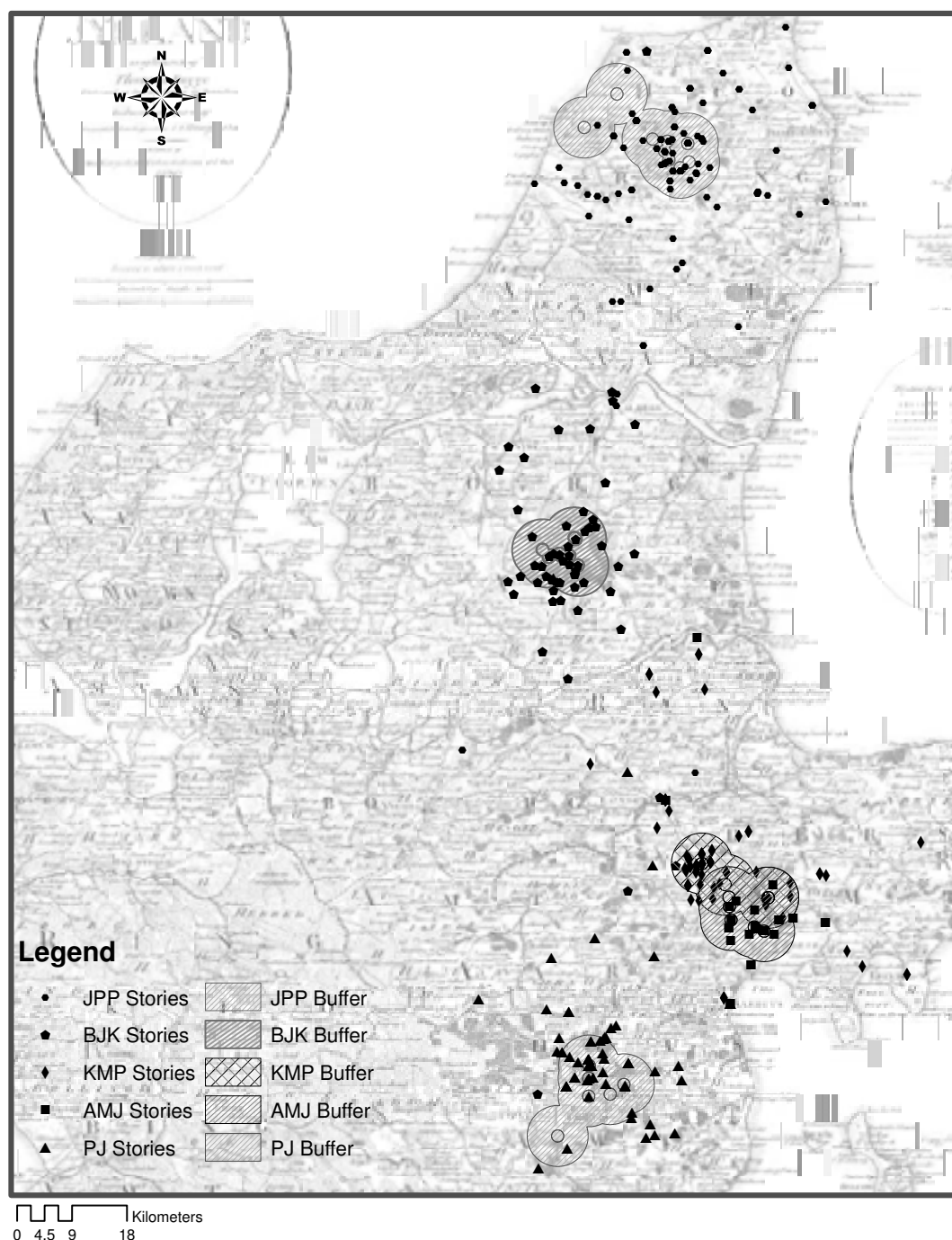
Barbara Bender extends this position and relates it in part to the folklore process, suggesting that the constructed nature of places leads to a redefinition of landscapes as “... created by people – through their experience and engagement with the world”, an engagement lost in the early historic-geographic method, but easily recovered in an approach that emphasizes the connection between individual,

repertoire, place and performance (Bender 1993: 1; Tangherlini & Yea 2008: 3).

### Experiments in Mapping Legend Repertoire

Plotting where people lived, where they worked, where they went to school or learned a trade, where they were stationed if they served in the military, where they went to church, where they were born and where they were buried is a surprisingly informative endeavor. Early folklore collectors and scholars paid scant attention to the people who actually created and perpetuated the folklore that otherwise so captivated their scholarly attention. A noteworthy exception to this general rule was the Danish folklore collector, Evald Tang Kristensen (1843–1929). Early on in his collecting career, Tang Kristensen became interested enough in his informants to note their names and where they lived. As his collecting expanded, he used these annotations to plan future visits – he was always eager to revisit prolific storytellers – and to further his own developing ideas of the distribution of folklore throughout Jutland. Eventually, he began augmenting his folkloric collections with ethnographic descriptions of everyday life gathered from people throughout Jutland and this eventually led to his collecting short biographies from hundreds of his many informants (Christiansen 2009).

By correlating Tang Kristensen’s information with information from the national census and church book records, it is possible to develop a fairly in-depth biographical sketch of many of his informants that includes place of birth, place of death, and various residences at the ten-year intervals of the census. Accordingly, one can plot a map that reveals the physical mobility of these informants. By correlating this data with cadastral survey information including land-taxation records as well as the occasional probate record, a general picture of the informants’ economic status and their economic trajectory over the course of their life emerges. Similarly, one can trace their mobility in the context of individual life events such as marriage, and in the broader contexts of shifting land-use patterns and changes in the general economy.



Ill. 1: Multiple ring buffers of 1 km and 5 km surrounding important biographical places for each of the five informants overlaid with places mentioned in storyteller repertoires. (Base map: Bugge 1820)

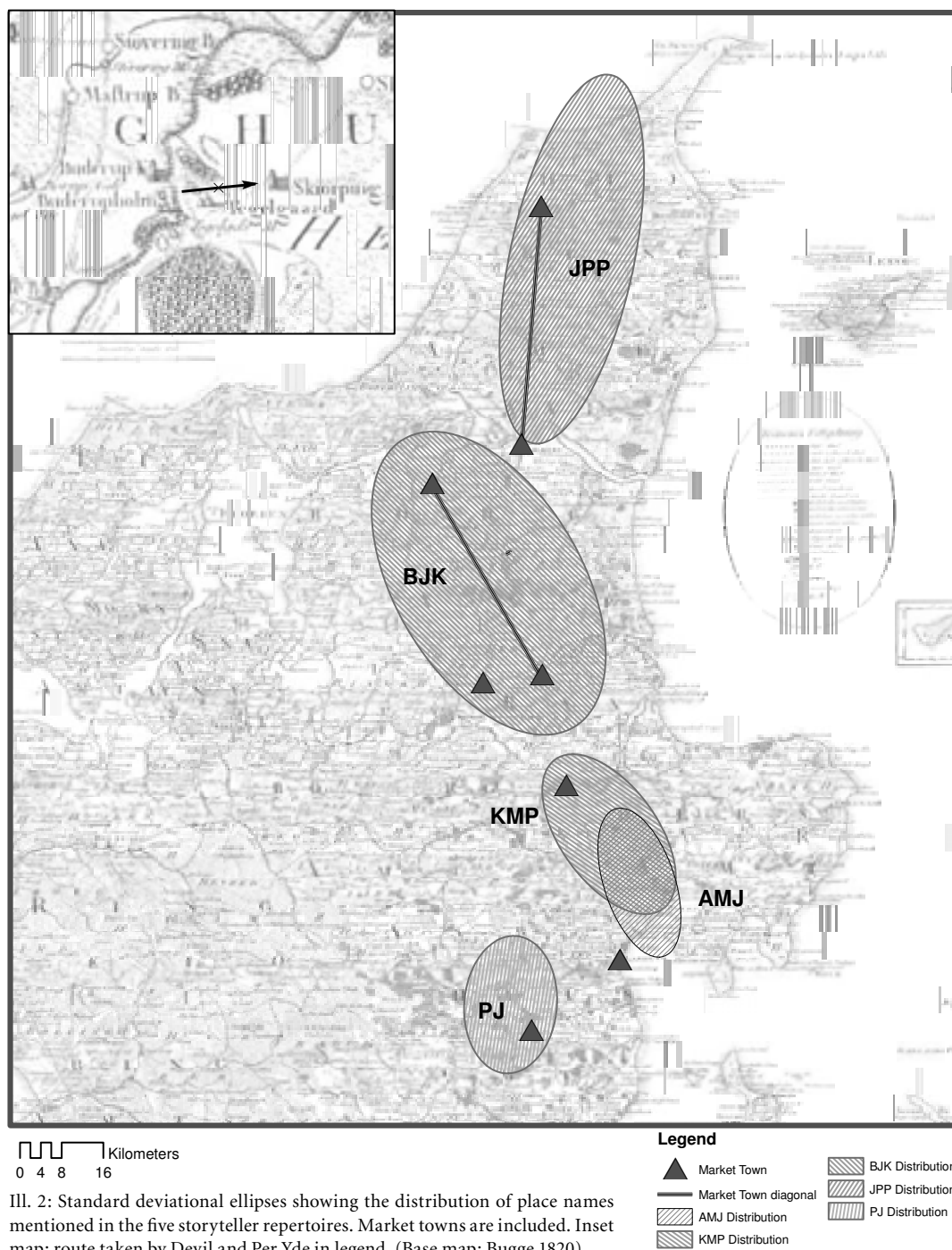
As an illustration of the potential of this approach, a map layer (see ill. 1) projected onto a historical map from the mid-nineteenth century shows the mobility of five of Tang Kristensen's informants. Jens Peter Pedersen (1836–1900) was an extremely poor woodworker who made and repaired parts for spinning wheels and lived his entire life in a small house in the impoverished northern Vendsyssel region. "Bitte" Jens Kristensen (1825–1906), a small holder and clog maker, had served in the military during the remarkably bloody engagements with Bismarck in the war of 1864. He took advantage of various veterans' benefits to buy several small plots of land which allowed him to advance economically. He lived the majority of his life in Himmerland in north-central Jutland near Rold Skov, a large forest known in the local imagination for its concentration of robbers' dens. Peder Johansen (1855–1928), a bachelor his entire life, lived in the more prosperous eastern-central Jutland at a mill near the town of Skanderborg where he worked as a journeyman miller. Further out on the Djursland peninsula, Ane Margrete Jensdatter (1813–1902) eked out an existence as a weaver while Kirsten Marie Pedersdatter (1827–1904) lived a very different life as the wife of a well-off farmer and the sister of an ambitious local political figure. The lives and story repertoires of these five individuals, collected over the course of a dozen years from 1887–1899, form the core sample for the various illustrations of computer-aided mapping given below. Admittedly, these five storytellers constitute a very small sample, a problem if the goal was to present a statistical overview of mobility. Instead, the goal with this study is to represent individuals and their physical mobility over the course of their lives. Unlike earlier historic-geographic maps, this map is not an attempt to provide a visual representation of aggregate experiences.

The map is interesting in several respects. First, it confirms the generally held belief that many late nineteenth-century rural Danes had very limited mobility, often spending their entire lives in a single parish or district. Second, the map clearly reveals the extent of each informant's geographic engagement by plotting all of the places mentioned in each story-

teller's legend repertoire.<sup>6</sup> It also provides a visual sense of the relationship between each individual's "narrative reach" in relation to their physical mobility. Third, a series of ring buffers of one kilometer and five kilometers have been drawn around each "biographical" spot on the map, making clearer the close connection between an individual's repertoire and their local environment. For some informants, stories are positioned close to life event places, while for others, the stories are kept at some distance.<sup>7</sup> The map also reveals the direct correlation between physical mobility and narrative reach; in short, narrators who moved around more during their lives told stories about places further afield than less mobile narrators.

A second map expands on some of the general relationships between individuals and the places mentioned in their stories (see ill. 2). Making sense of hundreds of dots can be a visual challenge, and can easily lead to making improper inferences (Tufte 2001). Fortunately, simple statistical tools allow one to highlight distribution patterns in a clear manner. In this map, the points denoting places mentioned have been replaced by a directional distribution standard deviational ellipse for each informant. The directional ellipse is a simple tool that measures whether features – in this case story place points – exhibit a directional trend.<sup>8</sup> In this case, the distributions generally do reveal a directional bias. The shape of these distributional ellipses is striking, with clear directional trends apparent in the elongated ellipses based on the repertoires of Bitte Jens Kristensen and Jens Peter Pedersen, and less discernible trends in the repertoires of Ane Margrete Jensdatter and Kirsten Marie Pedersdatter. Peder Johansen's repertoire exhibits an intriguing cross between the repertoires of the men and the women.

A likely explanation for the differences in these distributional ellipses can be found in the differences in work domains across the five narrators. The narrators can be broken, interestingly enough, into three separate groups: Jens Peter Pedersen and Bitte Jens Kristensen had work that frequently took them away from home, primarily to the closest market towns. For Jens Peter, this travel consisted of



traveling to farms to repair spinning wheels, and to the local market towns to sell spinning wheel parts and to purchase materials. Bitte Jens's travel was related to gathering materials for clog making, and to local market towns where he would sell both his clogs and the output of his small plots of land. One would expect that his experiences as a soldier in the mid-1800s would also influence his narrative reach; interestingly, this does not appear to be the case. Conversely, Ane Margrete Jensdatter and Kirsten Marie Pedersdatter's work kept them very close to home. Although Ane Margrete's work as a weaver and a wheat-bread woman required some travel, it was largely constrained to the immediate community.<sup>9</sup> Apart from their ballads and fairy tales, the places the women mentioned were all relatively evenly distributed across their local communities.

The larger and more elliptical directional pattern of the two men's repertoires is more regular than it first appears. Close inspection reveals that these ellipses align well with the main travel routes between the largest nearby market towns. Here, the storytellers' repertoires trace patterns of experience that are closely related to their daily economic lives. In the market towns, they could swap stories with other people and contribute to the conceptual mapping of these routes of commerce. Swapping stories would allow them to discover and internalize locations of threat, misfortune and good luck. These stories, in turn, would help redefine these places in the local imagination. At home or in their local community, they could reconfigure their experiences along these routes to align with other aspects of local belief. In this manner, their storytelling about the places along these main commerce routes not only contributed to the narrative inscription of the routes into their memory (and into local oral tradition), but also contributed to the ongoing figuration of these places as loci of meaning.

Peder Johansen's directional distribution ellipse appears at first glance to be anomalous given its relatively circular shape centering on his workplace, Fuldbro Mølle. His work as a journeyman miller, however, offers a potential explanation for this noticeable deviation from the place name dis-

tribution patterns of the other male storytellers. Although Peder frequently made excursions from the mill to nearby Skanderborg, usually to attend church, his daily life focused entirely on the mill. One of his responsibilities as the mill journeyman was to keep customers entertained in the mill room as they waited for their grain to be milled. Consequently, not only did he have an opportunity to tell his many stories, but he also had a chance to hear stories from all the mill customers. Given the organization of milling concessions at the time, the customers came from an area largely coterminous with the distribution of place names in Peder's repertoire. In short, Peder's place names align with the places that define the boundaries of "the local" for the people with whom he was in daily contact. This broad engagement with a fairly widely defined concept of the "local" was reinforced by his secondary work as a fiddler at parties and events. Since many of his playing engagements came from his social network at the mill – coupled to a secondary social network of local musicians – these experiences further contributed to the relatively even distribution of place names over this fairly wide "local" area. Since telling stories of local relevance – and therefore stories that create and reflect local meaning – is one strategy to keep an audience (something that Peder was renowned for doing), it makes sense that he would keep his stories "local." Accordingly, his repertoire reflects a broad engagement with the places that would have had the greatest significance for his customers. Since he did not make frequent and necessary trips to markets – rather the customers came to him – his repertoire did not develop the clear directionality of the other male informants. Since his customers came from a wide area around the mill, and since he fiddled at events in this equally wide area, his more or less circular distribution ellipse exhibits a considerably broader radius than those of the two female informants.

A third type of map shifts the focus away from an individual's entire repertoire to that of an individual story. Already it is apparent that most legends are closely linked to the narrator's local area. Mapping places and their relationships within a single



narrative can help illustrate how a narrator can use a story to project substantive meaning onto otherwise undifferentiated landmarks in the local landscape. To fully understand an individual's conceptual mapping of the local environment, one would need to do this type of mapping for each story in a person's repertoire; these map layers could then be presented and sorted by various criteria – negatively resolved legends, or legends of the Devil for instance. The goal of this “close mapping” is to reveal an individual's ongoing engagement with and changing understanding of the meaningful (at least to him or her) places in the local environment.

In February of 1887, on a two-week field collecting trip through the northern reaches of Himmerland and out to the coast at Hurup, Tang Kristensen met “Bitte” Jens Kristensen for the first time. He recounts this first meeting as follows:

From here I went over to Aarestrup again and naturally sought out Karl Hjort, who showed me to Bitte Jens in Ersted, a group of scattered houses a little bit east of Aarestrup town. I met the man and got him to tell for me, but his wife did not like that, and she hurried up and left. I have no idea where she went, but I did not see any more of her while I was there at the house. Jens was a good storyteller and he was also able to explain old customs from the area, particularly the old dialect that the old ones had spoken, but the younger people are now abandoning. He was an excellent man to meet. He had a sister who lived up on the road to the station and she also sang a little bit for me, but she was not nearly as good as her brother at remembering. At Karl Hjort's place I got food and lodgings, because it was not possible at Jens Christensen's place, as his wife had disappeared. Otherwise I got the impression that Jens who, by the way was not short, was quite proud of his son over in Copenhagen. He was a sculptor and had worked his way up. Later that same son became a famous man as it was he who made the large fountain out at the Grønningen that shows Gefjon plowing Sjælland out of Skåne and that I have later stood and admired. His father told me a bit about

him and that was interesting in large part because he dwelled on how his son had already shown his considerable talents at home. (Tang Kristensen 1923–1928, vol. 3: 82–83)

This meeting with Bitte Jens reflects Tang Kristensen's complex engagements with local populations, networks of teachers and like-minded local historians, and the sparsely populated areas of Jutland in which he collected. The discussion of Anders Bundgaard's famous statue of Gefjon plowing Sjælland out of southern Sweden brings the refiguration of landscape to the fore, and also echoes with the largely nationalistic project that is the foundation for Tang Kristensen's collecting.

During the first storytelling session alluded to above, Bitte Jens told over forty stories, largely legends, followed later in that same fieldtrip by a session that included another fifteen stories. Among the many stories that Bitte Jens told Tang Kristensen was the following story:

There was a man who lived in Teglgården, a little manor farm between Buderup and Skjorping, and he'd given himself to the Devil's power. But the Devil had agreed to give him a sign before he came and took him, so that he could be somewhat prepared for the trip. Then one Sunday morning, his hired girl was to go and get his Sunday clothes for him, he wanted to go to church, and when she brings him a pair of white stockings first, they looked red to his eyes. He says to her that she should get him another pair; he didn't want ones like that. She got him another pair, but they were red too, and all of the ones she brought were red. Then he gets quite upset and says that he doesn't want to go to church today and she should put them away. After that, he chased every one off to church, they all had to go except for the girl who'd given him the stockings, she was to stay home. Now she was to get him a big bowl of sour milk, he said to her, and he put a bunch of silver coins in it. “Now I want you to give me a spoon,” he said, and he wanted to spoon the money into himself, but he couldn't swallow them. So he pushed them

over to the girl, she could have them. Immediately, the finest carriage drove into the courtyard and stopped in front of the main door. She thought that it was important guests and the man who was sitting in the wagon also went in to see the lord but she didn't see what he did with him, but she did hear that he complained quite a bit and he didn't have the chance to leave out the door with him, but rather had to leave through a corner window, and then off with him, and they went fast because they drove over an oak by Hvældam when they got to the stream that runs between Skjørping and Teglgården – there were some scrub oak trees and other oaks down by the stream at that time – and cleaved it so that it almost broke in two, and it hung down and grew like that for many years, and because the Devil had driven over it there was no one who dared take it. Now no one saw Per Yde any more – you see that's what the manor lord at Teglgården was called – but they traveled north to Hell with each other, and after that people heard that when the Devil traveled over the sea with him, a ship came sailing right by at the same moment and the people called out asking who he was. Well, it was the Devil. And what freight did he have? Well, he had Andreas the bishop and Andreas Fal and Peder Yd'. Where were they from? ask the ship's people. Well, one was the bishop of Bremen, and the other was a dean – I can't remember now where he was from, but it was a place way down south, and the third was the man from Teglgården. You see, that was the last people heard of Peder Yde, but when the girl came into the room where the Devil had taken him, she saw his brains hanging on the walls, so he must have grabbed him pretty hard. There was a farmhand who worked here in the town who said that there was always a ruckus in the attic at Teglgården at night. (Tang Kristensen 1892–1901, vol. 6: 142–143)

In performance, the story is sandwiched between a story about an apparent haunt at Torstedlund (Tang Kristensen 1891–1894, vol. 6: 114–115) and the discovery of a mysterious rune stone at Bavnhøj (Tang

Kristensen 1892–1901, vol. 3: 59–60). Consequently, there can be little doubt that this story represents part of Bitte Jens's narrative mapping of the local geography, inscribing uncanny experiences and threat into the landscape.

A map of the locations mentioned in the story projected onto a local map from the historical period along with an approximation of the path taken across Hvældam provides a greater sense of the local geography and Bitte Jens's proximity to the events than simply hearing or reading the place names ever could (see ill. 2, inset). Topographical knowledge – where streams run, where there is a pond, what is passable and what is impassable – is accessible with the map; these are all things that Bitte Jens and his local audience would already know. While a local map is hardly a substitute for a local guide, coupling the words of the local storyteller with the visual representation of the area goes a long way toward bridging this gap for the folklorist engaged in a retrospective recovery of a lost performance. Reading the story together with the map begins to bring the performance back to the immediate. Here, the small manor that appears as an innocuous farm on the map is recast in a far more sinister light while the clearly liminal status of the mill pond and stream is heightened. The unusual path that the Devil takes with the manor lord becomes clear, bringing the terror and torment of the manor lord into the here and now. One no longer reads the landscape of the area around Teglgård – even at a remove of a century – as a pastoral idyll.

In all of these cases, the maps and the various features presented on the maps represent important engagements of individuals with their local environments.<sup>10</sup> The frequent appeal by storytellers to local geography in their legend repertoires is often considered to be little more than “noise” by those unfamiliar with the local geography, a common position for most folklorists. However, coupling these stories to both local geography and performance context – even if that context is the highly contrived context of a collector and his informant – clearly reveals the role that storytelling plays in coding the local landscape as part of the dynamic process of negotiating

cultural ideology. In these performances, the narrators present their conceptual map of the local relying on established place names and more idiosyncratic local names as part of this narrative mapping. Tying the narrative mapping to historical maps allows one to capture at least in part the immediacy of the local, and develop a deeper understanding of the refiguration of relatively undefined space into meaning-laden place.

### Conclusion: Distant Reading, the Map and Legend

This exploration of the mapping of individual lives and their engagement with the local environment represents another step toward achieving an ethnographically “thick” representation of folklore and is extensible to domains well beyond the study of Danish folklore (Geertz 1973). The maps in this type of study are not an end unto themselves. They provide a basis for asking additional questions that otherwise would be impossible to answer. As Gregory and Ell note, maps are “good at illustrating a story, but poor at telling it” (2007: 90). One of the most troubling aspects of working with large amounts of folklore material is that one often gets lost in the woods. Franco Moretti speaks convincingly of the strategy of “distant reading,” a corrective to the long-standing tradition in folkloristics of very close reading (Moretti 2005: 1). Distant reading allows one to discover patterns that might otherwise be obscured by too close attention to the details of a text or performance – and the same can be said for the methods briefly outlined here. Fortunately, with these methods, one can combine distant reading with close reading. In so doing, one can interrogate the relationship between performance – in this case of folk expressive culture – and the ideologically laden process of turning space into place. In her short story, “Sorrow Acre,” Isak Dinesen writes, “A child of the country would read this open landscape like a book” (1986: 172). The potential is now here to read an entire folklore corpus not so much as a book, but as a landscape of interaction.<sup>11</sup>

### Notes

- \* Support for the work presented here was provided by the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and the American Council of Learned Societies.
- 1 The method has also been referred to as the “Cartographic Method,” recognizing the importance of drawing maps depicting the distribution of variants for this approach. Carl Wilhelm von Sydow, who was one of the most prominent critics of the method, explores some of the flaws in the underlying premises of the theory in his article *Om traditionsspridning* (1932; reprinted 1948).
- 2 FF Communications, or Folklore Fellows’ Communications, is the monograph series of the Folklore Fellows, an international scholarly organization founded in 1908 to promote the study and teaching of folklore. The monograph series has been published since 1910 by the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters.
- 3 For an excellent discussion of superorganic theories in folklore, see Green 1997: 779–782.
- 4 Because of the broad historical scope of these studies, the human experience of time is also erased: entire decades or centuries are collapsed into a single moment as part of a misleading representation of a nonexistent simultaneity.
- 5 Schechner’s comments are primarily related to plays and dramatic performances but they are by extension equally applicable to folkloric performance.
- 6 I label this geographic scope “narrative reach.” The map also includes place names mentioned in ballads, as these tend to be closely related to local geography. Folktales and, particularly fairy tales (ATU 300–749) present a vexing problem, as many of the place referents are more conceptual than actual: Paris, for example, means “some place glamorous and foreign and far away,” rather than Paris, while Turkey means “some place exotic and dangerous and far away.” For ease of presentation, I have left these place names off of the current map.
- 7 Because of limitations in the number of maps that can accompany this article, further details showing the distance of various types of stories (ghost stories, stories of witches, stories of manor lords, etc.) to life places have not been included. This type of secondary visualization by type promises to be a productive avenue for future inquiry.
- 8 These ellipses are calculated using ArcGIS software. In the ESRI help manuals, they note that: “A common way of measuring the trend for a set of points or areas is to calculate the standard distance separately in the x and y directions. These two measures define the axes of an ellipse encompassing the distribution of features. The ellipse is referred to as the standard deviational ellipse, since the method calculates the standard deviation of

the x coordinates and y coordinates from the mean center to define the axes of the ellipse. The ellipse allows you to see if the distribution of features is elongated and hence has a particular orientation. While you can get a sense of the orientation by drawing the features on a map, calculating the standard deviational ellipse makes the trend clear. You can calculate the standard deviational ellipse using either the locations of the features or using the locations influenced by an attribute value associated with the features. The latter is termed a weighted standard deviational ellipse" (ArcGIS 9.2 desktop help).

- 9 As central bakeries became more prevalent in rural areas in the late nineteenth century, women found employment delivering bread in the early morning to farms in the immediate vicinity of the bakery. These women were known as "wheat-bread" women because the bread they delivered was made largely from wheat flour.
- 10 The database on which this work is based allows one to access the underlying stories behind each of these place points. Were this not the case, these maps would be little more than superficial engagements with the storytellers' repertoires and would elide the important aspects of performance flow that tie one story in a teller's repertoire to the previous story and the next story.
- 11 This approach to folklore that recognizes the historically situated component of these relationships and that also acknowledges the close relationship between place and folklore might productively be labeled a new historic-geographic method as part of a broader computational folkloristics. This project presents the beginnings of how this method might look.

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