ETHNOLOGY'S HOT NOTION?
A Discussion Forum on How to Return to "Tradition" Today

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After the publication of Hobsbawm and Ranger's groundbreaking *The Invention of Tradition* and ten years after Noyes' essay, Tradition: Three Traditions, what do we, as specialists of European cultures, have to say about "tradition"? This forum invites a selection of scholars coming from various thematic fields and countries to think about the concept of tradition, considered as one of our first conceptual tools and ethnographic objects of investigation. The authors reflexively discuss in which ways their research experiences challenge their own perceptions, understanding, and reframing of tradition. More than mapping new and allegedly new – or better "recycled" – ways in which social, ethnic, religious, or political groups use and manipulate traditions, the authors also address their perplexities with the notion of tradition. They thus add a specific layer of reflection, touching on temporality, methodology, and theoretical frames, to their practices of folklore and ethnology today.

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In 2009, Dorothy Noyes published an influential essay, Tradition: Three Traditions, on the destiny of the notion of "tradition" in European folkloristic, ethnological, and anthropological studies. Being a Western scientific category as well as a concept embodied and active within social groups, tradition can be thought of as: 1) the very process of cultural transmission – tradition is *how* transmission happens; 2) a tool to better grasp temporality – modernity or progression is what comes up against tradition; or 3) an asset of properties, habitus and/or goods, of a specific group – tradition is *what* is transmitted. However, Noyes argues that there is a fourth way to understand "tradition": as in Roman society, givers of cultural goods and aptitudes transfer not only authority or property, but also responsibility to the receiver. This fourth definition of tradition leads us to associate the process of transmission with a moral connotation. It opens up the path to political assessments and critical engagement with cultural heritage administrations, for example, as well as with our own intellectual uses of "tradition".

Many years after the publication of Hobsbawm & Ranger's ground-breaking *The Invention of Tradition* (1983) and ten years after Noyes' essay, what do we, as specialists of European cultures, have to say about "tradition"? In this special issue of *Ethnologia Europaea*, we have chosen to discuss tradition once

more, in the light of theoretical debates, individual postures, and alternative paradigms and concepts connected with both the very notion of "tradition" and what are commonly referred to as "traditional" facts (or "traditions").

As both an addition and a counterpoint to the set of research articles included in this special issue, we have invited a selection of experienced scholars coming from various thematic fields and countries to contribute with a short statement. Our aim is to trigger a rethinking of the concept of tradition, considered as one of our first conceptual tools and ethnographic objects of investigation. When reading one contribution, we encourage readers to take into consideration the findings and observations of the other texts, as well as meditate on the various backgrounds of the authors and their conclusions. The forum also lends itself to being discussed with advanced students as a theoretical or reflexive exercise.

The authors of the forum reflexively discuss in which ways their research experiences, each marked by their intellectual cultures, theoretical sensibilities, and national and international connections, challenge their own perceptions, understanding, and reframing of tradition. They present their views on how traditions have been considered in their training, and how they reach – or not – a satisfactory assessment of what people and scholars think traditions were, are, should encompass, must express, or could have been. Most of them tackle recent political uses of tradition, from democracy to "illiberal" contexts, but also reflect on the more intensive pressure "culture" is subject to. In fact, more than mapping new and allegedly new – or better "recycled" – ways in which social, ethnic, religious, or political groups use and manipulate traditions, the authors also address their perplexities with the notion of tradition. They thus add a specific layer of reflection, touching on temporality, methodology, and theoretical frames, to the sometimes uncertain, often problematic, certainly not facile, practices of folklore and ethnology today.

The contributions all address in some way (one or more of) three main issues: The first one is the acknowledgement of the growing and long-lasting common and popular usages of the term "tradition". Going hand in hand with commodification dynamics, heritage-making, and self-reflection of national, religious or ethnic groups, common uses of "tradition" make ethnographic work both fascinating and more complicated. When people and institutions we are working with name their cultural features and manifestations "traditions", merely analysing and deconstructing this kind of manipulation appears unsatisfactory and insufficient. As Anna Niedźwiedź, João Leal, and Jurij Fikfak argue, there is no need to abandon our critical engagement, insofar as we opt for a comprehensive description of the vocabulary in use within the groups we are dealing with. And precisely because the "traditional" has always been a contemporary matter for any human society, as Anne Eriksen reminds us, a historical and comparative analysis is required to better grasp how "tradition" is used today and was used yesterday.

The second issue can be thought of as the politicization of traditions, which is twofold. The classic entanglement of politics and traditions, exemplified by the nationalistic or authoritarian uses of folklore in Europe, has recently turned into a diplomatic and global weapon, which states, diasporas or economic elites wield to define themselves as liberal and democratic powers on the scale of intergovernmental arenas. The Unesco ICH convention is changing the scale of political uses of tradition as well as the instrumentalist or even opportunistic habits of politicians. Nonetheless, Ellen Hertz and Dorothy Noyes adopt a more nuanced perspective, showing that uses and misuses of tradition can have new and paradoxical effects on local scales. Ellen Hertz shows how democracy as a tradition and a "heritage" is being reconfigured in Switzerland while still remaining the fragile foundational stone of the country. For Dorothy Noyes the U.S. liberalism and illiberalism are not safe from the potential of resilience of traditions, especially in the Trump era.

The consideration of the third and last issue leads us to consider the ethical dilemma we are facing as critical and empathetic social researchers in traditions. Christian Bromberger, Fabio Mugnaini, and

Ronald Hutton (as an historian) have come to the conclusion that if tradition lies in the contemporary landscape of ethnology, folklore studies and anthropology, we have, in a certain way, a choice to make. Either we act as experts of cultural objects and we help institutions to define, assess, and legitimize a definition, among other things, of what is tradition; or, we carry on the heritage of our disciplines, which is to critically understand and interpret how people and humanity in general assemble, share, cohabit or disconnect, taking tradition as a conceptual instrument that helps us to describe the world as it goes, and not only as an identity management tool or a financial opportunity for our sciences to survive.

These are only three possibilities we wish to highlight here; other readings are present in the texts or may appear in the future. It is not, however, unexpected that the ethical dimension of our professions and epistemologies will come to light in a discussion about tradition in the first quarter of the twenty-first century. Our societies, especially in Europe but not only, seek more moral consciousness and public participation in the face of new mass migration patterns, human impacts on climate and the environment, and sudden political transformations. Perhaps surprisingly, traditions as a call for responsibility, following Dorothy Noyes' fourth signification, may be a good thing to keep in mind and think with today.

Christian Bromberger
Tradition as a Controversial Issue

Tradition has long been our daily bread. Historically, folklorists and ethnologists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have been haunted by the question: "Where does such-and-such come from?" Following this, the role of our discipline was to teach the ancient origins of those customs that seemed to have stood up to the test of time. Criticisms of such research have become commonplace. On the one hand, ostensibly timeworn traditions are often recent and "invented": the continuity of customs is an illusion. On the other, so-called ancient traditions have been harnessed to defend the worst causes. Totalitarian regimes – Nazism in Germany and the Pétain regime in France – drew upon these as a form of symbolic cement to exalt the greatness of a people. But should we stop at a criticism of historic reconstructions of traditions and the ways these are used by the populace and the powerful? Or, indeed, should we completely forsake the study of a research object that has such a poor reputation? My view is that there is no need to throw tradition out with the proverbial bathwater. Alternatively, two questions can be asked. Why does such or such a tradition – whether it be ancient or more recent – endure? And, what does this or that tradition reveal about tensions at the heart of a society? In this way, a quest for origins is replaced with an analysis of contemporary dynamics. An example helps illustrate both this process and this shift in the lens. In certain parts of Thrace, in Greek Macedonia, a carnival-like celebration of an old woman, or midwife, "Babo", takes place each 8th of January. This festival was resuscitated in the 1950s by Greek folklorists (*laographoi*) who were anxious to show the ancient origins of the tradition and to assert the Hellenism of Thrace. They re-baptized the festival Gynecocracy (*Gunaikokratia*), a contemporary reworking of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*. In the 1980s, the festival was appropriated by feminist movements. Women disguised as policemen, soldiers and priests installed themselves in cafés where they played cards and drank ouzo, in short, parodying the behaviour of men. More recently, Babo has become the symbol of maternity, but also that of female ageing, an aspect that was previously marginalized from public and festive activities but that now has come accrue a certain worth. On the 8th of January, elderly women are invited to take part in the dances, a new practice that breaks with tradition, and is reminiscent of old people's associations. This example illustrates well how the continuity of traditions relies on successive readjustments and ever-shifting rationales. Yet the status of tradition also offers a privileged vantage point from where to observe contemporary tensions at the heart of the regional society. Thrace is home to refugees from Turkey and Bulgaria who arrived in Greece in 1922. The former group, who came from

eastern Thrace (contemporary Turkey) claimed that Babo was merely an old woman. The latter, the Rumelians, who came from Bulgaria, contended strongly that she was a midwife. This difference in interpretation reflects the competition between the two groups, both of which claim to be the carriers of an authentic "Greekness" (Grégnac 2004).

Clearly tradition is an area of struggle, not a frictionless, consensual object, as advocated by Unesco with their notion of "intangible heritage" (Bromberger 2014). In relation to this, it is worth examining a tradition that has been categorized as intangible heritage by Unesco and according to that institution is supposed to, and I cite: "promote the celebration of peaceful and unifying expression of cultural diversity". The case in question concerns the springtime rites that celebrate the arrival of the new year, which, depending on the country, is called Noruz, Nevruz, Navruz… – words that mean "the new day". These rites can be observed across a geographical area that marks the historic extension and influence of the Iranian world. Yet, contrary to the assertions of the Unesco report, there is nothing less "peaceful" or "unifying" than this tradition. Across the entire area where Noruz can be seen, this "tradition" has become the source of controversies and interdictions, evidence of significant tensions at the centre of these societies.

During the first ten years that followed the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the Islamic leaders fought against and attempted to reduce to a minimum "specifically Iranian" customs in an attempt to spread a Shiite revolutionary ideology. The foremost target was Noruz, which had previously been promoted by the Pahlavi dynasty in the name of cultural nationalism. The year that starts with the spring equinox is governed by the solar calendar, which is out of sync with the Islamic lunar calendar, and is one of the strong symbols of the specificity of Iranian society, stretching back to Antiquity. Indeed, according to tradition, Noruz perpetuates and commemorates the day when Ahura Mazda created the world. From the 1990s, a period that saw a relative liberalization of the Islamic regime, a sense of national pride began to emerge, and a "specifically Iranian" folklore

was even restored as a means of fighting against the "Western cultural invasion". Ethnologists and, more broadly, nationalist intellectuals threw themselves into this breach to such an extent that seminars, conferences and books dealing with Noruz flourished. Yet this compromise did not happen without a certain number of reminders of Islamic pre-eminence. Noruz had become Islamized over the centuries and the Islamic authorities stressed insistently that the inaugural day marked the appearance of angel Gabriel before the prophet Mohammad, the day of the investiture by the self-same prophet Mohammad of 'Ali as his legitimate successor, as well as the future Parousia of the Hidden Imam. Moreover, should the ceremonial solar and lunar calendars intersect, it is the latter that dominates. Strong resonances with this recognition of Noruz can be observed across central Asian countries and the Caucasus, areas that denote the historic extension of Iranian civilization, and which share the same calendar. Indeed, the labelling of Noruz in these countries faced a number of challenges over-and-above a simple recognition of springtime customs. Those states where the festival was banned during the period of the Soviet Union were particularly strong in laying claim to a shared reference to Noruz, that had come to symbolize the end of communism and national independence. From 1926 to 1988, the rites of Noruz only took place in hiding, in family settings. One of the first measures taken by the new nations after their independence, or indeed following perestroika, was the restoration of Noruz, which was rapidly declared a national festival. This was the case in Uzbekistan where the presidential decree of February 1989 was dedicated to the restoration of this custom. In Afghanistan, the festival was banned first by the Soviets and then by the Taliban, before being celebrated with fervour following the overthrow of that regime. In this general hymn to the glory of Noruz, the position of Turkey, the other major regional power is somewhat singular. It would seem that Turkey played little part in the meetings set up to prepare the Unesco application. Playing second fiddle in a cultural operation led by Iran was, without doubt, not appreciated by the Turkish leaders. But is that to say that the

Turkish government is not interested in Noruz? By no means, but for other reasons than the celebration of a folkloric rite. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the celebration of Noruz was abandoned by the Turkish Kurds (who, we should note, are of Iranian origin), when nationalist intellectuals elevated it as a national festival at the end of the 1910s. In the 1960s, activists defending the Kurdish cause appropriated this date and this symbol as part of efforts to organize demonstrations and support. For example, it was on the day of Noruz that, in 1984, 34 activists set themselves on fire in the military prison of Diyarbakir. The Alevis religious minority with a strong base in the east of Turkey has not been left out in this race for symbols that can mobilize supporters. Some, no doubt, would have celebrated Noruz before, but the revitalization of the festival coincided with the growth of political dissent by the Alevist movement during the 1990s. These reappropriations have not been ignored by the Turkish leaders. When a tradition or a traditional rite becomes a symbol of opposition, two solutions present themselves for the power in place: either they ban it, which risks provoking bitterness and revolt, or they claim ownership, or indeed its origin. The Turkish leaders opted for the second solution: they have officially celebrated Noruz since the mid-1990s, hoping in this way to pull the rug from under the feet of the Kurds and the Alevis. They assert in no uncertain terms that it is an original Turkish tradition, something that is confirmed complacently by ethnologists and historians.

This is why it is essential to end with this "unifying", sterile, chloroformed conception of traditions and to analyse them for what they are, that is polemic societal issues.

Anne Eriksen
Tradition, Heritage and Time
Heritage is everywhere in the present world: in public life, in politics, in bureaucracy and administration, and among scholars. In research, the interest in heritage appears as a slightly younger sibling of the collective memory and commemoration studies from the 1990s. The terms partly overlap as they both spring from an interest in how the past works in the present and shapes the future. Folklorists have contributed significantly to this research, not least by arguing that heritage work is the source of new cultural expressions – not just bad history. I would nonetheless like to argue that folklorists have another and even more significant contribution to make, represented by the concept of tradition.

The term tradition came into regular academic use in the late nineteenth century, first as a generic term for different types of folklore, and then gradually denoting cultural processes of transmission and mediation. At present it can refer to practices of communication and transmission, to shared cultural property as well as to ideologies and cultural norms. As a scientific concept, tradition is closely tied up with the modern notion of history. They are mutually constitutive concepts, twin products of a modern experience of time and change. A temporalized idea of history emerged from the late eighteenth century and was institutionalized when history became a university discipline in the nineteenth century. The new idea of history as an overall process or force was accompanied by an equally new understanding of tradition as a parallel, but different kind of temporal process. Tradition represented other types of transformations, changes and continuities. Consequently, the nineteenth century's interest in collecting and studying folk culture was not only part of modernity more generally speaking, but represented a reinterpretation of certain cultural forms into a new temporal regime. The material that emerged from this process was neither discovered nor invented in the period, but inscribed into new ways of conceptualizing time and temporality. What had long been known as "popular antiquities", "superstitions" or "peasants' beliefs" re-emerged first as folklore and then as tradition.

This genealogy situates the notion of tradition in an epistemological landscape where it is related to history, but also, to the modern experience of time that created both concepts. As an analytical tool, tradition conveys a valuable and theoretically based contribution to the understanding of culture and more particularly of cultural heritage. I will try to illustrate this by means of comparison.

To call something either tradition or heritage means to ascribe it value. In both cases this assessment takes place in the present. The values are not inherent in the tradition or the heritage piece, but produced by the appreciation. However, this intrinsic presentism is not identical in the two concepts. Naming something heritage means to give it the status of an object: A treasure, an heirloom. While tradition can refer to both objects and processes, heritage tends to define culture as items, be it material or immaterial.

The word heritage also defines the object in question as property of a special kind, with its own distinctive legal aspects. Furthermore, it implies the existence of somebody who inherits. There can be no heritage without heirs. So, while heritage on the one hand makes culture into objects, it also produces subjects – individual as well as collective ones. The heirs can be a nation, a group or a family. One should think that this subject must exist before any heritage turns up. How can inheritance possibly take place without heirs to receive it? But in the world of cultural heritage, the opposite may be the case: Heritage creates the subject, it produces its own heirs. Reference to "cultural heritage" is an efficient means to claim cultural legitimacy and identity. Any group claiming recognition and social respect will have a stronger case if they can evoke a heritage received from the past. Heritage effectively confirms that their existence is rooted in something deeper and more serious than the whim of the moment. It is no accident that issues of identity so often are bound up with heritage rhetoric.

The notion of tradition does not focus on the subject in similar ways. Tradition does not presume a subject who owns it, and the term does not in itself imply any legal rights or ties. To be sure, tradition also assumes agents: somebody who tells the stories or sings the songs. So, people obviously create traditions, but tradition does not intrinsically produce subjects.

Collecting and researching folklore was long a project of rescue, and research questions emphasized stability and age. But the concepts that were developed have later proved to work remarkably well to investigate cultural variation, change, adaptation and processes of transmission. They have also made us realize that what appears as old, stable, traditional, and shaped by the past always represents variation and interpretations, and that the past in the present always is the product of continuous processes of negotiation and adaptation. Recent interest in traditionalization also emphasizes how cultural expressions are being authorized by reference to tradition, or by presenting themselves as traditional. Tradition works as a source of authority, supplying old forms and giving legitimacy to new expressions. A similar emphasis on variation and change cannot be found in the concept of heritage. One reason may be the tendency to objectify culture and to focus on inherently valuable products rather than on processes. Even when constructivist perspectives are employed, there is usually not much room for understanding change and variation as anything but lack of authenticity.

In a contemporary context, the notion of tradition is able to offer analytical understandings of how variation, change, adaptation and creativity is intrinsic to culture that has been passed down over time and that seems old and stable. It represents an approach to time and temporality that includes perspectives on how the past is working in and on the present. This is an important contribution to general cultural theory and to heritage studies in particular.

Jurij Fikfak
The Möbius Strip of Interplay:
"It's (Y)our Tradition"

"Can you tell us why we're doing this?"
"It's (your) tradition."

The "why" question was asked by a young man that came to our institute back in the 1980s to ask my colleague for advice on how to properly perform a ritual in which, on New Year's Eve, a group of local young men from Bohinj (known as *Otepovci*) come to wish people in the village happiness, joy, and health in the coming year.

I did not follow the rest of the conversation and the advice that my colleague gave him. What surprised me the most was the direct question about the sense of a ritual that is performed every year. The question that used to be asked by experts had now become a question by native experts. Performers of tradition – of the phenomena where "the past holds the present in its grip" (Shils 1981: 195) – were not happy with the common-sense answer that they were doing this because it was an old custom, because their ancestors did it, or with the simple tautology that it was their tradition. Witnessing parts of this brief communication between my former colleague and the local performer, it became clear to me that those young men were not the usual bearers of tradition, but local experts (Boyer 2005), meaning they played a double, ambivalent role. They were insiders that practiced the ritual as well as outsiders that thought not only about how prescribed rituals should be properly performed but also what place tradition should occupy in their village.

For this changed dynamic of interplay between researcher and performer, we can use the metaphor or concept of the Möbius strip (Fikfak 2018: 12), in which the two sides are on the same side. When did this change happen? It was during a time of rapid social change and uncertainty, when tradition or "the imagination of tradition" (Otto & Pedersen 2005) as a delayed element of authenticity provided important and cohesive support to shaping national identity while also concealing its hybrid nature and the diversity of actors. In Slovenia, this was in the 1980s, a time of opposition to increasing Yugoslav centralism, a time of aspirations for a rediscovery of Slovenian identity that was manifested most widely in the tourism motto "Slovenia, My Country". In this search for and self-confirmation of identity, there was also vibrant and intense cooperation between local experts, journalists, and professional experts, who uncovered, defined, and designed the special features of local traditions (Habinc 2018) in this interplay.

Being a part of these dynamics first during carnival research in the 1980s, when I was viewed as an expert that could talk to local experts, I immediately ended up in the middle of an "expert" discussion, where locals would let me know how they were entitled to practise the tradition of an event that was eventually restored after twenty years. Its reconstruction was based on a non-local art teacher's expertise and on a reenactment that was presented in a film from the 1960s showing the state of the ritual "as it was" before the Second World War. This reenactment was carried out by two experts: the prominent Slovenian ritual researcher Niko Kuret as the professional "outsider" and the "insider" teacher. The latter had some knowledge about folklore, wrote the basic text, and had participated in this custom as a young man before 1938, when he fled to Yugoslavia from a territory that had been annexed by Italy.

However, this productive Möbius strip of the interplay between the reconstruction and revival of a ritual performed by local and professional experts continues even today. One result is a commemorative stamp with the motif of the ritual group and a description by a professional expert; another is the efforts to enter this tradition into the register of intangible heritage and later also onto the Unesco list. Driven by the desire for self-exoticization, tradition became a fixed part of the local and national identity. A historical dimension was ensured through Niko Kuret's discovery that the ritual was first mentioned in 1340, and a European dimension with his statement that, in terms of culture, Slovenia is Europe in miniature. Tradition is implicitly subjected to cultural commodification, while at the same time serving as an element of self-identification and self-representation.

However, a different form and practice of tradition can be identified – using Zaykova's definition (2014) – as a "site containment and resistance". On 1 May 2004, I went to the Trieste area and spotted raised maypoles in some villages. They were adorned with red flags and a blue "Europeanized" heart inscribed with the lyrics of the Slovenian national anthem. On this day, Slovenia officially became part of the EU along with nine other Eastern European countries, and villages with a Slovenian minority were celebrating this important step. I arrived in a particular village that I had studied (for several

years) and saw no blue heart. In the afternoon, when the time came for the "young men's hour" – an event open only to single young men from the village – I asked one of the main local experts why there were no blue signs symbolizing accession to the EU. He told me this had been discussed at the "mayors' hour" (i.e., a meeting of the current and previous leaders of the young men's community), where it was decided that the only tradition in the village was the red flag at the top of the maypole and that the blue EU heart had no place there. The person I talked to did not support this opinion at the meeting itself, but he acknowledged that it made sense. This event raises the following question: Does the explanation that one thing is tradition and that another thing is not resemble common-sense discourse, in which the seemingly tautological scheme of the answer hides some underlying opposition or resistance to change?

The answer may be indicated by information about the widespread use of communist-era Slovenian flags with the red star and stories about how people experienced the Informbiro period (1948–1955) or the establishment of independent Slovenia. It seems that the young men's initiation ritual itself points to a search for a lost time and to a resistance (cf. Hall & Jefferson 2006) of external institutional tutelary powers that "force" villagers into accepting a different social reality than they were used to before 1948, with the notion of Stalin's mighty Soviet Union, or before the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Tradition – that is, the ritual of the poetics of manhood – allows at least a brief escape into being out of time, a return to an imaginary chronotope – and, following Taylor (1992), an authentic (i.e., not yet disenchanted) world.

In both cases, in this interplay of numerous dynamics, locals and local experts implicitly acknowledge a second order (in Alfred Schutz's terms) of discourse, in which they say to the researcher: "You know more about us than we do ourselves" (Fikfak 2004). At the same time, the Möbius strip of interplay functions as a channel to convert second-order knowledge into their common-sense answer; on the other hand, the potential of the Möbius strip metaphor is still limited because certain levels of their expertise and practices

are not accessible even to the researcher. There are niches that performers control and that they are not willing to or capable of revealing, often because they have internalized them deeply. This is why they can and will reply to our question "Can you tell us why you're doing this?" with: "It's our tradition."

João Leal
Tradition, Beyond Invention
Tradition and traditional cultures were once the subject matter of anthropology, especially in European and Latin American countries with strong traditions of nation-building anthropology (Stocking 1982) centred on the study of rural communities. In the 1980s, this focus on tradition underwent some important changes. From a loose designation covering different aspects of the cultural and social life of rural communities, tradition came to designate the results of processes of invention and objectification of traditional culture involving not only members of national and local elites, but also representatives of the rural communities that anthropologists used to study. From the study of tradition (without quotation marks), anthropologists moved to the study of "tradition" (with quotation marks) (Cunha 2009). Authors such as Eric Hobsbawm (with his emphasis on processes of invention of tradition) and Richard Handler (who questioned the opposition between spurious and genuine traditions and proposed the concept of objectification of culture) were decisive in this shift from tradition "in itself" to "tradition" as a set of discursive formations and practices about tradition (Hobsbawm 1983; Handler & Linnekin 1984; Handler 1988). More recently, the institutionalization of the category of Immaterial Cultural Heritage (ICH) gave a new breath to this anthropological interest in "tradition" (with quotation marks).

After almost four decades of anthropological interest in "tradition" we know a lot more about processes of objectification of tradition. The number of empirical studies has consistently grown and the level of conceptual innovation and theoretical sophistication has increased. But there are also some drawbacks in this enthusiasm for objectified tradition.

One of them is related to the overstatement of the transformative effects of the politics and practices of objectification of tradition. This idea was already important in Handler's theorization of the processes of objectification of culture and, since then, several other authors have emphasized it (Guss 2000; Hafstein 2007). Of course, in some cases the objectification of tradition is tantamount to what Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) would call a second life for tradition, "as an exhibit of itself" (1998: 149). But more attention should be paid to cases in which these processes have a limited impact on the performance of tradition.

That is the case of Holy Ghost festivals (*festas*) in the Azores, in North America and in São Luís, Brazil (Leal 2016, 2017). In some of these contexts it is possible to find practices and discourses of objectification of tradition centred on the *festas*. This is most evident in the Azores, where the *festas* are seen by most Azoreans as a defining trait of Azorean culture. In the early 2000s, the Azorean government presented the candidature of the festas to Unesco's list of ICH and in Ponta Delgada (the major Azorean city) a Holy Ghost festa was recently initiated as a means of asserting the festas as a major heritage asset in the Azores. In São Luís too, local Holy Ghost festas were transformed in the 1980s into an important symbol of the regional identity of the state of Maranhão. In the 2000s they benefited from strong financial support from the state government and several official initiatives related to the festas were launched, in order to enhance their public visibility.

Although in these two contexts the festas are strongly associated with processes of objectification of tradition, these processes did not have a transformative impact on them. A new meaning – as "culture", "tradition", "heritage" – was added to the festas. But this new meaning plays a secondary role in relation to other meanings that people continue to ascribe to the festas. For them, the festas are first of all a religious event, resulting from a vow or a lifelong devotion to the Holy Ghost. They are also viewed as important occasions for the production and reproduction of local sociabilities and groups. And, thanks to the politics and practices of objecti-

fication of culture adopted by local elites, they have acquired a new cultural meaning, as "tradition". But, besides this new meaning, the impact of cultural objectification has been tangential.

Of course it is possible to find Holy Ghost festas where objectification had more radical results. Such is the case of two well-known festas in Brazil: in Pirenópolis (Goiás) and in Paraty (Rio de Janeiro). There are cases in which anthropological discussions on invented traditions and objectification of culture are indeed important tools for understanding what happens to tradition in times characterized by the "expediency of culture" (Yúdice 2003). But more attention should be paid to the myriad cases where these discourses and practices have only a tangential impact.

Also, there are cases where objectification is irrelevant or, instead of objectification, one could speak of counter-objectification. For instance, in many municipalities in Maranhão, local power is now in the hands of neo-pentecostal politicians. Some of them have adopted an aggressive stance towards several aspects of local folk culture, including Holy Ghost festas. In these cases, the festas, which were previously seen as a proud expression of local tradition, are now regarded as catholic superstitions that should be banned.

These cases – where local tradition is antagonized – combined with the cases where objectification is irrelevant or tangential deserve more attention from anthropologists.

This is not only a matter of cooling down the academic enthusiasm about processes of objectification and invention of tradition. It is also a matter of questioning objectification and heritage-making from unexpected angles. The reasons that explain the irrelevance or the tangential nature of discourses and practices of objectification of tradition are as important for the understanding of contemporary predicaments of tradition, as the reasons that explain their success in the cases – more often studied – where they have a transformative impact.

After having moved from tradition (without quotation marks) to "tradition" (with quotation marks), it might be that the time is now ripe for a return to tradition, beyond invention.

Fabio Mugnaini

Tradition – Weaving the Social

As the teacher of a course officially labelled *Storia delle tradizioni popolari*, that is history of popular traditions, I am used to opening the lectures cycle with a disclaimer: my students are told not to expect a historicist formation, nor to receive a set of tools for detecting or "unmasking the folk", nor to think of traditions as a matter of fact to collect as if they were mushrooms, seashells, gemstones, novels or selfies.

For Alberto M. Cirese, the anthropologist who, in the 1960s, borrowed from Gramsci the fundamental inspiration for reformulating folklore studies in Italy (Cirese 1971), the term "tradition" referred both to the process of intergenerational cultural transmission within a well-defined social group (inculturation) and to the product of such process, that is all the contents that could be best transmitted through the means administered by that same social group.

The path carved out by various transmission processes (orality, emulation, reproduction) and contents (storytelling, handcrafts, foods), running parallel the social division of multilayered societies (peasants vs. landowners, rural vs. town dwellers), mirroring also the political order, have crossed, melded, and faded across the decades. Firstly, within the national horizons, such as those evoked by Hermann Bausinger (1990); secondly, under the pressure of globalizing forces such as the post-war and post-1968 modernization, the rise and sunset of the global revolution dream, the promises and cheats of the global market and the allure of consumerism; finally, today's revitalization of local identities, together with the passionate return to identitarian policies. This has given new sap to the old discourse, sometimes replete with mystical or nostalgic stuff, as in the case of "Tradition", with a capital T, which the neo-fascist movements often herald to propagandize their attempt to revive dead ideologies of death.

Therefore, tradition cannot be thought of as a clear-cut channel of cultural transmission, full of given contents, located somewhere in the past and rolling off into our present. Tradition is not floating as a sheltering past over the heads of its bearers. Considered as regards the relation with the past, tradition is the result of a continuous and processual choice: Lenclud's short essay said it clearly (Lenclud 2001); its meanings may either confirm or even radically change those of the "quoted" past; traditions live everywhere in social spaces, though variously legitimized or criticized according to the legitimating force of its actors. Out of the monopole of history, tradition appears as a creative frame: anything that is made twice – a twice-behaved behaviour, as Richard Schechner defined performance (Schechner 2004) – might be felt, from inside, or read, from outside, as a tradition. If the performed event is in its umpteenth iteration, tradition will rely on its past; if it is just the second time, its makers will be hoping or working for its future. Either as "mark of modernity" or as performative product, tradition today appears to be a "metacultural production", becoming then almost synonymous with "heritage" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004).

The new perspective on tradition that comes along with the "heritage turn", in Italy coincided with Palumbo's seminal research in Sicily, a long enduring ethnography on tradition making, heritage policies, political conflicts, inspired by a prescient attention to legacies of nationalism, in the wake of, among others, Herzfeld and Handler (Palumbo 2003).

The nation, after having coevolved with the celebration (and the nationalization) of folk culture, seemed to sink under the weight of international class conflicts, or under the affirmation of a universal market of cultural goods. Slowly, but relentlessly, the nation has resurfaced again, within – and probably even against – the international rhetoric of Unesco's logics and practices.

The worldwide "unescoization" (to borrow Berliner's coined term) (Berliner 2012) of traditions constitutes nowadays the paradigm, which rules also the promotion of local customs. It seems that something that has existed for decades suddenly feels the urge to rewrite itself according to the heritage model and mould, as also Noyes already noticed (Noyes 2009: 246). Behaving, doing or being something in

some particular way, no matter how ancient, singular or necessary, seems, somehow, incomplete if it is not certified as traditional, and hence as worthy of attention.

Traditional behaviours or creations still continue to select their track from the past, to borrow meanings and alibis, but in the era of certified cultural heritage they need to be accredited; they need birth certificates to be issued by experts, institutions, academics: bearers, ministers and rentiers of a new bureaucratic order.

In the Heritage era, the prevailing concept of traditions seems to be that of the "least common multiple" (or LCM), the encompassing quantitative concept that include different traits, or events or places; LCM circumscribes pertinences and closes differences into normative and authoritative categories so to blare and proclaim tradition. Traditions carefully described and itemized piled up for the national pride, imply also the worrying return to the nationalist claim of national Tradition. There is room, however, for trying to resist and defend an alternative view of tradition, driven by the complementary figure of the "highest common factor" (or HCF), that is the shared substance made of languages, values, expressive forms, social claims, crafts or skills, on which free and fluctuating identities are built; focusing on the HCF makes possible to valorize various ways of conjugating our humanity. According to LCM the pizza tradition is a possession of Italy as one of Unesco's fiefs; according to HCF it should be included in a wider array of clever and skilled techniques of sorting out tasty food from poor resources: widespread, socially precious, ecologically pressing, though still neglected.

For us, as scholars, there is the choice between cooperating with the hegemonic management of traditions (legitimizing governmental control on national heritage, producing items for the tourism market, leading cultural diversity to the expected political uniformity) and trying to challenge such an apparently irresistible trend. It is up to us, as experts, or simply as academic and state teachers, to keep alive a critical gaze, so as to be able to point to the main functions of tradition: that of supporting the process nature of human history; knitting together times, places, generations; building citizenship and including incoming friends and faces in the ongoing construction of our societies.

We can work on the tradition as a connective concept, framing a matrix of possible links between facts, judgements, and actions that are distant, both in time and in space or in their meaning and value. Traditional links may be seen in horizontal, spatial or social solidarity. Such links may actively unite apparently diverging destinies, such as those of the people who land on our beaches: their hopes should remind us – and we should make this explicit – the many stories recounted by our own migrant diaspora, in order to build, upon this shared destiny, a possible newer citizenship and a better future.

Seen under the lens of tradition as a connective or relational concept, single events get a new life, absorb and radiate a different meaning. The attribute "traditional" gives to a certain event a peculiar status, a particular impact force and appeal. Tradition as highest common factor may become strategic for weaving the social texture, for revitalizing productive citizenships and ensuring a future beyond the individual solitude within the walls of neo-nationalist pride or the malls of global consumptions.

Ellen Hertz
Democracy and Tradition, Democracy as Tradition
Writing about tradition from Switzerland presents a useful occasion for thinking about the relation between heritage and democratic politics. With respect to the latter, Switzerland has long portrayed itself as both a model and an exception: a spontaneous birthplace of local democracy, it has served as an inspiration for other countries while remaining politically neutral, an outsider to international alliances and multinational institutions (Eberle & Imhof 2007). This particularity has gone hand-in-hand with another, of great interest to scholars of tradition. Switzerland can claim to be the first state to be ideationally stitched together not by notions of race, nation or empire, but through intangible cultural heritage, the famous *Sitten*, *Bräuche und Traditionen* (manners, customs and traditions) that have nourished

this country's self-image (and tourist industry!) for over two hundred years (Bendix 1992; Hertz et al. 2018). While these two claims are not linked by necessity, they come together today in an unusual and potentially fruitful way.

In fulfilling its obligations under the 2003 Unesco Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, Switzerland has made an interesting move: it has turned Swiss democracy into heritage by including key practices of its democratic institutions in its official "Inventory of Living Traditions". Among these are "consensus-seeking and direct democracy", listed as a tradition in all twenty-six of Switzerland's cantons and described as follows.[1]

> The cornerstone of peaceful coexistence and effective political institutions is its [sic!] deep-rooted culture of consensus. […] However, it is a well-known fact that the road to [consensus…] is not always smooth or straightforward, and in some cases is marked by less than constructive dialogue. Indeed, the great store that the Swiss set by consensus-seeking is also born out of fundamental dissent. […] While these factors may hamper the decision-making process, the outcomes are always astonishing and unique.

Of course, many countries honour themselves and their institutions by monumentalizing and sanctifying key places, moments and objects in their political history. The United Kingdom celebrates the monarch's birthday with great pomp and circumstance, and every state has its national holiday on which it enacts its own political stability through ceremony and symbols. But with its "Inventory of Living Traditions", Switzerland is doing something slightly different. Rather than commemorate through metonymy – the crown for the kingdom, the holiday for the long haul – the listing of "consensus-seeking and direct democracy" qualifies the whole – the entire, real-live political system of Switzerland, with all of its quirks and pockmarks – as national intangible cultural heritage to be safeguarded.

At a moment in history when the central tenets of the Euro-American democratic project are under sustained attack, it is worth exploring this innovative choice in more detail. Put starkly, we might ask whether democracy's "heritagization" should be taken as a sign of its imminent decline – much as "Neuchâtel skittles" has been listed as intangible heritage because it is about to disappear – or as an original means of reinforcing its centrality.

No doubt, it is the later interpretation that experts solicited by the Federal Office of Culture had in mind when they proposed this element for the national inventory. Switzerland has consistently emphasized the "living" nature of the traditions it lists in its inventory, adhering closely to what is often identified as the "spirit" of the Unesco Convention. In this understanding, an honest but self-confident description of Swiss democracy at work could only underscore its on-going symbolic and operational importance. To this end, the text presenting this living tradition is simultaneously critical and celebratory, as if enacting the famous dictum (incorrectly) attributed to Churchill: democracy is the worst form of government … with the exception of all other forms of government that have ever been tried.

In this same vein, the photographs collected on the Inventory's website are almost ostentatiously self-critical. They feature a commemorative stamp about women's suffrage in which a peasant man is shown silencing his beleaguered wife; an image of "young separatists carrying a battering ram", discretely labelled "the Jura question" (in quotes); and a photo from the General Strike of 1918 in which we see armed soldiers "tackling" a striker. It is as if this official acknowledgement of the darker moments of Swiss history could only work to reinforce the strength of its democratic institutions, whose triumph over the forces of exclusion and violence is predestined by their patrimonial status.

The website's opening picture, in particular, speaks a thousand words, despite – or is it because of? – its short caption reading: "Every Wednesday or Friday, the Federal Council meet (sic!) behind closed doors."

In an age of transparency and traceability, this image highlights secrecy and orality, commemorating an unwritten principle underlying one of the

Figure 1: Door leading to chamber where the Swiss Federal Council deliberates under the regime of "collegiality". (© Swiss Federal Chancellery)

most important aspects of federalist democratic culture: the principle of "collegiality", or the idea that once decisions are made (in complete confidentiality) by the multi-party executive branch – the Federal Council, in this case, but this unwritten rule applies at the cantonal level as well – they must be upheld without further commentary by all of its members, regardless of the policy positions dictated by their respective party affiliations.

Something intriguing is going on here. This heritagization of democracy plunges us into a whirlpool of reflexive modernity, as science and the state collude to promote, at one and the same time, the myth and the reality of Swiss democracy. Critical ethnographic objectivity cavorts with patriotic self-celebration; the past and the present meld together in the notion of "living tradition"; and the "culture of consensus" is exalted by reference to "direct democracy", bypassing all of the tensions inherent in the relation between these two notions. Indeed, a reflexive *mise en abyme* is acted out by the very text of this web page, which affirms that the "Inventory of Living Traditions in Switzerland" itself "is a perfect [example]" of the "astonishing and unique outcome[s]" produced by Swiss democracy, with its intrinsic respect for the "country's linguistic, regional and economic diversity".

To their credit, the federal experts seem to have anticipated all of this confusion of categories, folding the contradictory pulls and pushes at work into their description of Swiss democratic procedure. As stated on the "Living Traditions" website: "Such an approach", they sagely state, "generally demands a multilayered political decision-making process: exploratory talks, several rounds of consultation, parliamentary debates and, last but not least, the use of instruments of direct democracy."[2] How all-things-wise-and-wonderful it is, this description of the slow and painstaking path to consensus! But what the text leaves out, the image reveals through concealment: equally as important as debate and deliberation are the forces of power and influence – the offers one cannot refuse; the enforced silences that follow – that lead to compromise. As the photograph and its caption remind us, these forces are very much part of the picture "behind closed doors".

The dual lesson for the notions of tradition and democracy may lie here: like democracy, the making of tradition is on-going, contested and performative (Hertz & Chappaz-Wirthner 2012). And like tradition, democracy requires a movement of retroaction so that the forces at play in the forging of compromise can be hidden from view, commuted into the miracle of consensus, the will of the People. In the best of all possible worlds, the Swiss federal experts would have had this very lesson in mind: for democracy to remain a living tradition, for its strength, its principles and its foundational character to endure, we must celebrate its fragility, its incoherence and its improbability.

Ronald Hutton
The Concept of Tradition

My own discipline is that of history, but in my work with the idea of tradition I have had to reckon with how it is conceived in two others, anthropology and folklore studies, and so with what the three of them have in common, and how they differ, when dealing with it.

In general, all of them have come, during the twentieth century, to depart from the definition of the term used in common parlance. That tends to

delineate a body of knowledge, customs or beliefs received from the past, with an emphasis on continuity and authority in the reception of it. By contrast, academics have tended increasingly to embrace a more dynamic sense of it as an ongoing process of adaptation and reformulation, in response to altering cultural needs: in other words, that the natural state of any tradition is one of constant change. Accordingly, what popular discourse has most often treated as a conservative phenomenon has come more often to be regarded within the academy as at least potentially a radical one, serving to sanction an accommodation of new conditions. All three disciplines, therefore, have come to emphasize the inherent mutability of received belief and practice.

In recent decades the "postmodern turn" has only served to reinforce this sense. In folklore studies and anthropology tradition has come to seem at times to be a wholly symbolic construction with an assigned meaning, a process of thought by which the past undergoes ongoing interpretation. In this sense, it becomes only a particular value given to something new, as all cultures – at least now – change ceaselessly. It is a means to create the future out of the past, certainly one process by which culture exists, and perhaps the main one. The popular sense of it as something essentially rooted in the past has largely vanished, to be replaced by one of it as in essence a mode of transmission. This formulation is now often implicitly applied to societies in general, but it is perceived as having an especial relevance to post-industrial societies, in which tradition seems to be exceptionally elastic and individualized. Rather than a surrounding state of being, it has become something strategically applied and manipulated; and thus, its study can be one of the ways in which spiritual and social connections can be understood, as subjective invocations.

At the same time the postmodernist agenda has caused historians to become acutely aware of what is termed "the invention of tradition", echoing the book of this name edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger in 1983. The expression denotes practices with agreed rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which implies continuity with a suitable historical past. The element of invention is supplied by the fact that they are in fact responses to novel situations, which either refer to old situations or establish their own created past. The concept aligns with the view of tradition taken by anthropologists and folklorists in that this pattern of invention, though probably present throughout history, is especially frequent in times of rapid social change, when the cultural patterns for which existing traditions have been designed are disrupted. Hobsbawm himself divided modern invented traditions into those establishing or symbolizing social cohesion; those establishing or legitimizing relations of authority; and those inculcating beliefs, values and conventions.

The problem is that as used here, the term "tradition" is actually at odds with the definition of it apparently dominant in folklore and anthropology. It assumes that the object and characteristic of all traditions is invariance: to impose fixed and formalized practices by repetition, with reference to a real or invented past. Hobsbawm himself contrasted "tradition" with "custom", which serves to give any desired change the sanction of precedent, social continuity or natural law, but does not preclude innovation and change. Anthropologists and folklorists have therefore tended to elide concepts which Hobsbawm and the historians who follow or refer to him have contrasted. There are problems on both sides: the former probably underestimates the amount of rigidity and orthodoxy found in many historical examples of tradition, while the latter sets up a boundary which is very difficult in practice to maintain.

There is, however, a still greater difficulty in the conception of tradition made by the respective disciplines. Folklore and anthropology have recently tended to outlaw attempts to distinguish between genuine and spurious traditions, holding that all traditions are spurious if the past is regarded as something immutable, and all are genuine if tradition is always defined in the present. If all tradition represents a process of recreation in every present, then all falls within the remit of practitioners of those disciplines. Such an argument is especially

empowering for folklorists, giving their studies a new relevance, which can sustain them limitlessly. This is a perfectly logical position; but only if one's primary concern is with the present. Historians, by contrast, are primarily concerned with the past, and the investigation and invalidation of historical claims represent a large part of their work. If it is unlikely that the whole truth of any portion of the past can be recovered by the present, it is none the less possible to refute some claims made about it and prove others. Many others can be shown to be more or less likely. There is therefore no doubt for a historian that some statements about the history of traditions are more or less genuine or false than others; and that it is important to demonstrate the difference. This exercise need have no implications for the validity of a tradition as a part of the contemporary world, but for many members of the public, it is likely to do so.

A study of the concept of tradition suggests that the academic world is now even more than before divided within itself, and from non-academics, by a common language. But that is perhaps in itself a feature of the postmodern condition.

Anna Niedźwiedź
"Tradition(s)" – The Making of Discourses and Discourses in the Making
"This is our tradition!" was a statement often made by people among whom and with whom I conducted my ethnographic fieldwork in central Ghana. Between 2009 and 2015 I spent ten months focusing on how locally constructed Christian identities were lived by Ghanaian Catholics in a fairly typical, newly established Roman Catholic parish. To my anthropologically trained ear the term "tradition" sounded both intriguing and suspicious enough to turn on the "attention lamp" anytime the word appeared in private discussions, small talks or more official circumstances such as church sermons, ceremonial speeches given during pompous funerals, which were one of the frequently discussed and celebrated local "traditions", or during various interreligious and multiethnic meetings and festivities so common in Ghana's religiously and ethnically diverse society.

I soon realized that the statement about tradition was usually proclaimed with particular emphasis, emotion and pride. Sometimes it was also directed to me – as a visitor, a foreigner, and a white person. Additionally, as an anthropologist, I was often defined as the one who "surely wants to know about our culture and traditions" and so deserving precise directions about what "tradition" is. At the same time, this strong declaration about "our tradition" functioned within a complex network of local identities, power relations and politics. During my research I started to realize that while studying contemporary Ghanaian Catholicism – a global Church lived in its post-missionary West African version – I needed to understand not only how "traditions" were made, lived, invented and re-invented by Ghanaians who identified with various ethnic and linguistic groups. Equally important was to grasp how discourses about "tradition(s)" emerge and function in the complex context of contemporary Ghanaian society. While, from a theoretical point of view, "tradition" shares its fate with many other anthropological terms that have lost their innocent definitions and are perceived as polythetic, contextual and dynamic categories, the popularity of the emic uses of the word cannot be ignored by ethnographers, but rather treated as a significant sign suggesting necessary analytical traces.

In the case of my fieldwork in Ghana the cultural interface between "religion" and "tradition" appeared to be highly instructive. It revealed the complexities and ambiguities of "tradition" discourses in the context of post-colonial African identities. Probably one of the most telling examples is a discourse concerning "African Traditional Religion" (ATR) – an issue pointed out also by many other anthropologists working in Africa as well as hotly debated by numerous African scholars (see Olupona 2001; Adogame, Chitando & Bateye 2012). Although the concept of ATR was coined to academically grasp tremendously diverse and variously lived phenomena, soon it developed an artificial picture of "traditional religion" and reified it in popular imagination. On a discursive level "traditional religion" functions within two main trajectories. The first describes ATR as a "traditional" phenomenon that is structur-

ally and historically different from Christianity (or other "world religions") and is treated as part of the "past". In some contemporary Ghanaian Christian discourses, the image of ATR is defined as "pagan" or even "satanic" (Meyer 1999). The second trajectory situates ATR at the heart of "African tradition" and a positively valued heritage. The first trajectory refers to "traditional religion" as "barbarian", "uncivilized", "dark", something to be dropped by "modern", "enlightened" Ghanaians, who usually see Christianity through the lens of "modernizing discourse" and "civilizational" advance (Steegstra 2005: 285). The second trajectory, on the other hand, refers to a positive image of the "past as a source of continental heritage" and points to "genuine" and "unique" African identities and values where "being religious" is part of the "tradition" (see e.g. Platvoet & van Rinsum 2003).

These two discourses concerning ATR are produced and re-produced in various institutionalized contexts, that is academia, religious organizations, state and African political bodies. Sometimes they get mixed and reformulated. For instance, Kwame Nkrumah – the first leader of independent Ghana – consciously incorporated elements of "traditional religion" as "national tradition". On the other hand, the creation of the Afrikania Mission in the 1980s was an attempt to reformulate the ATR in terms of "global religion" and make it "modern" (de Witte 2004). Another example might be the Catholic concept of inculturation that promotes incorporating "local traditions" into the Gospel. Also, as revealed during the second Synod of Africa (2009), the image of "African traditions" as inevitably spiritual was depicted by Catholic leaders in terms empowering the continent. Africa was described as a precious "spiritual lung of humanity", and juxtaposed against "fallen, secularized Europe".

While recognizing the significance of the institutionalized making of "tradition" discourses, it is equally important, and I believe anthropologically fruitful, to focus on grassroots' usages and transformations of these discourses. The paradoxical co-existence of two ambiguous discourses concerning ATR in the lives of contemporary Africans and within their common routines and practices, reveals a flexibility and contextuality of what "tradition" as well as what "religion" is. Most Ghanaian Catholics, like other Christians whom I met during my research, declaratively distanced themselves from "traditional worship" and "our fathers' way of life". At the same time, they usually not only accepted but also followed rules or celebrated certain rituals that usually belong to a typical ATR scenario. This was usually related to family or ethnic group obligations, particular annual celebrations and ties to local "traditional" shrines and priests. In these cases, the term "tradition" appeared to be crucial. The concept of "our tradition" was extensively used in these circumstances by Ghanaian Catholics, thereby replacing the concept of "traditional religion" and labelling phenomena not in "religious" but "traditional" terms. It seems that this juggling with terms and discourses enables numerous Ghanaians to maintain a consistent identity and pride as both "good Africans" (respecting their tradition and heritage) and "good Christians" (respecting their religious affiliation).

Through this case study of Ghanaian Catholics, I aim to emphasize the vitality of "tradition" as a discursive and emic category. I believe that for ethnologists of religion, working in various cultural and geographical contexts, the interface between "religion" and "tradition" can be an important platform in the study of contemporary identities, power relations, negotiations and transformations of institutionalized, as well as lived and practiced discourses. These discourses not only make and construct "tradition(s)" but also reveal the power of "tradition(s)" in the making.

Dorothy Noyes
Tradition Against Transaction in the Land of the Free
Oh dear, that man again. He is succeeding in his agenda of monopolizing the world's attention, for as I struggle for something new to say about the much-discussed concept of tradition, I can only think about the upcoming NATO meeting, where Trump will continue to smash up the alliance of Western democracies. An ambiguous thing, that alliance, productive of evil as well as good. Still, it has been a

framework flexible enough to guarantee at least the most elementary form of trust: that our interlocutor will be there and will be recognizable tomorrow. My generation has thought of the Western alliance as a kind of caravan extending both forward and backward, with different actors crossing paths, deviating, aligning; a messy braid of trajectories that nonetheless offers both traceability and indications of future directions (cf. Ingold 2007).

Tradition was once contrasted to the modern. That is the ideology of Anglo-American liberalism that has shaped folklore studies in the United States (Bauman & Briggs 2003). Suddenly tradition has been relocated. Bill Ivey, folklorist and former chair of the National Endowment for the Arts, observed last year that suddenly the Washington D.C. establishment was "speaking his language", talking of the importance of custom in legislative process, lamenting the new administration's contempt for precedent, and so on (Ivey 2018). Once liberal modernity declared other ways of life residual and sought to assimilate them, by persuasion or force. Today the dominant culture feels itself to be an endangered tradition. Its old Weberian legitimation is heavily tarnished: modernity no longer benefits from claiming rational-legal authority. Charisma has migrated to the anti-liberal outsiders. And thus, our struggling institutions now strive to defend themselves through the idiom of traditional authority, with reference to ancestors and continuity, respect and community (Weber [1922]1958).

The new opposite of tradition might be transaction. The adjective "transactional", negatively inflected, is suddenly everywhere in Anglo-American establishment media. It invokes commercial exchange, implying one-off, interest-based encounters instead of the complex, open-ended relationships of a gift economy. The word can thus be used to characterize interactions shaped by the rapidity and fluidity of social media, a universe of free choice and overwhelming, if trivial, possibility. In management studies, a transactional leader negotiates with underlings based on their self-interest, whereas a transformational leader engages other members of the organization to collaborate on restructuring foundations, enabling innovation (Burns 1978). By extension, "transactional" has become the adjective of choice for critics of the Trump presidency. They single out the current style of diplomacy, focused on short-term "wins" rather than long-term relationships and treating issues with different stakes and lineages, such as trade and human rights, as interchangeable bargaining chips that can be valued along a single linear scale. Theologian Alan Jacobs, linking Trump's "presentism" to the instant gratification of his Twitter habit, urges readers of *The Guardian* to thicken what novelist Thomas Pynchon called their "temporal bandwidth" so that the consciousness of the present co-exists with awareness of the past and concern for the future (2018).

Typically engaging with populations at the margins and interstices of the modern, folklorists have always been concerned with the residual and emergent dimensions of any cultural moment (Williams 1977). American folklorists have also engaged from the beginning with the vernacular layer of the modern individual's subjectivity and habits, extending their definition of the folk to "all of us when we are old-fashioned" (Mason 1891: 97). Having studied fragments and residues in cultural expression and observed the recurrent disruptions of human communities as liberal capitalism has extended its reach across the centuries, perhaps none of us has been much surprised by the arrival of the "age of fracture" (Rodgers 2011) on a larger societal scale. Indeed, Ivey's latest book argues that the lessons folklorists have learned from the folk can be invoked to repair the Enlightenment project and build its resilience (Ivey 2018). It is unlikely that those excluded or subordinated by that project will rush to collaborate in this endeavour, but Ivey's proposal does point to the end of liberal exceptionalism.

Finding the ground finally crumbling under my own once-secure feet, I have come late to where many folklorists begin, and am studying my own tradition. Western liberal modernity is my childhood vernacular. That seems paradoxical, for the modern world was made in print and law and stone and steel; it has sought to reproduce itself through codified institutions. But just as the religions of the Book relied on

social tradition to supplement scripture and bridge eternal precept to living realities (Noyes 2016a: 97), so the universalist claims of modern liberalism have always been complemented by a modality of tradition that works through particulars: exemplarity. In contrast to Weberian traditional authority, liberal exemplarity points towards the future and embraces the individual. But it does not let go of the idea of social transmission or the importance of tradition as a passing of responsibility. An exemplar is an individual whose act or conduct attracts attention through significant gesture and is claimed in a subsequent performance. Through successive revisions, exemplary performances form chains of resonance that hail back to the past and point forward to the future. Through emulation, exemplary performances accumulate towards tipping points through which norms are transformed (Noyes 2016b).

Liberalism claimed newness but was no pure product of its own precepts. Exemplarity was not sui generis, but a reformation of Roman and Christian and aristocratic ideologies; this allowed new practices and actors to achieve normative visibility so that a larger liberal order might in due course take shape (cf. Eriksen 2010). Although the United States was born in revolution and took individual freedom as its banner, its institutions have been invigorated through a civil religion based on exemplarity ever since the first "city on a hill" of the Puritans. Barack Obama was a fervent adherent of this tradition, with an oratorical style that invoked Martin Luther King, who invoked Civil War rhetoric, which invoked the Old Testament. But few Americans now are so richly networked across past, present, and future social spaces, and our sacred national texts have often preached against their own authority. It is uncanny to reread Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Self-Reliance" today: "What have I to do with the sacredness of traditions, if I live wholly from within?" ([1841]1983: 262). One cannot but think of the current occupant of the White House, who has thrown himself free of almost any social moorings, and who is without intertextual ties to the American exemplary tradition.[3]

My working argument is that liberal intellectuals mobilized exemplarity to harness the mimetic energies of mass society, seeking to empower the few and constrain the many. But tradition is by nature interpersonal and its force is reduced across social distance. As distances widened and communications grew more open, mimesis escaped the control of elites and they likewise became dangerously removed from the examples of others. At last, freedom engendered the truly individual. Be careful what you wish for.

Notes

1 See http://wwwt.lbtr.admin.ch/traditionen/00248/index.html?lang=en (last accessed June 10, 2020).
2 See https://www.lebendige-traditionen.ch/tradition/en/home/traditions/consensus-seeking-and-direct-democracy.html (last accessed June 10, 2020).
3 Wolfgang Mieder, author of several books on the proverb in political rhetoric, says that he has never yet caught Trump uttering one (personal communication).

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