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FLUTE. See MUSIC AND MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS.

FLY/FLIES. See ZOOLOGY.

FOLKLORE IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST.

This article will examine how the concept of "folklore" has been applied to the literature of the ANE.

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A. Terminology

Coined in 1846 by William John Thoms (1803–85) who proposed "folklore" as a substitute for "Popular Antiquities or Popular Literature" (Thoms 1846: 862). In spite of his claim for originality (Duncan 1946: 372), folklore is a translation of the German term *Volkskunde* that Josef Mader (1754–1815) used already in 1787. As in other German compounds—such as *Volkslied* that Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) employed in 1778, and *Volksmärchen* that Johan Karl August Musaus (1735–87) introduced in 1782—at the core of *Volkskunde* is the concept *das Volk*, "the people," that derives from Herder's thought and writings (Simpson 1921; Schütze 1921: 115–30). *Volkskunde* connotes the traditions that peasants and lower classes represent in language, narratives, songs, and sayings. So does folklore. For Thoms folklore refers to "the manners, customs, observances, superstitions, ballads, proverbs, of the olden times." In subsequent use the term has expanded its field of reference to include a broader range of verbal, visual, and musical forms, such as tales and legends; myths and riddles; artifacts, whether plain or decorated, religious or secular; and vocal and instrumental music. Similarly, festivals and rituals, the belief system that sanctions them, and the symbols that people use in their celebrations are elements of folklore.

In most current definitions of folklore 2 main features stand out: orality and traditionality (Bauman 1989; cf. Ben-Amos 1971). Consequently, oral tradition is the quintessence of folklore. As such, folklore thrives in nonliterate societies, whereas in literate cultures it functions through interdependence with and interreference to the literacy of the educated groups. While in nonliterate cultures, folk-lore is traditional ipso facto, the literate classes attribute to it the value of traditionality.

Whenever and by whomever edited, the OT text was prepared to fulfill the role of the central canon in the Israelite society. It embodies the religious and ethical values, beliefs and facts, tales and poems that validated the Israelite leadership. Some of the OT texts could have circulated orally prior to their commitment to writing. Yet that oral tradition contained some additional themes and narratives which conflicted with the canonic religious, political, and ethical doctrines and were therefore excluded from the OT.

Consequently the folklore of the era was relegated to a position of an extracanonic tradition. It was deliberately left out of the text in the transition from oral to literary tradition. Hence while not all folklore was in conflict with the OT text, all that conflicted with it remained only folklore. Occasionally, however, the oral ideas and images were an integral part of the Israelite culture and continued to resonate in the OT in metaphors, allusions, and fragmentary narratives.

The earliest scholarly association between folklore and the Bible occurred in print in 1884 in the title of the book *Bible Folk-Lore: A Study in Comparative Mythology* by James Edwin Thorold Rogers (1823–90). The book applies to the OT a kind of philological analysis that interprets figures and objects as representations of bodies in the solar system, and events as their motions, following the principles proposed by Max Müller (1823–1900). The book was inconsequential in either folklore or biblical studies, though similar interpretations that had been proposed earlier by Ignaz Goldziher (1850–1921) were very influential in biblical studies at the end of the 19th century (Rogerson 1974: 33–44).

By and large, 4 conceptions of the relations between folklore and the OT have prevailed in scholarship.

First is the notion that folklore is the historical antecedent of the OT. Early suggestions of such an idea appeared already in theological writings during the 16th and the 17th centuries (Knight 1975: 39–54). However they reached their clearest formulation during and after the Romantic era, in particular at the later part of the 19th century. Paradoxically, Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918), who most systematically formulated the documentary hypothesis, also stated unambiguously that oral folklore existed before the writing of each of the 4 documents. For him oral folklore preceded literature and history, though it was historically unreliable, formulaic rather than precise, and artistically incohesive. Cognizant of these attributed limitations, indeed because of them, he rejected any possibility of their having any historical and aesthetic value, and appraised the documents in terms of their distance from this oral period. (*WPHI*, 296, 334–35, 336–37, 341).

Second, there is an assumption of evolutionary relations between the oral tradition and the written text. Accordingly, folklore does not simply antedate the biblical text, but also evolves into scripture. This process of literary evolution has distinct principles. Following the propositions made by Robert Lowth (1710–87) and further developed by Herder, the assumption was that poetic forms were primary and oral; in their evolution into a written text they transformed into prose narration and com-

manded historical credibility. In their oral stage, biblical narratives were episodic, brief, and primitive. Their evolution into biblical literature involved the integration of the tales into complex and cohesive narrative cycles, cast in a refined language. Nevertheless, some of the biblical texts still bear the earmarks of their oral literary origin. Hermann Gunkel (1862–1932) offered the basic formulation of this proposition that was later explored from diverse perspectives (Gunkel 1964, 1987; Knight 1975: 71–176; Rogerson 1978: 69–72; Warner 1979).

The attribution of primitivity to the OT plays a major role in the third view, reducing the OT to folklore, in practice if not in theory. The very comparison of OT themes, motifs, actions, and even laws, to similar narratives and practices found among our "contemporary savages," positions the OT society on the evolutionary stage of early man. Since the same evolutionary approach would regard the monotheism that the OT advocates as a mark of high cultural attainments, the magical practices and savage laws that are in the OT could be but survivals of earlier evolutionary stages. In this scheme it is not literature but mankind that evolves, yet he cannot completely shed beliefs and practices from earlier stages. These prevail and are found throughout the text. The most prominent expositor of this view is J. G. Frazer (1854–1941) who in his *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament* (1918) equates folklore with cultural survivals, and interprets the OT itself as being folklore.

Fourth is the view that the OT, as a text that has been formulated in a society of restricted literacy (Haran·1988), contains numerous allusions to, and representations of, ideas and performances of folklore forms in social life. Accordingly, the OT has a documentary value for the reconstruction of the dynamics of folklore of land, the people, and the period. The OT in itself is not folklore, neither as a survival nor as a literary representation of oral forms. Rather it is a written text that has been subject to all the strictures and normative values applicable to writing, yet at the same time reflects the oral society and culture in which it has been formulated. Such a view maintains clear boundaries between orality and literacy, recognizing the qualities and the potentialities of each mode of communication. Yet the very permanence of written text enables it to document oral forms, and refer to their performances. On the basis of these references it is then possible to partially reconstruct the use of folklore in OT life and society. There is no single scholar who has advocated this view; however, it underlies numerous attempts to reconstruct life in the ANE, which respectively and in combinations effected the formulations of different theories and interpretations employed in either the comparative or the ethnographic methods.

B. Comparative Method

By analogy and through inference, comparison serves as a method for the reconstruction of folklore in the OT era (Talmon 1978). In each particular case the basic assumptions may vary, depending upon the compared language, literature, culture, or genre and their historic or geographic relations to the OT.

1. **Comparison with Ancient Cultures.** The archaeological discoveries in Nippur, Ras Shamra (Ugarit), and other cities have brought to light literary traditions that

parallel themes, figures, and forms of the OT. Though obviously in one script or another, this literature in the languages of the ANE drew upon oral traditions that were widespread in the region. In part they shared them; in part they knew but did not accept them as their own. These parallel traditions are reflected in the OT to a variable degree, in different ways, and in distinct biblical books and literary forms.

Accounts of the creation of man (Gen 1:26–27) and the flood narrative (Gen 6:9–8:14), for example, occur in Akkadian and Old Babylonian epics and hymns (*ANET*, 68a, 99b–101a; Lambert and Millard 1969; see also Dundes 1988). The deities that have central roles in the pantheon and the epics of Ugarit, such as Baal and El (Pope 1955; Oldenburg 1969), have been known to the Israelites. While references to the former occur throughout the OT, the latter is rarely used as a proper name for a deity (*CMHE*, 13–75). Other Canaanite deities and supernatural forces such as Rahab, Yam, Tanin, Leviathan, and the mythical Serpent, all associated with the sea, are mentioned by Isaiah, Job, and in Psalms as forces that God subdued (Rahab: Isa 51:9; 89:11; Job 9:13; 26:12; Yam: Isa 51:10; Ps 74:13; 89:10; Job 7:12; Tanin(im): Gen 1:21; Isa 27:1; 51:9; Ps 74:13; 148:7; Job 7:12; Leviathan: Isa 27:1; Ps 74:14; 104:26; Job 3:8; 40:25; Serpent: Isa 27:1; Job 26:13). The comparative study of these references in Ugaritic epics and the OT text has prompted the suggestion that, by analogy, there could have also existed a Hebrew epic as part of the prebiblical oral tradition (Cassuto 1975: 2.69–109; *CMHE*; Jason 1979). However, so far there is no clear evidence for a text of a Hebrew oral epic, only indications that Canaanite epics and their themes and heroes were known in Israelite society (Conroy 1980; Talmon 1981).

The OT, however, shares other verbal forms with neighboring traditions. Narratives in prose about human beings occur in Egyptian literature (*ANET*, 18–31; Simpson 1972). One of them in particular, "The Tale of Two Brothers," shares central narrative episodes with the OT Joseph story (Redford 1970), and at the same time enjoys worldwide distribution in oral tradition (Aarne and Thompson 1961: type 318 "The Faithless Wife").

Proverbs and fables occur in Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and Canaanite literatures (Alster 1974, 1975; Falkowitz 1980; Gordon 1959; Lambert 1960; Lipiński 1983; *ANET*, 405–30; Simpson 1972: 159–79). Since these forms serve as rhetorical devices of persuasion, as they do in the OT (Fontaine 1982; Thompson 1974), whether they appear in catalogue format or in a narrative context, they have been part of the oral tradition of the ANE.

2. **Comparison with Postbiblical Literatures.** The OT includes, in a succinct style, only a fraction of the tales told orally in ancient Israelite society. Many stories have been lost, while others were passed along to successive generations throughout oral transmission. These historic survivals of ancient traditions recurred in the apocrypha and the pseudepigrapha *(OTP)*, in the writings of Josephus (Feldman 1984, 1986), and in the interpretations that accompanied the ritualistic reading of the scriptural text in the synagogues (Gerhardsson 1961; Mann 1940). Later rabbis compiled these biblical exegeses into books of midrash. Midrashic literature relates primarily to postbiblical

Jewish society. Most of its narratives, metaphors, proverbs, and fables—whether concerning biblical themes and figures (Ginzberg 1909–38) or not—have their particular literary history and thematic transformation, and are grounded in postbiblical religion, literature, languages, and society (Bloch 1954; *DBSup* 5: 1263–81; Heinemann 1974). Since by that time the religious and political conditions of the OT period no longer prevailed, postbiblical narrators were able to verbalize oral traditions that had been deliberately excluded from, or subdued in, the OT. A comparison between the midrashic literature and the OT narratives could uncover some of those traditions, and expose the dynamic folklore concerning (a) the formation of Israelite tradition, (b) the mythology of the ANE, (c) the historic-political narratives, and (d) sub-ethical themes in terms of OT standards.

The formation of the OT tradition has been a selective process, the goal of which has been the establishment of a literary covenant between God and the people of Israel. Consequently, internal conflicts, apparent inconsistencies, and evidence of syncretism have been subdued in the OT, although some have reappeared in the midrash. For example, the biblical narrative of the sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis 22) concludes with the substitution of a ram for the first-born child. In religious law (Exod 13:1,13,15; 34:20; Num 18:15) a similar substitution prevails, sanctified by the Passover narrative. However in midrashic tradition references to "the blood of Isaac's sacrifice" (*Mek. R. Ish.* 7.12) suggest the existence of an alternative tradition where no substitution occurred (Spiegel 1981: 51–59).

During the biblical period the Canaanites threatened the monotheistic belief that the writers of the OT espoused. Therefore any mention of mythological creatures or deities in the OT has been tendentiously negated or limited to vague metaphors or, at most, casual allusions. However, in the postbiblical period, when the Canaanite religion posed no threat to Judaism, narrators were freer to articulate earlier religious conceptions. For example the references to Leviathan occurs in the prophecy and poetry of the OT (Isa 27:1; Ps 74:14; 104:26; Job 40:25). It is a creature God defeats. In Canaanite myths, Leviathan serves the same role, being overcome by Baal and Anat (*UT* I:1–3; III:35–39; Oldenberg 1969: 33–34). However, the postbiblical literature includes descriptions of the full extent of his monstrosity, might, and wonder (Ginzberg 1909–38: 1.27–28;5.41–43), as it could have been known in the folklore of the OT period.

The historic-political narrative in the OT anachronistically supports the centrality of the Davidistic dynasty, describing its rise and fall. Yet within a society consisting of several tribes vying for a dominant position, there are likely to be rival traditions concerning ruling families. In spite of editorial attempts, some narrative incongruity has survived in the text. For example, Samuel's nativity legend is replete with nouns and verbs that could have generated Saul's rather than Samuel's name (1 Sam 1:17, 20, 27, 28). The word play on Saul's name is indicative that originally the birth story related to the king rather than the prophet. However, only in a late midrash, the confusion comes full circle, when Samuel is described in terms commonly reserved for Saul. The written text thus ensures the supremacy of Samuel, but oral tales—clues to its existence appear in both the biblical text and the midrash—suggest a tradition upholding Saul as the judge-king (Seeligmann 1952: 199–200; cf. Zakovitch 1980).

The ethical standards of the OT writers guided them to exclude bawdy tales. The narration of sexual matters, whenever it occurs, concerns more with political history than with sex. For example, the account of the rape of Tamar (2 Samuel 13) traces the rift between David and Absalom back to its very beginning. However, midrashic literature has been more lax in its ethical standards and more freely records popular narratives, even those that were likely told in the OT period. For example the story of Jael and Sisera appears twice: first as an historical account in prose (Judg 4:14–23), and second in a poetic rendition that alludes to the former version (Judg 5:24–30). However, the poetry hints at more than the prose version narrates, emphasizing by repetition that Sisera fell and laid between Jael's legs (Judg 5:27). Midrashic literature expounds in full the popular sexual imagination to which the OT only suggests but censors (Ginzberg 1909–38: 4.37–38; 6.198; Zakovitch 1981b).

3. Comparison with Islamic Cultures in the Near East. Comparisons between the OT and the Islamic societies in the Near East and their folklores have taken 3 directions: (a) The use of oral tradition in nomadic society as a model for its use in OT times. (b) The conception of current Islamic culture and folklore as a survival from antiquity that reflects OT customs, rites, and beliefs. (c) The search for historical survivals of OT folklore in current Islamic culture.

The documentary hypothesis that has dominated biblical research for so many years, introduced into scholarship not only workable paradigms but also complicating paradoxes. According to this hypothesis the formation of the OT took place in postexilic times on the basis of written sources that were prepared in the preexilic period. But such documentation assumed extensive literacy which was not part of the ancient Israelite society. In an attempt to resolve such a paradox Sigmund Mowinckel, and more emphatically Henrik Nyberg proposed that the OT was transmitted orally rather than through literate means; the OT itself is thus regarded as part of the oral tradition of Israelite society and therefore part of its folklore. They based their oral tradition hypothesis on the orality of pre-Islamic and nomadic societies in the Near East. They focused in particular on the prophets, whose texts were created orally while in ecstasy and passed along to successive generations by means of oral transmission.

The debate that ensued (Knight 1975: 215–399) was concerned, among other things, with the validity of the model, rather than its application. That is to say, the exclusiveness of oral transmission in Islamic and pre-Islamic societies is brought into question and, by implication, the oral nature of OT society (van der Ploeg 1947; Widengren 1948, 1959). These are issues with no clear resolution. First, the documentary and the oral traditional hypotheses have respectively drawn their evidence from different sources: the Pentateuch, the poetry of the Psalms, and the prophets. Second, in the broad cultural range of the Near East and East Africa, it is possible to find models for either propositions. In Somali, for example, poets compose orally, and their admirers commit their

verses to memory for future recitation (Andrzejewski 1964: 44–46), a model that would support the hypothesis of oral tradition. On the other hand, the existence of literacy in a society, restricted as it might be, effects tradition, literature, and education dramatically (Street 1984).

The use of Islamic cultures in the Near East and Arabia as a model for ancient Israelite society began systematically in the 18th century, with an expedition planned by Johann David Michaelis (Rogerson 1974: 3–5; Hansen 1965). While verbal folklore was not the focus of this research, the expedition set to explore, in addition to the fauna and flora of the region, the customs, rituals, and religious practices of the inhabitants. Theoretically Michaelis' approach set the foundation for the reconstruction and interpretation of the culture and folklore of the ancient Israelites on the basis of the assumed conservatism of desert societies, a trend that expanded in subsequent years (Smith 1889; AncIsr).

While Islamic society of recent centuries, with all its assumed conservatism, does not necessarily reflect ancient Israelite culture, the Arabs of Palestine have preserved in their folklore elements that have survived transmission through oral tradition during the long history since antiquity. In particular, the geographical features of the land, be they mountains, springs or hills, have served as stable pegs upon which place names and local legends have been attached and preserved (Canaan 1927).

4. Cross-cultural Comparison. The rationalism of the enlightenment is the basis of the cross-cultural comparison of the OT. Such a method abrogates the OT from its position as the singular manifestation of monotheistic religious belief, turning it into a text comparable with narratives that are found in the stories of polytheistic religions the world over. Studies such as those of Bauer (1802) involved theological, philosophical, and historical considerations, comparing OT narratives to Greek and Roman, and even Indian and Persian myths (see Hartlich and Sachs 1952: 79–87; Rogerson 1974: 8–9). In later works there was a shift from philological to cultural evolutionary frameworks, and from comparisons with classical, Indian, Islamic, and ancient Semitic mythologies to comparisons with the religions of peoples scholars deemed primitive. In the transition, comparisons based on names and language shifted into comparisons of thoughts and action. Employing the method of comparative mythology as formulated by Max Müller, Goldziher (1877), and Rogers (1884) derived from the names of biblical figures solar, stellar, and climatic meanings, for which they found corroboratory comparisons (Rogerson 1974: 33–44; Yassif 1987: 4–5). The philological cross-cultural comparisons offer an allegorical interpretation of heroes and events, the significance of which resides in cognate words and names in related or unrelated languages. Allegedly, the method exposes meanings that were lost in time through linguistic change, diffusion, and misinterpretation.

The purpose of the cultural evolutionary comparison, on the other hand, is the identification of savage survivals in the OT. In *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament* (1918), J. G. Frazer, the champion of this method, compares biblical themes such as the creation of man (Gen 1:26–28; 2:7), the mark of Cain (Gen 4:15), and the flood (Gen 6–8) with similar stories found not only in the Near East and the

Classical world, but more significantly among "primitive" tribes in South and North America, Africa, and Asia (see also Gaster 1969). For him, the existence of parallel narratives is a demonstration that the OT teemed with survivals from an earlier stage of the intellectual evolution of man. Frazer conceived of this evolution in 3 stages: magic, religion, and science. As the creation of an individual great mind, the OT represents the religious state of man, but the occurrence of numerous customs, tales, and superstitions that are characteristic of magical thought, as represented by tribal folklore, demonstrates that in large measure the OT itself is a survival of thoughts conceived by the savage mind (see Ackerman 1987: 180–96, 271–77; Rogerson 1978: 46–85; Yassif 1987: 10–11).

5. Comparison of Forms. The comparative study of narrative forms, known as form-criticism, is a method designed to infer from the OT text its antecedent oral tradition, and to examine the place of its respective forms in the communal life of ancient Israelite society. Since the OT offers neither complete oral narrative texts, nor sufficiently detailed descriptions of their oral use, any necessary conclusions must be reached by analogy to themes and forms that are available in other oral cultures. The method hence rests, first, upon the assumption of the universality of oral literary forms and their use, and second, the universality of the principles that govern the transition from oral to written literatures. The major proponent of this method was Hermann Gunkel (1862–1932). He sought to identify the oral forms that preceded the OT through analogy with the narrative genres of European, particularly German, folklore such as myth, legend (*Sage* and *legende*), and folktale (*Märchen*). Myth is a story about deities; the legend is assumed to have historical validity; and the folklore, in contrast, is fictive (Bascom 1965). Gunkel's conception of the narrative context was similarly influenced by the available image of storytelling among European peasants: "In the leisure of a winter evening the family sits about the hearth; the grown people, but more especially the children, listen intently to the beautiful old stories of the dawn of the world, which they have heard so often yet never tire of hearing repeated" (Gunkel 1964: 41). Later Gunkel proposed to conceive of these genres as forms of primitive literature, detectable in the OT with the aid of the epic laws formulated by Axel Olrik (1909).

Accordingly, among the features that distinguish oral narratives are opening and closing formulas, triple repetition of episodes, and the occurrence of only 2 characters in a scene. These as well as the length of the narrative served for Gunkel as a measure for recovering the oral strata in the OT text (Knight 1975: 71–83; Rogerson 1974: 57–65; 1978: 69–72; Warner 1979; Wilcoxen 1974). The inference through comparison of forms, problematic as it is, has been a potent method in the exploration of folklore in the OT, mostly revolving around the traditions of the Pentateuch and the Hexateuch (Hayes 1974). Following Alt (1929), von Rad (1938, 1957) and Noth (1948) consider these traditions to evolve not around family entertainment, but within differentiable cultic circles, either as narratives or ritual recitations. A basic problem, yet unresolved, is the logical possibility of projecting, a posteriori, literary formal concepts that evolved in Europe after the Enlightenment, such as myth (Detienne 1986; Feldman and Rich-

ardson 1972; Hartlich and Sachs 1952), legend [*Sage*](Gerndt 1988), and folktale [*Märchen*](Fink 1966; Anthony 1981) into the world of the ANE (cf. Ben-Amos 1976).

6. Morphological Studies. The morphological method shares a goal with form criticism, namely, the discovery of the types of oral literature that preceded the OT text. However, it differs from it in one fundamental assumption. While form criticism accepts the narrative types as given, the morphological method regards their formal description as a primary analytical goal, the attainment of which is essential before the inception of any other study, either historical or cultural. The morphological study of the folktale emerged within the theoretical paradigm of Russian formalism (Erlich 1965; Steiner 1984). Following some preliminary exploratory essays (Nikiforov 1975), V. Propp (1895–1971) formulated the methodological concepts and procedure for the morphological description of the folktale. Initially his aim was to discover the historical roots of the folktale, but upon embarking upon his project he became aware of the absence of an adequate morphological definition of the folktale. He proposed to describe the folktale as a whole, and thus he considered it as "any [narrative] development proceeding from villainy or a lack, through intermediary functions to marriage" (1968: 92). For descriptive purposes, Propp discerned in the tale distinct analytical units—he termed them "functions"—which are actions predicated upon a specific narrative role that follow each other in a specific sequential order. Repeatable functions that are logically or narratively connected constitute a move. Among the tale's dramatis personae Propp distinguished 7 roles: hero, false hero, villain, dispatcher, donor, helper, and princess.

Propp analyzed morphologically only Russian tales. The application of his method and model to biblical tradition is significant because of 2 reasons. First it demonstrates the occurrence of the folktale morphology already in antiquity; second, the comparative dimension of this approach evidences that other cultures have the same form in their oral traditions. In the OT only David's early biography could be reconstructed to fit the morphological model to the folktale. If David is the hero, Jesse is the dispatcher (1 Sam 17:17–19), Samuel is the donor (1 Sam 17:11–13), Goliath is the villain (1 Sam 17:23), and Michal is the princess whom the hero marries (1 Sam 18:17–23). The sequence of functions approximates Propp's morphology, spanning the entire range of the model up to the hero's difficult task and its resolution before the marriage (1 Sam 18:25–27) (Jason 1979: 42–43). Other tales fit only a specific sequence of functions such as Jacob's struggle with the angel (Gen 32:23–33) (Barthes 1974; Couffignal 1975; Durand 1977; Greenwood 1985: 41–61; Milne 1988: 125–41); Jacob's biography in Gen 25:19–50:14 (Blenkinsopp 1981), Ruth (Sasson 1979: 200–15); Daniel 1–6 (Milne 1988: 199–262), and the book of Tobit (Blenkinsopp 1981).

Propp's *Morphology* offers not only a formal model for the folktale but also a methodology. Applying the latter and not the former, it has been possible to discern in the OT narrative themes that bear similarity in their formal exposition such as stories of deception (Gen 12:10–20; 20:1–18; 26:1–17), deceptive murders (Judg 3:12–31; 4:17–24); romantic encounters at the well (Gen 24:10–14; 29:1–14; Exod 2:15–21) and tales of miraculous curing (i.e., 1 Kings 17–24; 2 Kgs 4:18–37). The patterned exposition of such themes, which is the earmark of oral narratives, strongly suggests that these narratives circulated orally in ancient Israelite society before they were committed to writing (Culley 1974; 1976: 33–115; Niditch 1987: 23–125; Rofé 1988).

7. Poetic Comparison. As a method, comparative poetics could reveal, by analogy, the features of oral literature that the OT text retained. The occurrence in the OT of poetic features that commonly appear in texts that have been recorded from oral singers and narrators is indicative of these texts being rooted in oral performance, or at least its impact upon their literary rendition. In other comparisons with Near Eastern cultures (i.e., van der Ploeg 1947; Widengren 1959; see also Ong 1982; Goody 1986, 1987), oral tradition is conceived as an ideal and abstract concept. Comparative poetics, on the other hand, draws an analogy between the OT and oral poetry on the basis of recording and analysis of performance-generated texts. In such a comparison 2 features that have become distinctive of oral poetry stand out: (a) formula and (b) parallelism. These 2 poetic features are a function of oral performance and therefore their occurrence in the OT is indicative of the residue in, or the impact on, the OT of poetry that was performed orally in ancient Israelite society in a variety of religious and political contexts.

Originally defined as "a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express essential ideas" (Parry 1930: 80) the formula has been regarded to be instrumental in the oral composition of poetry. M. Parry (1930) and A. Lord (1960) isolated such formulas in the texts of oral singers in the Balkan, and since they identified similar verbal patterns in the Homeric epics they inferred that Homer was an oral poet. This conclusion stimulated worldwide research (Foley 1985, 1988), confirming the use of formulas by oral poets, and more controversially, reconstructing the oral base of ancient and medieval epics. In a somewhat modified and expanded definition, R. Culley (1967) has applied the concept to the OT, identifying such phrases as "incline your ear to me" (Ps 31:3; 71:2; 102:3) or "hide me in the shadow of your wings" (Ps 17:8; cf. Ps 36:8; 57:2; 63:8) and many others as formulas (Culley 1967: 32–101), and inferring therefore the origins of the Psalms, and other OT parts in which formulas occur, in oral composition (Watters 1976: 2–19).

Word pairs such as "ground/dust" and "ever/all generations" and many others have been recognized as particular formulaic parallelism that the OT shares with Canaanite myths (Avishur 1984; Cassuto 1975: 60–69; Watters 1976: 20–38). The recognition of parallelism as a characteristic of OT poetry is one of the points that marked the inception of modern research in the 18th century (Lowth 1753; Watters 1976: 92–95), and has continued to exert its influence on scholarship (Dahood *Psalms 3* AB, 101–50; Kugel 1981). Modern field research among partial or nonliterate societies increasingly demonstrates that parallelism is a characteristic of oral poetry (Fox 1977, 1988).

Neither formula nor parallelism are the exclusive features of oral poetry; they do occur in written poetry as

well (Finnegan 1977; Jakobson 1966; Watters 1976). However their position in oral poetry and ancient recitations of myths that antedate writing indicates that even when they appear in written texts they resonate the oral voice in poetry.

C. Ethnographic Method

The ethnographic method is descriptive. Its purpose is a reconstruction of the process of folklore communication in OT society. Toward this goal, folklore is conceived not as an aggregate of verbal forms but as an artistic process of communication that is performed in oral culture, in face-to-face situations, in a society that shares language, themes, symbols, and cultural meanings (Bauman 1977; Bauman and Sherzer 1974; Ben-Amos 1971; Briggs 1988). In order to achieve a descriptive adequacy the ethnographic meaning refrains from comparative analysis with other cultures; while comparisons have illuminated various aspects of folklore, at the same time they introduce into the description either a different cultural system that is not necessarily congruent with the OT society, or a theoretical model that could constrain the description. So far the ethnographic method of folklore cannot claim to be part of a single school in OT research; Gandz (1935) and Eissfeldt (1965: 9–127) have made important contributions in this area, yet both were still historically associated with comparative methodology. At the same time the entire spectrum of OT research provides a foundation for this method. Other directions in OT research purport to reconstruct either the social life and structure or the social and political history of OT society, or to explore the history of Israelite language, literature and religion; by contrast, the method of historical ethnography in folklore aims at reconstructing the themes and forms of folklore, their social conception and function, their uses and users as they manifest themselves in the OT. The OT is admittedly a limited and tendentious text, documenting folklore only partially and doing that from the perspectives of its writers and editors who focused on the central institutions of authority, royalty, priesthood, and law. This limitation is an inherent part of the documentary value of the OT and has to be accounted for in any attempt at historical reconstruction. Furthermore, as a text that has been formulated over a long historical period, some of the ethnographic information that pertains to folklore is relevant to one era and not the other. The possibility of historical changes in folklore during the OT period is significant, yet at the moment cannot be discussed systematically.

Though written, the OT contains traditions on an oral culture. In the accounts of the Patriarchal period, even commercial and legal transactions resorted to eye witnessing or monumental testimony (Gen 21:30–33; 23:10–17; 31:44–52). The first reference to writing is associated with Moses (Exod 17:14; 24:4; 34:27; Deut 31:9–19). However, even in the stories of a later period, monumental testimony was used for historical commemoration (Josh 4:6–7), or in conjunction with writing for legal purposes (Josh 24:25–27).

1. Themes and Figures. The hallmarks of folklore in society are thematic repetition and variation, patterned accounts, and recurring allusions to distinct events and figures. When these features characterize a corpus of written literature, there is a greater likelihood that these literary sources draw upon oral sources that were historically available. This approach is applicable to the OT. It is true that the OT text attributes events and characteristics to historically grounded, distinct personalities; yet the recurrence of themes, their patterned presentation, and the allusions that subsequent generations made to them in poetry and prophecy, evidence their circulation in oral tradition and the familiarity of the community with them.

The OT accounts the history of the Israelites as a clan and a people through unfolding stories concerning family matters and magical acts that touch upon basic human needs of nourishment, health, and individual and collective freedom. These themes occur repeatedly. For example, female barrenness, a threat to the family future, has been attributed to Sarah (Gen 16:1), Rachel (29:31), Samson's mother (Judg 13:2–3), and Hannah (1 Sam 1:5). The acts of magical infliction of disease, even death (Exod 7:19–12:30; 2 Kgs 2:24; 5:27), and their opposites, stories about magical nourishment, cure, and revival (1 Kgs 17:17–24; 2 Kgs 4:8–37) have been an integral part of the prophetic narratives. The magical acts that the OT attributed to Moses affected the entire nation, whereas those attributed to Elijah and Elisha affected individuals.

The variability of specific stories, either mythological or historical, is also indicative of their basis in folklore. The creation of Eve, from earth like Adam (Gen 1:27) or from Adam's rib (Gen 2:21–23), represents a basic variation in the mythology of the OT. Among the historical tales, the introduction of the young David to King Saul is subject to two incompatible OT versions. According to the first (1 Sam 16:14–23), David is brought to play the harp before the depressed king, while according to the second he is the hero of the battle against the Philistines (1 Samuel 17). The killing of Goliath itself is attributed to another hero, Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim, a variation that can reflect either suppressed oral tradition or a scribal error (2 Sam 21:19; 1 Chr 20:5).

Variations in details do not preclude similarity in plot patterns. Some of the morphological studies (see above) have demonstrated that different OT stories of magic and family matters share similar discernible patterns thereby suggesting their basis in oral tradition.

But the themes of oral traditions are not limited to family affairs and concerns with food and health. Rather, throughout the poetry and prophecy of the OT resonates the central historical theme of the Israelites: the exodus and the wandering in the desert. The recurrent references to this subject suggest that this tradition was familiar to all Israelites, particularly since the knowledge of these traditions has been reinforced in the ritual celebration of the Passover ritual.

2. Genres. In personal interaction and artistic performances, oral communication is clearly dominant. Verbal communication is a framed activity, conveyed within verbal forms that the members of a culture name, or at least recognize, in terms of their textual features and the social contexts of their performance (Ben-Amos 1976: 215–42). The following are the genres that function in folklore communication.

a. Poetic Genres. Šîr is the term for the general category of poetry as contrasted with prose. It encompasses

songs, either a cappella or with instrumental accompaniment (Amos 6:5), recitation (Judg 5:12), and popular songs or cultic songs (Ps 137:4). In Psalms the term occurs with the generic modifier *mizmôr* (i.e., Ps 30:1; 48:1) which also occurs independently (i.e., Ps 100:1; 110:1). The 2 terms *šîr* and *zmr* partially overlap, and partially relate to each other as the general to the particular: *mizmôr* and *zmr* appear to represent the more melodious subcategory, while *šîr* marks the basic distinction between prose and poetry. *Šîr* is also a category of verbal expression of joy that contrasts with *qînâ*, lamentation (Amos 8:10), though *qînâ* could be a subcategory of *šîr* as well (2 Chr 35:25). Within court and cult organization there were professional singers. In the preexilic period, the OT refers to singers of both genders: *šārîm* and *šārôt*, who were part of the royal personnel (2 Sam 19:36; cf. Eccl 2:8). Postexilic references mention mainly cultic male singers *mĕšōrĕrîm* associated with Temple worship (i.e., Ezra 2:41; Neh 12:28). Singing, together with music making and dancing was an integral part of joyous occasions, ranging from the celebration of war victories (1 Sam 18:6–7) to romantic love as represented in Canticles.

A subcategory of *šîr* is *šîrâ*. This form is a commemorative song that commits to verse events of historical significance, in particular the deliverance from a powerful enemy. Thus the "Song of the Sea" (Exod 15:1–19) and David's song (2 Samuel 22; Psalms 18) are both designated in the title as *šîrâ*. The song of Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam (Judges 5) lacks a generic designation; nevertheless the OT employs the verb *šîr* to describe their performance. In all 3 cases the OT attributes the song and the singing to the leader, even though, in the case of the "Song of the Sea," Miriam is said to have repeated the song in a dance (Exod 15:20–21).

The introduction to the "Song of Moses" (Deut 32:1–43) illuminates a literary rather than oral perception of the genre of *šîrâ*. Before reading the song aloud *(dbr)*—the same verb that preceded David's song—Moses instructed the people to write down his song so that it would serve as a historical monument, a testimony for the covenant between God and the Children of Israel (Deut 31:19–23). From a literary perspective, the *šîrâ* serves the same function as the monument Joshua erected (Josh 24:25–27).

The interchangeability of the verbs *šîr*, sing, and *dbr*, speak, in describing the *šîrâ* mode of performance may be indicative of historical change; the possibilities available for singers simultaneously; or a rhythmic delivery that can be perceived as either singing or speaking (cf. Judg 5:12). In all cases except one, the *šîrâ* is performed by an individual, with possible choral response (Exod 15:1). The exception is the "Song of the Well" (Num 21:17–18). The writer introduces the song with the same formula employed in the opening of the "Song of the Sea" (Exod 15:1), albeit the singer is a collective entity: Israel. Isaiah employs the term, in the construct state, *šîrat*, indicating a further possible extension of its meaning. He refers to a known genre, albeit in a mocking fashion, reversing its meaning from a song of victory to a song of defeat. This occurs in the song to the vineyard that brought forth wild grapes (Isa 5:1–2) and the song of the harlot (Isa 23:15). Isaiah admonishes Tyre, which is compared to a harlot, "Take a harp, go about the city, though harlot long forgotten;

make sweet melody, sing many songs, that thou mayest be remembered" (23:16). Possibly by his time the term *šîrâ* referred also to individual recitations accompanied by musical instruments performed by female singers who were wandering around urban areas (cf. Ezek 33:31–32).

The Heb term, *qînâ* (pl. *qînôt*), lament or funeral dirge, is an oral poetic genre that contrasts socially and thematically with *šîr* and *šîrâ*: it conveys a message of defeat and loss (Amos 8:10). While *kinot* could be recited at any funeral, the OT reports them mostly after death in combat (2 Sam 1:17–25; 3:33–34). The information about the oral *qînâ* is meager and appears to be contradictory. The two complete *qînôt* texts are either literary quotations (2 Sam 1:18) or obvious literary compositions as the acrostic form of Lamentation clearly indicates. Both share a structure in the opening formula and the *leitmotif* phrase that begins with question marker "how?" (Lam 1:1; 2 Sam 1:19, 25, 27). In spite of the literary nature of both *qînôt* they may replicate the oral *qînâ*, inasmuch as David's fragmentary lament for Abner (2 Sam 3:33–34) similarly opens with a question that is the verbal equivalent to "how."

The information about the *qînâ* performance is similarly ambivalent. While Jeremiah refers to women as *qînâ* singers (Jer 9:16), and another text suggests a mixed choral group (2 Chr 35:25), the available texts are attributed to individual males—a king and a prophet. The discrepancy may reflect either historical development or different phases of the funeral ritual: choral singing and individual oration. Only the latter offers significant texts quoted by the OT.

The most prominent of the poetic genres in the OT is "the word of Yahweh" *(dĕbar YHWH)*, a term designating prophecy in the preexilic and postexilic periods (i.e., Jer 1:4; Ezek 1:3; Hos 1:1; Joel 1:1; Mic 1:1; Zeph 1:1; Hag 1:1; Zech 1:1), alternating with such terms as *ḥāzôn*, vision (Isa 1:1; Obad 1:1) or *maśśāʾ* (Nah 1:1; Hab 1:1). The term *nĕbûʾâ*, prophecy, is postexilic, occurring in the OT only 3 times (Neh 6:12; 2 Chr 9:29, 15:8). The OT narrators, speakers in the biblical tales, attribute to the speakers of the word of Yahweh the role of a prophet, *nābîʾ*, a term which the prophets themselves rarely proclaim (Jer 1:5) and in fact occasionally deny (Amos 7:14) or even denounce (Zech 13:2–5). The word of Yahweh is a divinely inspired speech, uttered in OT poetic forms, in various degrees of ecstasy, in public places, mostly places of worship. The prophets often engaged in verbal duels and open debates with each other and other religious personnel (Amos 7:10–17; Jeremiah 28). The OT describes prophetic speaking as a common occurrence in urban public life, though it has retained, and thereby canonized, only the texts of Yahweh-inspired prophets from the 8th century B.C.E. onward. Although occasionally the prophet committed their words of Yahweh to writing (Jer 25:13; 30:2; 36; Nah 1:1), their speeches were an integral part of the public oral poetic discourse revolving around ethical, religious, and political subjects.

b. Prose Genres. The paucity of generic terms for prose narratives in the OT may be surprising in light of the rich scholarship of the form criticism school. The debates over definitions and categorization of one OT narrative or another—whether it is a myth, saga, legend, folktale, or novella—rarely incorporate the perception and conception

of these tales by the OT narrators and writers. Rather, from their perspectives, as manifested in their textual accounts, the entire narrative of OT history from creation to exile of the king of Judah, is a trustworthy account, the veracity of which cannot be doubted, and which has the same validity as far as their faith is concerned. The story of creation (Gen 1–3), the sacrifice of Isaac (Gen 22), the story of Joseph (Gen 37, 39–50), the accounts of the beginning of the Davidic dynasty (1 Sam 16:2–18:13), and the destruction of the Temple (2 Kgs 25:8–21; 2 Chr 36:15–21), had the same historical-religious validity in ancient Israelite society, regardless of their scholarly classification as either myth, legend, folktale, or saga. In that respect the absence of generic terms is as significant as their abundance in other societies. Furthermore, except for rare cases the OT narrators do not offer a literary, generic metacommentary. There is hardly any report of narrating which would give room for the use of the names by which storytellers refer to the oral literary forms they distinguish.

One exceptional case is the account of the confrontation between the anonymous man of God and King Jeroboam (1 Kgs 13:1–10). The tale has all the earmarks of a miracle tale and a story of an encounter between secular and religious authorities (cf. Rofé 1988). The OT text relates the retelling of these events by the son of an old prophet to his father, employing the term *ma'ăśēh*. In postbiblical and medieval Hebrew this lexeme had become a term for a genre that includes tales of this kind. In the present use, *ma'ăśēh* could refer either to the acts or to their narration. In other uses *ma'ăśēh* refers to human or divine craftsmanship, work, or action (Exod 26:36; 28:6,11; 37:19; Josh 29:31; Isa 60:21).

As in the present example, nouns that are predicated upon the verb *spr*, to tell, are likely to be names of oral literary forms. Prominent among these is the term *niplā'ôt*, wonders, which always occurs in plural form. The term designates both actions and their narration; the former are predicated upon the verb *'āśāh*, to do (Ps 78:18; 86:10; 98:1), whereas the latter, the generic term, upon the verb *spr*, to tell (Ps 9:2; 26:7; 71:17; 75:2; 105:2; 119:27; 145:5). Most of these usages of *niplā'ôt* appear in Psalms where poetry offers a possibility for commentary upon the narrative tradition and requires terms for references. Occasionally, the same term occurs in the same function elsewhere (Judg 6:13). The term refers to stories about historic, cosmic, and ethical actions of Yahweh, as he reveals himself to his people. The generic terms themselves are indicative of the theological and religious views of ancient Israelite society.

c. Conversational Genres. Conversational genres are those forms of oral literature that require the active participation of 2 speakers or those that are interspersed within a conversation or speech making. Among those the *māšāl* appears in the OT to be the most enigmatic. On the one hand it is part of a paradigm consisting of an insult, a taunt, and a curse (Jer 24:9; cf. Deut 28:37; 1 Kgs 9:7; 2 Chr 7:20). On the other hand the form is the epitome of wisdom, as represented in the book of Proverbs. Furthermore, it appears to parallel the riddle (Ezek 17:2; Ps 78:2), but its literary form is either a parable or an epigram. However, this apparent diversity of forms share a unity of

use that provides them with a single generic categorization. The *māšāl* is a self-contained proposition that cannot be contradicted by its own terms; hence it represents wisdom. In its appropriate application there is a correspondence between the proposition and the situation to which the *māšāl* is applied, further reaffirming the notion of wisdom. Inappropriate application conveys stupidity (Prov 26:7, 9). The relevance of the proposition to a particular situation can be enigmatic, hence the riddling quality of the *māšāl*. Finally, since the principle of correspondence is the main feature of the *māšāl*, it is possible to establish it between a real situation and either terms in a proposition, or figures in a narrative, that then becomes allegorical.

The *māšāl* speakers are known as *mōšlîm* (Num 21:27) or *mĕmaššēl mĕšālîm* (Ezek 21:5). Referring to his allegory, Ezekiel uses the term in a derogatory sense, but the attribution of 3,000 proverbs to King Solomon is a clear mark of his wisdom (1 Kgs 5:12). While the ability to speak in proverbs and parables could distinguish an individual, in the OT there are several narrative episodes in which figures, known for their other qualities, quote proverbs to resolve situations of conflict. David cites an ancient proverb to diffuse the tension between him and King Saul (1 Sam 24:14), and without offering generic designation Gideon (Judg 8:2), the Midianite chiefs (Judg 8:21), and Ahab (1 Kgs 20:11) employ proverbs during conflicts. A proverb is also used in the story of the anointment of David (1 Sam 16:7), replicating oral discourse. In speech making, orators and prophets use the *māšāl* as either strings of epigrams (Num 23:7–10, 18–24; 24:3–9, 15–24), or as parables (Ezek 17:2–10). As in other societies (Briggs 1988; Fontaine 1982) proverbs serve as quoted speech. Jeremiah (31:29) and Ezekiel (18:2) quote the same proverb, "The fathers ate sour grapes; But it's the children's teeth that rasp," and both choose to dispute the value it conveys. This proverb, as others, has been quoted from a set of culturally available propositions that speakers could apply to various situations. They bear the authority of tradition as the abstract voice of the community, encapsulating cultural values, ideas, and even legal principles for the guidance of social conduct.

In contrast to proverbs that appear in the OT relatively in abundance, the reports about riddles (*ḥîdâ*, pl. *ḥîdôt*) and riddling situations are rather scarce. The Psalmist ascribes to them, along with proverbs, the attribution of antiquity (78:2); but in riddles, novelty is required for the form to have any rhetorical effect. In Proverbs they are conceived as belonging to the same paradigm with proverbs, metaphors, and the words of the wise (Prov 1:6; cf. Hab 2:6). Indeed in use they serve as tests of wit and wisdom (Judg 14:12–18; 2 Kgs 10:1; 2 Chr 9:1). In these cases the riddle context is an exchange between the genders or, as in the case of Samson's wife, her representatives.

Least of all, the OT offers information about humorous texts and behavior. The OT, particularly the book of Proverbs, conveys a negative attitude toward humor and jovial behavior. However, the righteous condemnation of conviviality is a strong testimony of its central position in social life. Merrymaking was a social affair (Prov 1:22), part of urban life (Prov 29:8) often associated with drink-

ing (Prov 20:1). Individually (Jer 20:7) and collectively (2 Chr 30:10) those who advocated righteous behavior conceived of the reaction toward them as ridicule. They were subject to the people's humorous songs (Lam 3:14), the texts of which have not been preserved.

3. Transmission of Tradition. The Israelite oral tradition and literature in OT times were heterogeneous, multigeneric, and multipurpose. They served the needs and goals of several tribes and of different segments of the society. However, the writers and editors of the OT preserved and documented mainly those oral traditions that they perceived to be central to their conception of Israelite religion and history. Similarly in their references to the modes of transmission they continuously referred to the central institution of oral transmission. Stories of defeat and victory were told on the city streets (1 Sam 1:20), at the city gates and on the road (Judg 5:10–11), but the main institution of oral transmission to which there are repeated references is the passing on of cultural heritage from father to son (Exod 12:26; 13:8, 14–15; Deut 6:20–23; Judg 6:13; Ps 44:2; 78:3). Probably there were several informal occasions to pass on traditional knowledge, but the formal situation has been *lêl šĕmûrîm*, night of watching, a term that likely refers to an all-night storytelling. The midrash in the Passover Haggadah about the rabbis telling Exodus stories all night, could be a record of a cultural historical survival which they try to explain through exegesis of the OT text. For the Israelite society the exodus and the Sinai experience, including its narrative and laws, have been the core of the national tradition, and it was transmitted within the family.

D. Folklore and the Biblical Text

The comparative and the ethnographic methods complement each other in reconstructing the folklore of the OT; neither can be exclusive. Rich as it is, the OT offers only a glimpse into the oral traditions of biblical society. Only a few of the tales, songs, proverbs, and riddles that were an integral part of the ancient Israelite society have survived the sieves of history and literacy. What has remained rarely reflects the changes in folklore within the different historical periods that constitute the OT era. Many themes and characters have been forgotten, leaving their traces in metaphors and allusions. The comparative method, particularly the examination of other cultures in the area, their literatures, languages and religions, supplement and illuminate the narratives, metaphors, and beliefs of the OT and the historic and heroic figures around which the biblical stories revolve.

The relation of an oral theme or form to the OT, whether it is included, omitted, or allusively mentioned, is a function of the very process of canonization through literacy. In their act of committing a text to script, the writers and editors of the OT were motivated by a desire to sanction and commemorate a specific version of a story—to render permanent those texts that serve the writer's ideas, beliefs, and conception of history and nation. Literacy is not value free; hence any examination of the folklore in the OT must also account for the nature of the OT itself as a literary and religious canon.

Stylistically, literacy imposes its own constraints upon oral tradition. The length of a text and its rhetorical features can attest neither to its authenticity nor its antiquity. Short fragments are not necessarily oral and older; longer texts are not essentially literate and younger. Oral tradition has many of the capabilities literature possesses, and literature can imitate many of the qualities of oral performance. The texts that are available to us in the OT do not duplicate precisely the whole range of features of oral tradition for the simple reason that they are in a book. They can only echo the voices of a distant past.

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FOLLY. See VIRTUE/VICE LISTS.

FOOD. See ZOOLOGY; MEAL CUSTOMS; EATING AND DRINKING.

FOOTWASHING. The washing of the feet of guests before a meal seems to have been a sign of welcome in the ANE, as reflected in the Yahwist's account of Abraham and the heavenly visitors in Gen 18:4. But in Exod 30:19 the washing of the feet is required of those who are to come before the presence of God at the Sanctuary. Philo's comments on these passages (*Quaes Gen* IV.5, 60, 88; *Quaes Ex* I.2; *Vit Mos* II.138; *Spec Leg* I.206–7) show that, within the Hellenistic synagogue, footwashing may have been the object of some discussion in connection with its ritual performance. Apparently it was thought that it provided sanctification by the divine spirit, and/or the opening up of the soul to manifestations of the divine. Discussion of the validity of this ceremonial practice seems to have continued for some time in some Christian communities, as reflected in Pap. Oxyrh. 840. This 4th century Christian document tells of a Pharisaic chief priest who challenged Jesus' right to walk on the sacred pavement of the temple "without having bathed yourself and your disciples not having washed their feet." The text goes on to contrast exterior vs. interior washing. For our purpose it is important to note the association made between disciples with washed feet and their right to stand on the pavement of the sacred precinct.

Within the early Christian communities there was an oral tradition about the washing of the disciples' feet on the part of Jesus. Apparently different Christian communities adopted the practice, but gave to its performance different meanings. Within the more ecclesiastically organized communities of the Pastoral Epistles the ritual became something that established the position of "widows" as servants of the community (1 Tim 5:10). The exact circumstances under which widows were supposed to wash the feet of disciples, or the meaning attached to this ritual performance escapes us now due to the lack of further contemporary evidence.

In the more egalitarian Johannine community the ritual seems to have gone through different stages of signification prior to the final redaction of the gospel of John. A form critical analysis of the passage (John 13:4–20) reveals that within the Johannine community the original account consisted of 13:4, 5, and possibly 12–15. These texts set the basic scene of Jesus washing the disciples' feet. The scene itself, however, seems to have been influenced by synoptic sayings of Jesus recorded in Mark 10:42–44 and par. This observation causes some scholars to suggest that the scene may represent a traditional elaboration of the synoptic sayings in narrative form. Verses 12–15, it is to be noticed, do not actually illumine the meaning of the action described in 4, 5. They only establish the *mandatum* that the disciples must follow the example of the Master, and that the one who did the washing was none other than their Master and Lord. That this command is recorded here would indicate that the ritual was part of the liturgical celebrations of the Johannine community. In this connec-