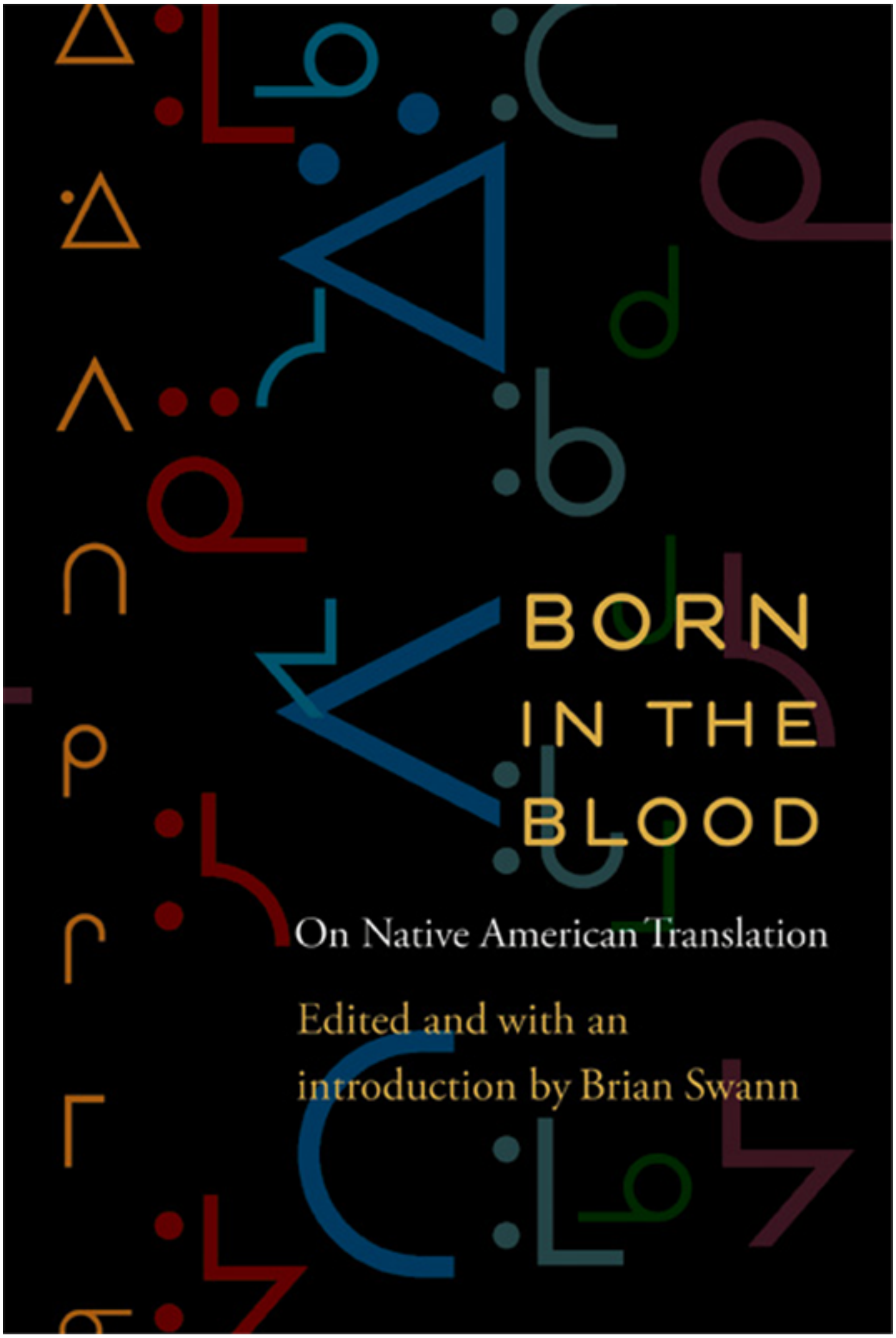
BORN IN THE BLOOD
On Native American Translation
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Performative Translation and Oral Curation

Ti-Jean/Chezan in Beaverland

Amber Ridington and Robin Ridington

The Setting

In 1999, as Amber Ridington was preparing to enter the MA program in folk studies at Western Kentucky University, her father, anthropologist Robin Ridington, recorded a French folktale told by Sammy Acko, a talented Dane-z̲aa storyteller (for the full text of this story see appendix A). The Dane-z̲aa, also known as the Beaver Indians (or Dunne-za in earlier publications), are subarctic hunting-and-gathering people who live in the Peace River region of northeastern British Columbia, Canada, close to the town of Fort St. John, where Amber was born. For almost fifty years, since Robin began his fieldwork in the area, the Ridington family has referred to the area where the Dane-z̲aa live as Beaverland.

Until 1942, when U.S. Army engineers pushed the Alaska Highway through their territory, the Dane-z̲aa were nomadic hunters. They had participated in the fur trade since 1794, when the Northwest Company established the first upper Peace River trading post, Rocky Mountain Fort. In 1822 the Northwest Company merged with the Hudson's Bay Company, and Dane-z̲aa continued their interactions with this fur-trading monopoly. During the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Peace River was a major transportation route connecting eastern Canada with Arctic drainage fur and game resources. The Dane-z̲aa have, therefore, been in contact with a variety of cultural influences for several centuries. Because of this long history of fur-trade contacts, most Dane-z̲aa men spoke Cree, the traders' lingua franca, as well as some French, the language of the voyageurs.

Even after taking an adhesion to Treaty no. 8 in 1900, the Dane-z̲aa continued to travel seasonally to hunt, trap, gather, and socialize with their kin groups. Today, farms and oil and gas development dominate in the region, the Hudson's Bay Fort is long gone from the area, and the city of Fort St. John is a thriving urban center. Yet the Dane-z̲aa continue to tell traditional stories. In talking about the "narrative technology" of the Dane-z̲aa, Robin has written: "Literature is more than a pastime in First Nations tradition. It is where stories become experience and experience gives rise to stories" (Ridington 2001a:222). Similarly, Dell Hymes describes narratives in Native American culture as being produced by "thoughtful motivated minds, seeking narrative adequate to their experience, surviving and renewing" (2000:11).

Dane-z̲aa experience includes cultural exchange with Europeans, so it is not surprising that they have added stories learned from their new neighbors to their narrative repertoire. Robin first met the Dane-z̲aa in 1959, and was introduced to much of their oral literature through participation, observation, and documentation when stories were being told. Perhaps because he identified himself as someone interested in documenting traditional Dane-z̲aa culture, he was not exposed to and did not record any European folktales in the Dane-z̲aa repertoire until 1999.

Dane-z̲aa Oral Tradition

While the Dane-z̲aa participated in the rich mix of cultural and linguistic influences of the fur-trade era, their knowledge remained entirely within an oral tradition until the 1950s, when the Department of Indian Affairs established the first Indian day schools in their communities. Dane-z̲aa children were not allowed to speak their own language at the day school. However, they were fortunate: unlike their close linguistic relatives the Sekani and children from many other First Nations across Canada, they were not taken from their families and placed in church-run residential schools where they were forbidden to speak their language at all times.

In addition to cultural exchange with the other First Nations groups in the area, particularly the Cree and the Sekani, the Dane-z̲aa have come to share cultural traditions brought by the traders with whom they came into contact. As Robin has pointed out elsewhere (Ridington 1990:64–83), the tradition of Dane-z̲aa dreamers was strongly influenced by images and metaphors from Christianity, as well as by the changed relation to the natural environment that the fur trade brought about. The men who ran the forts (the factors) were generally Scots from the Hebrides and Orkneys, but many fur traders and other employees in forts across Canada were francophones. Some were Iroquois from eastern Canada, while others were Métis, the products of intermarriage between European men and First Nations women.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, people of French-Cree ancestry established themselves as permanent residents of the Peace River country. Some of those who were in regular contact with the Dane-z̲aa came to speak a working version of Beaver. As stated previously, many Dane-z̲aa learned to communicate in Cree and perhaps a little French. It was through the interactions of these bilingual or trilingual communities that the Dane-z̲aa were introduced to the folktales of France and other European countries. It was not unusual for Dane-z̲aa trappers to spend time on the trapline with their French-Cree neighbors. This is where the adventures of Ti-Jean (Petit Jean) in Beaverland began.

On July 28, 1999, Robin was driving through traditional Doig River territory recording stories and place-names from the elders who are his contemporaries. Accompanying him on this trip were Billy and Tommy Attachie and Sammy Acko. Sammy was born in 1952, but his older brother, Jack, who told him stories about a sort of European trickster named Chezan, was born in 1916. Their father, Ray Aku, whose stories Robin recorded in Beaver in the 1960s, was born in 1879. Like the rest of his contemporaries, Sammy grew up immersed in Dane-z̲aa oral tradition. He continues the storytelling tradition and is recognized in his community as a master storyteller who can tell many different kinds of stories from memory without hesitation, always taking care to explain how he came to know each story.

Ever since Robin began working with Dane-z̲aa elders in the 1960s, they have appreciated the value of having their culture documented, and Robin has been comfortable with his role as cultural documentarian. The stories he recorded in both Beaver and English generally told about places associated with dreamers or other important people from the past. Some stories and names described events in recent experience: the place where band members were born in the 1950s; a place named for the Cree trapper Mygoosh (who was listed in the 1899 Northwest Mounted Police census); and Broomfield Creek, where our late colleague and mentor, Howard Broomfield, camped with a small group of Dane-z̲aa, including Tommy

Attachie and Sam Acko, in 1974. Perhaps Robin's presence as a documentarian of "traditional" culture kept the focus on distinctively Dane-z̲aa stories.

"As we approached Doig on our way home," Robin told Amber, "Sammy unexpectedly launched into a story from a genre that is very much alive in the Dane-z̲aa community, but to which I had never been exposed" (personal communication). Billy Attachie volunteered that this was just one of many similar stories, and that Sammy wasn't the only person who could tell them. Indeed, he said, "Tommy got lots, oh, he start, you gotta go to Grand Prairie" (a town in Alberta that is several hours drive from the Doig River Reserve). Sammy started to tell the story in English with an introduction explaining that the story, while part of the Dane-z̲aa repertoire, must be of European origin. Robin was already recording the conversations on the drive and captured this story on a mini-disc recorder. He transcribed it verbatim, but has set it out in line-for-line ethnopoetic form to reflect the quality of the oral performance. Sammy began:

There's one story, Dane-z̲aa, Dane-z̲aa
They have one story about Chezan.
Anybody tell you about that story?
This story, it's amazes me.
It sound like a . . .
Long time ago there's little towns, things like that.
That's the way this story sound like,
And I don't know where Dane-z̲aa people pick that story from.
Maybe from Monias [Cree word for white man] elder, or . . .
I didn't know where it come from.
But anyway, this story,
It's about magic tablecloth,
and then a magic fiddle,
magic wine,
and magic scissors.
Those four things.
It's about four things. (Acko 1999)

When Robin got back from the field in 1999, he told Mark Mealing, a folklorist at Selkirk College, about the European tale that he had found in oral circulation. Dr. Mealing provided a few Aarne-Thompson tale type references,[1] but none of the material he provided identified the protagonist as Ti-Jean. About a year later it suddenly dawned on Robin while he was corresponding about the story with his former student Blanca Schorcht that Chezan must be Ti-Jean, a popular character from French folklore. In 2000, Robin asked Sammy if he would tell some more Chezan stories, and Sammy volunteered another one (Acko 2000).

The stories are two of many that Sammy calls Chezan stories. They are about a young man named Chezan and his brothers. Chezan is a trickster character who is constantly outwitting people and using special powers to his advantage. Chezan as trickster resonates well with the well-established Native American tradition of trickster stories. Among the Dane-z̲aa, the culture hero Tsááyaa (also spelled Saya) has a trickster side to his character and is known for his ability to use special powers to outwit the giant animals that once hunted people. In thinking about the Chezan story as Sammy told it compared to the Aarne-Thompson tale type references Mark Mealing had provided, Robin noted in an e-mail to Amber:

> None of these sources contain the texts themselves, only motif abstracts. This kind of folkloristics is great for cross-references but has absolutely no literary or performative value. I am interested in performative translation. As long as a story stays within the oral tradition, it can cross language barriers and retain its integrity as a narrative. In this case, I think you could argue that the story actually retains its original meaning quite well, even though it is told by First Nations hunting people . . . Rather than transpose the story into their own cultural setting (The Odyssey becomes *Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?*), the storytellers have kept the narrative in a form that preserves its original setting. There is a lot of underlying similarity to Danne-Zaa narrative in the character of Chezan and his brothers. He is like Saya or Wyoni in being a trickster figure. Maybe that's why Ti-Jean has done so well in Quebec and the Caribbean. He fits into the form of characters like Anansi. Another point about performative translation is that maintaining orality keeps the story alive, while writing it down generally stultifies it. That point, of course, depends on finding some written versions. It would be quite interesting if similar Ti-Jean stories transcribed from actualities turned up. (Ridington 2001b)

Performative Translation

Dennis Tedlock (1991) distinguishes between oral performances of traditional texts that are rote recitations and those that are re-creations in which the narrator is also the text's interpreter. Sammy's Chezan story is clearly a re-creation, but it is just as clearly a translation. In comparing Sammy's story with motif indexes describing its European antecedents, it appears that Sammy privileged translation over transformation. He did not significantly change European references into Dane-z̲aa equivalents. Rather, his interpretation was faithful to the integrity of the story as oral literature. What is remarkable about his story, compared to the written versions that are found in the Western folklore literature, is how alive it continues to be in oral tradition.

The test of a performative translation is that it must work as performance. It must be able to touch a listener. Sammy heard the story in Beaver from his older brother, Jack. Sammy suggests that Jack heard it from a Cree speaker like Mygoosh, for whom a place in Doig River territory is named. Unlike a translation in which a written text in one language is carefully and with scholarly attention transformed into a text in another written language, a performative translation is integral to the act of performance. Sammy learned the story in Beaver but told it to Robin in English. He drew upon his knowledge of both Beaver and English, as well as his understanding of the story as a piece of oral literature. His translation was simultaneous with his telling of the story.

The late Harry Robinson was a master of performative translation in Native American oral literature. Anthropologist Wendy Wickwire recorded Harry telling a wealth of stories from his Okanagan heritage, as well as some historical narratives and the odd European tale such as Puss in Boots. Robinson used his own voice to carry the narrative line and cited the voices of characters in the story as directly quoted dialogue. The result is vivid and compelling. "I can go for twenty-one hours or more when I get started," Harry told Wendy, "because this is my job. I'm a storyteller" (Robinson 1992:7). Okanagan scholar and writer Jeanette Armstrong suggests that "Okanagan Rez English has a structural quality syntactically and [is] semantically closer [than standard English] to the way the Okanagan language is arranged" (1998:193). Armstrong writes that Okanagan reality (like that of other First Nations) "is very much like a story: it is easily changeable and transformative with each speaker. Reality in that way becomes very potent with animation and life. It is experienced as an always malleable reality within which you are like an attendant at a vast symphony surrounding you, a symphony in which, at times, you are the conductor" (191). She goes on to say that in Okanagan storytelling "the ability to move the audience back and forth between the present reality and the story reality relies heavily on the fluidity of time sense that the language offers" (194). The Dane-z̲aa "Rez English" in which Sammy told the Chezan story is similar to that which Armstrong describes for Okanagan.

We found the Chezan stories in the Dane-z̲aa repertoire interesting for a number of reasons and have pondered the following questions: Why would one group curate another group's traditional lore? How do we find meaning in a Native American group telling stories from a distant and foreign culture? What changes have been made to the stories? What meaning do these stories have for the Dane-z̲aa? In the remainder of this chapter we will address these questions and place the Dane-z̲aa Chezan stories within the canon of the original French Ti-Jean stories. We will examine them to see how their basic structure (plots, story lines, and motifs) have fared through performative translation across different language communities, point out regional variations in the stories, and discuss these in relation to work by other scholars studying European tales in Native American circulation.

Classification of Tale Types and Motifs in Folklore Literature

From the early days of ethnography in North America, scholars have been collecting stories of European origin found within Native American cultures and have been fascinated by them. These ethnographers include James Teit (1916), Alanson Skinner (1916, 1927), Truman Michelson (1916), Stith Thompson (1919, 1929), Franz Boas (1940), Melville Jacobs (1945), and Frank G. Speck and Horace P. Beck (1950), among others.

Stith Thompson was an influential figure in early American folklore who helped to bridge the disciplinary gulf between anthropology and literature. Thompson, who had studied the Finnish method of comparative philology known as the historic-geographic method in the early 1900s, was the first scholar to apply the methods of comparative analysis to European tales found among the North American Indians. As part of his 1914 Harvard dissertation (expanded in 1919 as *European Tales among N. American Indians*), Thompson created an index and survey of the geographic distribution of European tales found among the North American Indians at that time and cross-referenced them to European versions. He concluded that the majority of the European tales known and told by Native Americans came from French immigrants in Canada and Louisiana (1919:456).

Following this initial work to trace dissemination of tales from an origin, Thompson went on to the task of translating and expanding Finnish scholar Antti Aarne's work to classify the types of the European folktale. In 1928 he published *The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography*, now commonly referred to as the Aarne-Thompson folktale index. This, along with Thompson's later *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* (1932), became the standard reference works for the comparative study and archiving of European folktales for many decades. Over the years, numerous regional motif and tale type indexes from around the world have been published. Hans-Jörg Uther's three-volume work, *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography, Based on the System of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson* (2004), is an adapted and expanded reference tool that has only recently replaced Thompson's volumes as the standard reference work. While Thompson's comparative approach to the study of folktales was adopted by many, the historic-geographic approach was flawed in many ways. It was based on the idea of monogenesis and even distribution of tales from a single origin. Also, it arose during a time when scientific approaches were in favor which took the examples out of context and reduced them to plot summaries; in the process, the tales lost their meanings. In addition, the methodology was very labor intensive and the task of collecting and classifying became an end in itself, leaving no time to look at the folktales' functional use and significance in living tradition. Alan Dundes has summarized the flawed historic-geographic approach in relation to mixed Native American and European folktale traditions: "Listing the European tales among the North American Indians does not in itself explain how the borrowed tale functions in its new environment. The concern of folklorists with identification has resulted in sterile study of folklore for folklore's sake and it is precisely this emphasis on text and neglect of context which estranged so many literary critics and cultural anthropologists" (1965:136).

Dundes does not, however, recommend abandoning the identification of variants and sources. He suggests that the comparative study of European folktale types and motifs can be a valuable tool for studying the historical development of particular variants over time and space. Writing during a critical time in folklore studies when context and performance were emerging as new paradigms for the study of folklore, Dundes concludes that the objective and empirical process of identification of variants can help inform the more subjective and speculative interpretation of the meanings of folklore (1965:136). Much later, in 1997, when performance and contextual orientations were well established in folkloristics, the *Journal of Folklore Research* (34.3) published a special issue devoted to type and motif indexes in which authors offer critiques, describe actual uses, and suggest future developments for comparative study using the indexes. Carl Lindahl is one of these authors who finds "Some Uses of Numbers" from the Aarne-Thompson indexes. Lindahl summarizes his perspective as follows: "Nearly all the folklorists who continue to use the type and motif indexes do so because there is currently available no better means of taking the broadest measure of the context of tale telling, of surveying and accessing the narrative backgrounds from which individual traditions and narratives emerge" (1997:271).

For this chapter, Amber scoured the early volumes of the *Journal of American Folklore* to find Ti-Jean stories.[2] She noted that many Ti-Jean stories were recorded from Quebec and published as Contes Populaires Canadien by Marius Barbeau (1916, 1917); Evelyn Bolduc (1919); Gustave Lanctot (1916, 1923, 1926, 1931); Adelard Lambert, Marius Barbeau, and Pierre Daviault (1940); and Marcel Rioux (1950), among others. However, as these sources are in French, we leave it to scholars more competent in that language to discuss them, as well as the numerous more contemporary collections of Ti-Jean stories published in French.[3] What our initial survey does tell us is that there was a thriving French folktale tradition in both French Canadian and Native American communities in the early twentieth century.

Amber also identified Aarne-Thompson tale types and motifs in the Chezan stories told by Sammy Acko. The tale types and motifs for the 1999 story, along with the text of that story, are included in appendices 1 and 2; because of space consideration in this volume, the text and the tale types and motifs for Sammy's 2000 Chezan story can be found on the Internet at http://sites.google.com/site/plumeofcockatoopress/chezan-story-by-sam-acko/chezan-story-2000. Although of no performative value, the plot summaries and motifs have been helpful in identifying and comparing the Dane-z̲aa Chezan stories to other Ti-Jean stories found in Native American and European tradition.

One of the fruits of this publication search was the identification of two “Ticon (Petit-Jean)” stories in Alanson Skinner’s 1916 article “European Tales from the Plains Ojibwa” in the *Journal of American Folklore*. These “Ticon” stories happen to be versions of the two Chezan stories that Sammy told in 1999 and 2000. The stories have some differences in detail and action, but the basic plots are the same. In 1916, the stories could not have been recorded as audio actualities. It appears that they have been revised either during transcription in the field or in preparation for publication, as the English grammar of the stories has been standardized in the Skinner versions. Skinner provides no contextual information, so we cannot know whether the narrator told them in English or if these versions are translations. They most certainly originally arrived in Ojibwa tradition through the process of performative translation.

More recently, Jarold Ramsey (1987) has revisited many of the historic texts that show Native American assimilation of European folklore collected and written in the early 1900s by ethnographers. He notes that the Ti-Jean stories are by far the most popular and widespread of the European traditions assimilated by Native American communities and that within the Ti-Jean cycle the most common story is “Ti-Jean and the Seven-Headed Dragon” (207). Ramsey’s analysis of a number of versions of this tale, he writes, are meant to shed light on the “intercultural literary process which, if properly documented and understood, could tell us much about the imaginative circumstances of Indian acculturation and about the internal rules and dynamics of traditional oral literatures” (206). Ramsey’s article provides a strong historical base from which to study and compare examples of Ti-Jean stories found in active Native American oral tradition.

Thus far we have located only two examples of European stories in Native American tradition that were recorded in live performance. One is a French Ti-Jean story collected by Dundes (1965) from Prairie Band Potawatomi tradition in Kansas, and the other is a Russian version of the Frog Princess story collected by Nora Marks Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer (1998) from a Tlingit community in southeast Alaska. We will discuss these and compare them to the Dane-z̲aa Chezan/Ti-Jean stories later in the chapter.

Oral Curation

A recurring theme in the literature about European folktales in Native American tradition is a fascination with the stability of tale types despite their transmission between distant languages and cultures (Thompson

1919, 1929; Hymes 1981:276; Ramsey 1987:206). Amber suggests that we can benefit by thinking of this stability within oral form in relation to the concept of curation. In museum studies, *curation* refers to the selection, organization, and care of items in a collection; the emphasis is frequently on preservation. In archaeology, a curated artifact is one that is prized, cared for, and often adapted (e.g., large stone knife could be retooled into an arrowhead). Drawing on the references to both stable and dynamic cultural patterns[4] contained in these definitions of curation, Amber has applied the term *oral curation* to the process of oral transmission which simultaneously maintains the plot structure and setting of a story and provides an opportunity for it to be tailored according to each performance context. Amber's intent in using the term *oral curation* is to reconceive curation so that it implies a dynamic and ongoing process rather than one that is fixed, and to point out that tradition bearers, rather than just outside professionals, are, and can be, curators of their own culture. Reconceiving curation in this way is meant to relieve it from its association with elite institutions and a history of decontextualization. As we will demonstrate, the Dane-z̲aa have adapted the Ti-Jean/Chezan narratives through ongoing performance, but have also maintained the stories' structural form through the processes of performative translation and oral curation.

Regional Variation and Indigenization

C. W. von Sydow and Albert Lord were influential scholars who contributed to the idea of emergent folklore and refocused study on living traditions instead of texts. Von Sydow's work (1932) to explain the processes of regional variation through folktale transmission[5] and Lord's (1960) identification of oral formulaic memory devices that help maintain the structure of oral histories during performance are both applicable to the Dane-z̲aa Chezan stories and to Dane-z̲aa and Native American literature in general. Also relevant to our study of oral curation and performative translation is Linda Degh's work on the art of storytelling. Degh writes: "The special gift of any storyteller consists in his being able to shape a tale. . . . The possibilities for the reshaping of the well-known forms are legion. They can occur in the tale structure (the possibilities for combination of motifs are infinite) or in the individual shaping, in the way the narrator actualizes the tale . . . and they depend on whether his manner of narrating aims at breadth, length, detail, precision, or density of content" (1969:171–72).

Drawing from these contextual approaches to studying variation within oral literature, we can see the adaptive process by which Sammy Acko, a talented Dane-z̲aa storyteller, as well as his Native storytelling predecessors, have orally curated Ti-Jean/Chezan folktales and have made them relevant for each new audience. In the preamble to Sammy's narration of the second Chezan story (Acko 2000), it becomes clear that there are both active and passive tradition bearers in the Dane-z̲aa narrative community. Again, the four people present at the narrative event are Sammy Acko, Billy Attachie, Tommy Attachie, and Robin Ridington. The story begins as follows:

> **Robin:** Do you know any other stories about that, like that Chezan?
> **Sammy:** Chezan, yeah,
> **Tommy:** Yeah, lots of story about that.
> **Sammy:** That same Chezan, he's just like outlaw those years. . . .

While Sammy is telling the story, Tommy continues to make comments and offer details from time to time. This indicates that Tommy also knows the story and is able to tell Chezan stories himself, which may well have had an effect on Sammy, the narrator for this particular storytelling context.

The type of commentary presented above is an example of metanarration, a narrative device that indexes or comments on the narrative itself or on the components or conduct of the storytelling event (Bauman 1986:98). In both of the Chezan stories, the narrated event is preceded by a metanarrative statement from Sammy in which he assesses his audience's familiarity with the story he is about to tell and comments on its origin. What is made clear by the following excerpt is that the stories are now part of the Dane-z̲aa repertoire and are considered their own.

> There's one story, Dane-z̲aa, Dane-z̲aa
> They have one story about Chezan
> Anybody tell you about that story? (Acko 1999)

There are numerous regional variations evident in Sammy's versions of the stories that indicate how they have been tailored to the Dane-z̲aa context. In the story he told in 1999, Chezan is referred to as "crazy," which in the Dane-z̲aa language can be said as "muh-tsi-nachue," meaning "his head nothing." The Dane-z̲aa use of the word "crazy" corresponds to Thompson's use of the term "numbskull" or "fool," which almost always refers to a lowly hero who outsmarts someone with power. "Crazy" may also imply uncontrolled shamanic power, as in the story of the first Dane-z̲aa dreamer, Makénúúnatane, whose initial crazy behavior was later revealed to be a sign of his power to transform. The intonations Sammy used to say the word "crazy" have a metonymic element that conjures up other stories and experiences for the Dane-z̲aa audience. Ti-Jean/Chezan is a lowly hero who ends up outwitting everyone else, a familiar scenario in the Dane-z̲aa culture hero myths. Chezan is a person with power; in Dane-z̲aa terms, a person who "little bit know something" (Ridington 1990). The hybrid character of Ti-Jean/Chezan, who is seemingly an empty-headed, sometimes crazy numbskull delights Dane-z̲aa audiences, as Chezan shows that he actually does have brains and power—hence the story's appeal and survival in Dane-z̲aa oral tradition.

Sammy told the stories in English, his second language, rather than in his native Beaver. "Indian English" is evident in Sammy's speech patterns. Although his speech is often not grammatically normative, Sammy speaks with poetic authority and uses his "Indian English" effectively to convey the action and plot of the story as well as its poetic vitality. Some characteristics of Beaver language are evident in the following passage from Sammy's performance of the first Chezan story (Acko 1999):

> but her sister told him [the princess],
> "It's OK. It's not going to kill you.
> After he sleeps there
> I will wash the place really good anyway."
> So she said,
> "OK,"
> and he sleep there by that door

Dane-z̲aa pronouns are not gender specific. In the dialogue between the two princesses, Sammy says: "but her sister told him." "Him" refers to one of the princesses. This is a good example of how Dane-z̲aa often retain elements of Dane-z̲aa grammar in their English speech.

Intonation is another feature of Dane-z̲aa English evident in this performance that conveys meaning to a Dane-z̲aa-literate audience. The intonation Sammy used in the first four lines of the excerpt above we recognize as a command or imperative. It is not so much what is being said as the intonation that makes it a command. We have heard this same tone used by parents or older siblings as they direct youngsters. Thus, a Dane-z̲aa-literate audience can get more emotional meaning from the tonal connotations conveyed during the performance of the story. Without this insider knowledge, the plot sequence of the story is still understood, but the cultural connotations conveyed by intonation help the audience find both localized and personal meaning.

Another example of localization we found in the second Chezan story includes the concept of banishment involving disappearing into "the bush." The bush is a place and concept with specific meanings for the Dane-z̲aa. It implies being away from camps, towns, and settlements. There is both power and danger in the concept of the bush. The bush is where children go for vision quests, and it is also the home of the bushman, a feral forest creature who tries to capture children and women. In the same story, localization is also evident in Sammy's use of Canadian political positions such as premiers and mayors to identify the town administrators and rulers.

> And all those big shot people. Those head people.
> Must be like premiers or something like that
> Those town, maybe those mayors and those kind of people.
> (Acko 2000)

In this way we can see how the stories are adapted with every telling to reach the understanding of each particular audience.

Many students of northern Athapaskan culture have noted that the use of "I guess" and "maybe" are typical of northern Athapaskan English. These metanarrative devices found in the Chezan stories appear to be telltale signs of indigenization. For example:

> I guess those years there's no car or nothing.
> They gotta travel by foot . . .
>
> I guess there's some kind of secret in that king's daughter . . .
>
> I guess he went between people somewhere fast
> and he went to bathroom in his toque or some kind of hat.
> He carry that. So I guess they caught him . . . (Acko 1999)

Rather than reflecting uncertainty, these phrases indicate that the events portrayed are hearsay and not part of the speaker's direct experience. In a similar vein, a speaker will refer to another person's supernatural power by saying something like "Maybe he little bit know something." Sammy's distinction between events that are experienced directly and those that are reported by others reflects what Scollon and Scollon (1979) identify as the individualistic "bush consciousness" of northern Native oral tradition. They describe this consciousness as a feature of what they call the "linguistic convergence" of Chipewyan, Cree, English, and French in Fort Chipewyan, Alberta. The Chezan stories reflect a similar convergence, but they also demonstrate the structural, thematic, and artistic integrity of a shared oral literature. Although Sammy has made the tales understandable to his audience, he has also maintained the basic nature of the stories as he practiced performative translation from Beaver to English. The corresponding European tale types and motifs indexed in Aarne and Thompson (1928) and Thompson (1932–1936) are easily recognized in Sammy's Chezan stories.

In addition to recurrent plots familiar to both Native American and European tradition (lowly hero outwits the powerful), the Chezan stories use dialogue, which is a fundamental feature of First Nations oral discourse (Ridington 2006:148–70). Dialogue is often repeated several times during a story with minor changes. For example, when characters experience a series of similar situations, they say nearly the same thing every time.

> "Are you going to cook all night?" . . .
> "Are you going to sew all night—sewing?" . . .
> "Are you going to drink with us all night?" . . . (Acko 1999)

This example reflects a common pattern in Native American oral discourse. It is also very similar to the memory devices reported by Lord for the process of oral composition in Yugoslavia, and reflects patterns of dialogue found in both European and Native American narrative traditions.

In European folktales, events and numbers tend to occur in groups of three, while in Native American stories the number four is more common. In his work on "Ti-Jean and the Seven-Headed Dragon" stories found in Native repertoire, Jarold Ramsey writes: "Ti-Jean's immediate appeal and accessibility in Native terms meant that he and his stories were open to adaptive changes, including alterations of details, additions, and deletions. When Ti-Jean enters Indian narrative tradition, he becomes, as we will see, subject to Native spirit power instead of European magic, he does things according to Native cult numerology (four or five times rather than the European three times), his powers and indeed his very motives are Indianized, and so on" (1987:208). This type of adaptive change, from European magic to Native spirit power, can be seen in Sammy Acko's first Chezan story. In it, there are four magic objects—magic scissors, magic bottle, magic tablecloth, and magic fiddle—while in the French versions there are only three magic objects.

In the same article on the merits of identifying variants and sources as well as interpretation in folklore research mentioned earlier, Alan Dundes has presented and analyzed a recorded performance of a P'teejah (Petit Jean) story told in 1963 by a Prairie Band Potawatomi elder, William Mzechtenoman, in Kansas. It is unclear whether this is a performative translation or if the storyteller learned the story in English himself. In his analysis, Dundes applied a Eurocentric approach in identifying the tale as "a French version of Aarne-Thompson tale type 569 and certainly not an aboriginal tale type" (1965:140). He identified a connection to tales in European tradition, but fails to look to the canon of Native American motifs and characters, many identified and presented for comparison by Stith Thompson in his 1929 volume *Tales of the North American Indians*. Specifically, Dundes failed to place the story in the categories of Native American trickster tales and hero tales.

However, Dundes did identify ways that the Potawatomi made the story their own and made it relevant to their present-day culture. We can see indigenized elements in both the Potawatomi and the Dane-z̲aa stories which follow the Native American cultural numerology mentioned earlier. For example, in the first Chezan story Robin recorded (Acko 1999), the symbolic magic (the magic tablecloth's gifts) was changed from the European ritual number of three to the more typically Native American ritual number of four. In a similar pattern of indigenization, the magic hat in the Potawatomi tale produces four soldiers rather than the three in the French version of the tale. Dundes also suggests that the tale reflects a resistance to Potawatomi colonial domination, as the lowly Indian hero, P'teejah, is able to outthink the white man (1965:141). Dundes saw the P'teejah character as an Indian boy, but he did not take into consideration that this character could have special Native spirit powers to perform the magic tasks—as do many Native American culture heroes.

Dundes argues that the Native American telling of a European folktale will more closely resemble the original according to how acculturated the teller is. He cites the Potawatomi transformation of P'teejah into an "Indian hero" as evidence that the tale has been significantly indigenized. However, it appears that Dundes asked leading questions that may have encouraged the teller to give that interpretation.

> **D.** The boy was, you say, an Indian Boy?
> **M.** Yeah.
> **D.** So the Indian boy was fooling the white man.
> **M.** Yeah, [laughing] he put it on him. (Dundes 1965:140)

Sammy Acko's Chezan stories are generally closer to their European origins, but looking at how they are contextualized for a Dane-z̲aa audience, they have been more subtly indigenized to fit into the genre of trickster and culture hero stories.

Nora Marks Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer have also analyzed contemporary Native American material with European origins from the perspective of live performance, as well as historic-geographic tradition, and point out the dynamics of cross-cultural interaction inherent in the processes of both story borrowing and story documentation (1998:58). In 1974 they recorded a version of the Frog Princess, told in the Tlingit language, which came to the community through contact with Russians during the maritime fur-trade era. Nora is Tlingit and was familiar with the story from her own childhood; she translated it into English. In looking at the cultural context of the story and its situation within the Tlingit community, the Dauenhauers have concluded that this story was specific to one family and that the majority of Tlingit do not know the story.

The Dauenhauers suggest that the Frog Princess story may not have been widely adopted in Tlingit tradition for two reasons, both of which reflect traditional Tlingit social structure and attitudes toward storytelling. The first is that the narrative may have been perceived as a clan story, and that others refrained from telling it out of respect for clan ownership (1998:77). They also suggest that this European tale is not often told because of Tlingit reluctance to tell fictitious stories, as their own myths and legends are considered to be true (76). Both of these explanations seem to reflect the hierarchical Tlingit social structure. The maintenance of Tlingit social structure seems to have limited the adoption of European tales, such as the Frog Princess example, because Tlingit have had difficulty placing them in their own worldview. The less rigid Dane-z̲aa, by contrast, appear to have no trouble placing the character of Ti-Jean within their own narrative tradition.

Like the Tlingit Frog Princess and the Potawatomi P'teejah story, the Dane-z̲aa Chezan stories that Sammy Acko told are in contemporary oral circulation and were recorded in live performance situations. Unlike the early ethnographic examples mentioned previously in this chapter that were collected as plot summaries and texts filtered through the tempering lens of the translator and ethnographer, the recording of the stories in live performance allows the narratives to be analyzed as part of living oral traditions and in terms of polyphonic contexts.

Conclusion

Exactly how Ti-Jean made his way into the Dane-z̲aa story repertoire and the details of who first told these stories to the Dane-z̲aa is not known, and probably never will be. The Ti-Jean stories are of European origin and probably come from French-Cree living around or traveling through Fort St. John in the fur-trade era. Early in this chapter we put forward a series of questions: Why would one group curate another group's traditional lore? What changes have been made to the stories? What meaning do these stories have for the Dane-z̲aa? How do we find meaning in a Native American group incorporating stories from a distant and foreign culture into their own narrative tradition?

Dane-z̲aa culture is in transition now. In many respects, newer generations of Dane-z̲aa appear to be passive tradition bearers rather than active carriers of their traditions. They can understand the Dane-z̲aa language but do not speak it. They have been told some of the stories, but are not telling them themselves. It will be interesting to see what course Dane-z̲aa culture takes and whether younger generations will continue to display their oral narrative competence in similar ways. The Chezan stories have been maintained and curated orally in Dane-z̲aa culture, primarily because the trickster elements have resonance with trickster characters from their own tradition, because they reflect the Dane-z̲aa fur-trade experience which included cultural interaction with Europeans, and because the stories themselves have become part of Dane-z̲aa oral heritage. The Chezan stories illustrate how Dane-z̲aa culture is influenced by others, yet also expresses itself. In concluding the results of his 1919 study, Stith

Thompson writes: "The study shows that the comparative stability which has characterized the tales in their migration from people to people in the old world has been retained by them as they pass over to a people . . . of an entirely alien tradition . . . the tales might become as much at home on American soil as Hindu tales now seem native to France, Germany, or Norway" (1919:456–57). The pattern of structural stability that Thompson found for European tales in Native American contexts is explained by the processes of performative translation and oral curation that we have discussed here. And indeed, some ninety years later, we have found that the Ti-Jean tales are at home in Dane-z̲aa narrative tradition.

The Dane-z̲aa today still have two living generations of tradition bearers who continue the oral nature of their literacy. Their performative translation and oral curation of the Chezan stories is continuing to evolve. Sammy's recounting of the Chezan stories to Robin in 1999 and 2000 may well have been the first time they were told in English. In the future, we would like to ascertain who else in the Dane-z̲aa community knows and tells these stories. Do people from all the communities know them, or is it just this group of men from Doig? Do women tell them? Do children know them? What language are they told in? Until these questions are investigated, we hope the cycle of stories will continue through oral curation. We trust that Chezan will continue his adventures in Beaverland and that the Dane-z̲aa will continue to tell his stories in the way that Tommy Attachie has described each singing of a traditional song: "When You Sing It Now, Just Like New."

Earlier, we quoted Robin's statement that literature "is where stories become experience and experience gives rise to stories" (2001a:222). Sammy's Chezan stories describe a world that the Dane-z̲aa never knew from direct experience. Hence Sammy's use of "maybe" and "I guess" in his English rendition of the stories. The world these stories describe, however, is not really any more removed from direct experience than the world in which giant animals hunted people and Saya, the culture hero, overcame them and sent them beneath the earth. Chezan, like Saya, is a trickster-transformer who uses his wits to overcome more powerful adversaries.

The stories themselves are vivid experiences in a world without the distractions of television and rapid travel from one place to another. During long nights on the trapline or in small log cabins in the bush far from the nearest road, stories were a prime form of entertainment. The elders of this era, like Sammy's older brother, Jack, and their father, Aku, created windows into a world of imagination. Here kings and princesses and magic gifts of the white man's material culture became real in the voices of the storytellers. Here storytelling became an experience in its own right. Because the stories and the worlds they created were vivid and interesting, they retained their narrative integrity from one telling to another. As the stories remained alive from one telling to another and even one language to another, they were adroitly translated and carefully curated. They retained their integrity because if they lost it, they would lose their life as oral literature.

Storytellers can only find audiences for good stories performed in a lively and knowledgeable way. Ti-Jean in Beaverland had the benefit of being curated by great storytellers like Jack Acko and his brother Sammy. It had the added benefit of being recorded as an audio actuality, rather than being entombed as a list of traits and motifs. Through performative translation and oral curation, the story has retained its integrity as a window into First Nations oral literature and experience.

Appendix A: First Chezan Story Told by Sammy Acko and Recorded by Robin Ridington (Acko 1999)

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There's one story, Dane-z̲aa, Dane-z̲aa,
they have one story about Chezan.
Anybody tell you about that story?
This story, it's amazes me.
It sound like a . . .
long time ago there's little towns, things like that.
That's the way this story sound like, and I don't know where
Dane-z̲aa people pick that story from.
Maybe from Monias [white man] elder, or . . .
I didn't know where it come from.
But anyway, this story,
it's about magic tablecloth,
and then a magic fiddle, magic wine, and magic scissors.
Those four things. It's about four things.
Jack [Sammy's elder brother] used to tell us a story about that.
He was saying . . . There's two people, two brothers.
One, his brother's name is Chezan.
Chezan and his brother.

They travel on foot.
I guess those years there's no car or nothing.
So they gotta travel by foot.
Then from one place, they got to one little town.
From there they're heading straight towards that bigger town
where the king live.
They're headin' that way,
so this town they stop.
And then they told his brother first,
    "Are you willing to cook all night?"
His brother said,
    "No, I'm tired. I'll just going to go asleep."
But his brother Chezan is kind of crazy guys. They told him,
    "Are you going to cook all night?"
He said,
    "I will cook all night."
So from there he cook all night with the people.
The next day before they move,
they give him a tablecloth. They told him,
    "Anywhere you get hungry, anywhere, you carry this,
    you just spread it out
    and then there'll be a whole bunch of food on it.
    It will happen."
They told him.
They gave him that tablecloth.
So they move to another town.
They were walking.
Somewhere in the middle they were hungry.
He told his older brother,
    "Let's eat."
His brother said,
    "There's nothing. What we gonna eat?"
So
    "Wait,"
he told him.
He took that tablecloth out and he spread it
and then, there's all kinds of food in there.
So they eat, and then his brother told him,
    "Brother, this is something good one you have.
    Don't sell it.
    Don't give it away."
    "I'll do what I want with it,"
he told his brother.

So they went to next town.
And then that town, again they stopped to spend the night.
They told his brother again,
    "Are you going to sew all night . . . sewing?"
His brother said,
    "I'm tired. I'll just go to sleep."
Again, he sewed all night.
So next morning before they move,
they give him a pair of scissors and a cloth.
So they went to another town and he told his brother,
    "Do you want new clothes?"
    "Where you get those new clothes?"
he told him,
so he took his scissors out and that magic cloth.
It bring him all the nice beautiful clothes like these.
Sports jacket and all good clothes people have.
He dress his brother up.
So his brother again told him,
    "This is good thing you have.
    Don't sell it."
But he said,
    "That's mine.
    I can do whatever I want with it."
So they move on to another town.
Again they stop in this town,
and then they told his brother first, older brother,
    "Are you going to drink with us all night?"
He said,
    "I'm tired.
    I just want to go to sleep.
    I don't want to drink."
But his brother, Chezan, said,
    "I'll drink with you all night."
Drinking whatever liquor they have.
So he drink with them all night
and next day, they give him a bottle.
A bottle.
They told him,
    "This one, you finish it,
    it will be full again.
    Forever it's like that."
So he gives his brother a drink on his way too.
And then, the last one was,

there's scissors, bottle and tablecloth,
[Billy volunteers, "fiddle."]
Yeah, the last one was fiddle.
Then next town they stop
they told his brother again,
    "You going to play fiddle all night?"
He said,
    "No, I'm not crazy.
    I'll just go to sleep."
So again he play fiddle all night for them,
and the next day they give him a fiddle.
That's another magic fiddle.
So from there,
the next one they're coming into is city, just like a city.
Big town, and there's a king in there
and then he's got beautiful princess.
And they're headin' into this town.
I guess maybe they're having some kind of celebration or something.
So they're coming into this beautiful fine town.
And when they got into town,
I guess there's some kind of secret in that king's daughter . . .
Inside somewhere.
Every time new people come there
and then the king will them,
    "What's secret in my daughter?"
They mention anything; grass, leaves, ground, rocks, sky, everything.
Nobody mention the right one.
So every time they get the wrong one,
they put 'em in jail.
So they were all in jail.
Bunch of people, are skinny people in jail.
'Cause the day somebody got it right,
they will all go free.
So I guess his brother's scared to go there.
So he never went there,
but him, somehow, before they catch him
he told his brother,
    "Oh, boy, brother I want to go to bathroom."
But there's no bathroom.
So oh, boy, his brother give him heck.
    "There's nowhere in the bathroom around here.
    How you going to ever go to bathroom?
    This is fine town.

They just going to put you in jail.
The hat you got.
Why don't you poop in there?
Poop in there and then somehow carry it
and somewhere you can,
if you find a garbage,
you can throw it away."
He said,
"Okay,"
and then I guess he went between people somewhere fast
and he went to bathroom in his toque or some kind of hat.
He carry that.
So I guess they caught him.
He's hang onto that.
So the king told him,
"What secret is in my daughter?"
And then he open his poop in that hat.
"This one,"
he told him.
So the king got mad.
He said,
"Even these people who don't say that to my daughter
are in the bad place, in jail.
Put him in the worse place."
So they throw him in jail.
And then he got all those magic, everything with him.
When he went in jail he just opened those tablecloth
and all those jail people just got fatten up
and they were drinking and partying every night.
Somehow those two princess, those sisters, they found out.
So one of the princess told her sister,
"I like that magic he got.
There's some way we'll make him give it to us.
Why don't we ask him if we can buy it?"
So I guess they told him,
"If we can buy it from you—one."
He said,
"No. If I sleep,
I sleep inside the princess, inside the door,
by the door on the floor.
If I sleep in there I'll give 'em this,
this tablecloth or scissors."
So he said,

    “No, he’s too dirty.
    He can’t sleep in my doorway.
    He’s too dirty,”
but her sister told him,
    “It’s ᴏᴋ. It’s not going to kill you.
    After he sleeps there
    I will wash the place really good anyway.”
So she said,
    “ᴏᴋ,”
and he sleep there by that door.
So he give ’em that scissors, I think.
And next one is that tablecloth.
Tablecloth.
And then he sleep in the middle of that floor,
closer to her bed.
In the middle, he sleep there.
And the next one, the next one was that fiddle.
The fiddle.
He sleep right close to that princess bed.
The last one is that wine bottle or whatever bottle it is.
And then he sleep right under the princess bed.
Underneath.
He give that drink to the princess,
and he end up sleeping with that princess.
And then that princess told him,
    “You going to have court again.
    And if my dad told you what secret is inside me, tell him,
    ‘Big star up in the air, that’s inside me.’
    Tell him that and don’t tell him that you’re with me.”
So I guess he’s back in jail
and then when they took all the jail people,
they all went to court
and then I guess it’s his turn.
They put him in front of king
and then king told him,
    “What secret is in my daughter?”
He told him,
    “Big star up in the air.”
So he, the king have to keep his word.
He marry the princess.
So this kind of story amazes me. I don’t know where it come from.

Appendix B: Folktale Types and Motifs Found in the First Chezan Story Told by Sammy Acko and Recorded by Robin Ridington (Acko 1999)

Tale Type References (Aarne and Thompson 1961)

577	*The King's Tasks*. The three brothers; through kindness one brother receives magic objects which are used to gain princess.
592 I	*The Magic Object and Powers*. Mentions magic fiddle
851 A	*Turandot*. Princess sets riddles for her suitors to be answered on pain of death.
853 IV	*The Princess Caught*, (a) The hero is imprisoned and escapes by means of his magic tablecloth, purse, and fiddle. (b) By his magic fiddle he captures the princess and will release her only if she says no to all his questions. (c) By this means he gets her into bed and marries her.

Motif Index References (Thompson 1932–1936)

D810	*Magic object a gift*
D817	*Magic object received from grateful person*
D1470.2	*Provisions received from magic object*
D1472.1.8	*Magic table-cloth supplies food and drink*
D1472.1.17	*Magic bottle supplies drink*
D1395	*Magic object frees person from prison*
H335	*Tasks assigned suitors*
H508.2	*Bride offered to man who can find answer to question*
L13	*Compassionate youngest son—rewarded*
L161	*Lowly hero marries princess*
T68	*Princess offered as prize*
T121	*Unequal marriage*

Notes

1. The Aarne-Thompson classification system for comparing plot summaries of European and Near Eastern folktales was first published in 1910, in Finnish, by Antti Aarne. Stith Thompson translated the work, enlarged it in scope and detail, and published it in 1928 under both their names as *The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography*. Although numerous regional motif and type indexes from around the world have been developed and published over the years, the Aarne-Thompson bibliography continued to be a standard reference work for comparative study of European folktales until 2004, when Hans-Jörg Uther revised and expanded it in his three-volume work, *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography, Based on the System of Antti Aarne*

and Stith Thompson. Uther maintains the Aarne-Thompson tale type numbers but revises many of the tale titles and descriptions and updates the bibliography with more recent references to documented variants (primarily from European sources).

2. Amber first wrote this paper in 2002 for a narrative folklore class at Western Kentucky University. For this volume it was greatly revised and expanded by both Robin and Amber. We are thankful to Dr. Martin Lovelace, who reviewed a draft of the paper and provided valuable comments.

3. We welcome collaboration with bilingual French-English colleagues in the future so that we can together bridge this language barrier and make use of all the relevant sources. Following are some additional sources that we are aware of but that we have not been able to use as we have not been successful in locating translations from French:

Paul Delarue and Marie-Louise Teneze, *Le conte populaire francais* (1957). This French folktale index includes a survey of North American Collections primarily from eastern provinces and states.

Evelyne Voldeng, *Les meìmoires de Ti-Jean: Espace intercontinental du heìros des contes franco-ontariens* (1994). This book is about Ti-Jean stories in oral circulation in Ontario and about their origins in both the literature and oral history of France.

In 1946, Joseph M. Carriere summarized the state of French folklore studies in North America for an English audience in *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 10 (4): 219–26. In this article Carriere notes research in francophone communities in Quebec, New Brunswick, Louisiana, Missouri, and Michigan's Upper Peninsula, but he does not mention any stories found circulating in Native American groups. His footnotes, with detailed references to French-American sources, may be of interest to others studying French folklore in North America.

4. Toelken (1996:39) suggests the twin laws of dynamism and conservatism to explain variation and stability in folklore process.

5. Regional variation through oral transmission is also known in folklore as "oicotypification," and a regional variant is described as an "oicotype." Von Sydow developed this term in 1927 to explain the process of cultural adaptation of stories as they are passed along from tale teller to tale teller through time and space. The term was borrowed from botany, where it refers to a local or regional form of a plant. Von Sydow used the term in his extension of the comparative method to refocus study on living traditions instead of texts (von Sydow 1932).

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