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# Pathways

Approaches to the Study  
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# EXPLORING URBAN AND ETHNIC FOLKLORE: STRATEGIES IN RESEARCH AND PEDAGOGY

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THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT coupled with the emergence of significantly large ethnic communities – not only in the United States but also in the Nordic countries – poses particular challenges of both a methodological and pedagogical nature in folkloristics. While nineteenth century conceptions of the folk situated the people who were to be engaged and studied as primarily rural, lower class and generally poorly educated, most if not all scholars of folklore have, over the years, come to recognize the failings of this deliberately narrow definition of folk. Instead, the position perhaps most famously articulated by Alan Dundes (1977) in his well-known essay, “Who are the folk?” informs the majority of contemporary research and the way in which the concept of “folk” is presented in the classroom. While Dundes’s concept of folk group may be overly broad to be useful in many pedagogical situations – given that a group as small as two could define a “folk” (something which borders more on the study of idiosyncratic behavior), the notion of a close homogeneous group stands as an apt replacement, at least in the context of the classroom. Students are easily able to identify folk groups once they understand the ideas behind the notions “close” (meaning that the people know and interact

with each other) and "homogeneous" (meaning that the people themselves recognize that they share certain cultural traits that define their group). In this concept of group, there is a sense of self-definition: members of the group recognize that they are part of the group. Indeed, part of the problem with Dundes's definition is the level of confusion among students prompted by the suggestion that a folk group simply requires that two people have something in common (Oring 1986:4).

A short example might illustrate this problem – a student in my Korean folklore class proposed a fieldwork topic exploring traditional practices among Korean American smokers. Open to most suggestions, and curious to discover whether there were particular traditional expressive practices among this group, I allowed the student to proceed with the project. What became clear in the first few days of fieldwork, however, was that there was no group that defined itself as such. Because there was no clear, self-defined group of Korean American smokers, the student ended up documenting numerous idiosyncratic behaviors and certain expressive forms shared by smokers in general. In neither case was there anything particularly Korean or Korean American about the collected expressions. Of course, more advanced students may well be able to utilize Dundes's concept of "group" or to extend the notion of a close homogeneous group to the more subtle idea of the "imagined community" proposed by Benedict Anderson (1983) in his study of nationalism and thus explore folk groups that the limiting definition of "close homogeneous group" excludes. Although Anderson's term describes a group that is neither close nor particularly homogeneous, it nonetheless aptly describes most folk groups in many respects. Regardless of the definition of "folk" that one ultimately uses, I find that it is helpful for students to think of folk groups as self-defined groups that share certain expressions which reinforce the group members' sense of belonging. It is these expressions that are of interest to the student of folklore and should, at least in the introductory classroom setting, be the object of field studies.

The second part of the equation – the lore – is usually not difficult for experienced folklorists to either identify or articulate. However, it is frequently a stumbling block for students, and certainly another significant failing in the aforementioned fieldwork project on Korean American smokers. Lore is most

frequently equated with traditional expression, an equation that neither enlightens nor assists, given the problematic nature of tradition. Certainly, the nineteenth century folklorists had a much easier time of things by setting generational constraints on the concept of lore, and endorsing a position of "the older the better." If it did not pass the subjective litmus test of perceived age, the item would be ignored. Since contemporary folklorists generally recognize that traditions are frequently invented, and that something can be said to exist "in tradition," long before a generation or two has intervened, the very concept of tradition is one that is both central to our studies – and our teaching – and one that is problematic. While I do not intend to provide here an answer to this thorny question, I will propose a strategy that I find useful in my own research and my teaching, namely that an expression exists "in tradition" whenever the members of a self-defined group who perpetuate (or perhaps intend to perpetuate) the particular expression perceive it to be part of their "traditions." The result of such rhetorical sleight-of-hand is a position that allows for the exploration of the dialectic tension that exists between the individual (as a member of the group) and the tradition (that is defined by the individuals in the group) (Chesnutt 1999). In short, if the members of a group – which is self-defined – say or acknowledge in other ways that a certain form of expression is traditional for their group, then it is part of their folklore. As noted above, these expressions largely inform group membership.

The positions outlined here may not seem particularly enlightening at first glance, but when taken in light of the complexities of the urban situation, in which groups emerge, fracture and disappear with remarkable speed, and in which certain expressions may be practiced for only a brief period of time, these positions do help in the identification of subjects worthy for continued study. Furthermore, as new groups emerge, and as old groups redefine themselves, the acknowledgement of the remarkably dynamic nature of tradition in the urban environment allows one to identify certain processes that seem to inform much of the innovation that shapes emergent traditions. Homi Bhabha, writing about the profound changes attendant the emergence of multi-cultural societies notes, "These hyphenated, hybridized cultural conditions are also forms of a vernacular cosmopolitanism that emerges in multicultural societies and explicitly ex-

ceeds a particular national location" (1998:23). The folklore of the city is at once linked to the immediate locale of the city, but also linked to the distant locales of countries of origin and any intervening way stations along the road to the city exceeding the sense of a particular nationalism at the same time that it installs a sense of remarkable localization. In the new multi-cultural city the coherent sense of the nation that informed early folkloristics is highly problematic given the "vernacular[ly] cosmopolitan" urban environment which Bhabha proposes. Indeed one may well speak of an emergent form of cultural nomadism where expressions from one's own and other groups are borrowed, modified, discarded, recycled, reinvented and renewed in an ever-quickening spiral of cultural innovation.

In this short essay I explore, using examples from my own experiences of folklore research in several large American cities, some of these processes that animate tradition both in ethnic groups and occupational groups in urban settings. While I use American cities for most of my examples, similar phenomena can be found in many Nordic cities as well. It is quite possible that these processes are not limited to urban areas; rather, I suggest that these processes are made all the more prominent by the urban environment, an environment in which, "violent edges, colliding turfs, unstable boundaries, peculiarly juxtaposed lifespaces, and enclaves of outrageous wealth and despair" define the landscape (Soja 1996:448). In my work among Korean American communities – and I deliberately refer to them in the plural, as there is no monolithic Korean American community, no sense of true cohesion that people outside of the group may want to propose – and among paramedics – a group defined by occupation – I have been struck time and again by several inter-related processes that influence the contours of the traditional expressions of these groups. None of these processes are unique to the urban environment; rather, it is in the contemporary multi-cultural urban environment that they become foregrounded.

Narratives and other forms of expressive culture that reveal a heightened awareness among tradition participants of the man-made environment constitute the first, and perhaps most striking, of these phenomena. In the city, the man-made environment more than anything else governs the circulation of

people and goods, and has a profound effect on how people interact. Despite the seeming anonymity of many spaces in the city – one mini-mall is pretty much like any other mini-mall – folkloric expression among the groups who use these spaces have a transformative quality and allow people to develop “a sense of place.” One sees this type of transformation in places sought out by Korean American students interested in defining an area of the city with which they can identify, and among paramedics as they use storytelling to draw a “conceptual map” of the city, labeling certain areas as dangerous and others as less so (Tangherlini 1998; Tangherlini 1999b; Tangherlini 2000). The complementary processes of developing a conceptual map that is shared among members of a group and of infusing a space with meaning so that it becomes a place (a locus for making and conveying meaning) both contribute to the dynamic and at times violent cultural landscape of the city. Interestingly, both of these interrelated processes frequently depend on narrative traditions – the conceptual map exists only in the narrative tradition, and through narrative memory becomes attached to place. As more and more memory attaches to a place through repeated tellings, the initially vague traces of experience become etched more deeply into the surface of the conceptual map. The subsequent interaction of conceptual maps of various groups at times vying for use of one and the same place – perhaps best seen in the “tagging” of buildings by various street gangs who lay claim to entire neighborhoods – lead to a dynamic perhaps unique to the city (Kim 1995).

The remaining three processes – which are in essence processes that relate to the classic folkloric notion of variation – are perhaps most prevalent among groups (and sub groups) that use ethnicity as a primary factor in their group definition. As such, these processes may not be particularly urban, except that ethnically defined groups tend to cluster in urban areas – and it is in urban areas that one gets population concentrations great enough that people begin to perceive themselves as a group. The first of these processes can be termed “revival” and is well-known from ethnic communities throughout the world. Revival frequently takes the form of the stylized recreation by immigrants or their children of traditions from the country of origin in their new country of settlement. In many cases, expressions that were originally village-situated have

now been transplanted to a distinctly urban environment. To a large degree, this form of expression endorses a romantic, and at times nationalistic, notion of the "homeland" (Tangherlini 2001; Anderson 1983).

Another intriguing process is that of hybridization, in which traditions from the country of origin are merged with traditions primarily from the dominant culture of the country of settlement to form new types of traditional expression which are unique to the group. Hybridization can take place in many different ways and it is at times hard to discern to what extent a tradition is a product of hybridization, appropriation or sheer invention. Indeed, all of the processes I describe here should be considered as conceptual categories and not as clearly delimited divisions. Certain expressions exist in the gray area between categories and, accordingly, the notion of a sliding scale linking all of these concepts together might be helpful.

Along with revival and hybridization, a third and equally important process is that of appropriation. Appropriated traditions are ones that are part of the traditional expressions of any other group that become part of the target group's traditional expressive repertoire. In some instances, the appropriation is not based on the interaction of cultural groups, but rather based on the pressures of globalization and the market economy; a clear example of this is the emergence of American-style Halloween celebrations in Denmark in recent years. At times, appropriation is part of the immigrant group members' concerted effort to align their culture with a dominant culture – a way to "fit in." As such, this type of traditional alignment may be seen as a tactic in which a subordinate group makes a conscious decision to claim the authority of the dominant culture through mimicry (de Certeau 1984). In this sense, appropriation is a tactic that aligns with cultural assimilation. Finally, at other times, the appropriation endorses an oppositional position – a means for group members to take something and "make it their own," a tactical engagement with the dominant culture exhibiting a distinct sense of resistance (de Certeau 1984). A clear example of such appropriation is the playful mimicry by young Danes of West Asian heritage of the stereotype of the *indvandrer* [immigrant] (a part of the traditional repertoire of members of the dominant folk group) portrayed in a computer game named *Mujaffah spillet* (aka *Perker spillet*) available on the web site of the Danish National Radio.

It is of course hard to distinguish what motivates the individual tradition participants to appropriate the traditional expressions of another group and make them "their own." One doubtlessly can find appropriated folk expressions in a particular group that are engaged from an assimilationist standpoint by some group members and by a resistive position by other group members. As Wicker notes in a discussion of both assimilation and hybridization,

The observation – quite trivial in itself – that the integration of migrants is not to be understood as straightforward assimilation, nor as a uniform transition from one (cultural) system to another, nor, for that matter, as a passively suffered ordeal determined by cultural proclivities, leads us to conclude that we are dealing with a complex, reciprocal process involving social actors from different backgrounds who interact and negotiate meanings. (1996:16)

Wicker's observations on the complexity of the interaction between immigrant groups and between immigrant groups and the dominant cultural group shed light on the complexity of the processes influencing the emergence of and variation in traditional expression. Interestingly, none of the processes of variation in tradition outlined here are exclusive of each other, and frequently all are present to some degree or another in the traditional expression of any single group.

Although identifying the processes is an important step to understanding the dynamics of folklore in urban and multi-cultural environments, perhaps even more pressing is recognizing the motivations that animate these processes. Michel de Certeau, in his seminal work on the study of everyday life, proposes the concepts of strategy and tactic, concepts which are quite useful in understanding how folk expression can be deployed by disenfranchised or marginal groups in the face of assimilationist and at times racist pressures (1984). The expressions that arise in such politically charged situations are often ones that have emerged through one of the aforementioned processes, and it is the responsibility of the folklorist to not only identify the emergent expression, record it and reveal its genealogy, but also to explore the motivations of the individu-



als who create the expression for choosing that particular expression at that particular moment. When these processes and the motivations of the tradition participants animating these processes are coupled to the various conceptual maps of the city that inform the actions of each and every member of a folk group, one can begin to develop a "thick" understanding of the urban cultural landscape (Geertz 1973).

## CONCEPTUAL MAPS: MAPPING IDENTITY ONTO THE CITY

In a study of storytelling among a group of paramedics in the San Francisco Bay Area, I was struck time and again by the importance that was placed on location in their storytelling (Tangherlini 1998). A short narrative culled from the transcripts of the storytelling demonstrates this phenomenon.

We got a Code Two call for a nosebleed and we're driving down Fourteenth Ave right near Highland Hospital – this is a pretty gnarly part of Oakland, lots of scary shit happens there. So there's a car wreck right in the middle of the road. So we pull over and one car's horn is stuck and people are running around and I'm trying to talk on the radio, "5-2-5 we're on the scene of a car wreck on Fourteenth Avenue."

In the meantime, this guy walks up next to me and says, "Hey man, you know my buddy there has been shot!" So I get out and sure enough this guy walking around on scene from this car accident has been shot in the chest with a shotgun! And he's all gray and ashen and his whole chest is riddled, and he's got like 300 holes from his neck all the way down. So we grab him and throw him in the back of the ambulance and put him on oxygen and start working on him. And his friend who was driving gets in the back of the ambulance.

And he's sitting there and then he starts spitting blood on the floor of the ambulance! I'm like, "Excuse me, are you hurt somewhere?" And he's

like "Uh, I've just been shot in the back." I'm like "What?!" And I lift up his shirt and he's been shot in the back twice with a .38 or something. So in some parts of Oakland, like over by Highland, it's sort of the Wild West thing – who ever has got the quickest draw wins.

In the story, the medic Lars, provides considerable detail about the location of the event, and through that narrative gesture gives his audience of other paramedics an evaluative cue, marking the area as "dangerous," and dubbing it "the wild west." Repeated tellings of this story and others like it have a cumulative effect on the tradition participants and as such contribute to the constantly evolving conceptual map of the city that influences profoundly the way that the paramedics interact with the city (Tangherlini 1999a).

In a somewhat related case, Korean Americans, reacting to the destructive riots of 1992, made frequent references in their "riot" narratives to place names and vanished landmarks (Tangherlini 1999b). As such, the narratives began the process of reclaiming a piece of the city that had been forcibly rewritten from a locus for Korean American identity formation into a locus of extraordinary violence (Tangherlini 1999b). While the Korean American traces could be read palimpsestically back onto the landscape, the repeated retracing of those marks helped reestablish the area – at least conceptually – as an area marked as Korean American. Other folklorists working with the city have noticed similar phenomena, be it in the study of graffiti art which leaves physical traces on the otherwise anonymous environment, or in the study of public performances which make visible the connection between a group and an otherwise undifferentiated place (Kim 1995; Kim 1999; Adams 1999; Finnegan 1998). In short, the urban environment, perhaps by its very anonymity, tends to lead groups to emphasize the role of geography in their cultural expressions. While folklorists are not new to the relationship between folk expression and geography, what the urban environment reveals is the profound degree to which people's traditional practices affect the geography – the interaction between place and tradition is a two-way street (Tangherlini 1999a).

## REVIVAL, HYBRIDIZATION AND APPROPRIATION

The revival of tradition is also intimately related in the urban setting to the desire of various groups to make their "mark" on the urban landscape. Many revival traditions take place in decidedly public spaces and represent a public enactment of a part of an expressive culture that group members feel represents both their group and, importantly in this context, their heritage. As Anderson points out in his work on nationalism, nations frequently celebrate their glorious past as a means for deriving legitimacy (1983). In the rough and tumble of the multicultural urban landscape, one similarly finds that groups engage in deliberately revivalist traditions that signal to other groups who may not know them that they too have a long and legitimating history behind them. In Los Angeles, for example, there is a burgeoning revivalist movement among one-point-five and second generation Korean Americans to perform rural folk rituals such as the *Chisin Palpki* (Treading on the Earth Spirits) celebration at the New Year. In the current urban form, musicians wander from business to business, playing their drums and gongs and imploring the spirits to help protect the businesses in the coming year (Tangherlini 2001). While the tradition has been effectively abandoned in contemporary rural Korea, its enactment in contemporary urban America suggests the ability of performances such as these to continue to create meaning for tradition participants in new contexts and in unexpected ways.

Although revivalist traditions are by nature conservative, they are not, interestingly enough, marked by ethnocentric attitudes. Rather, just the opposite appears to obtain. In the tradition mentioned above, the young musicians who play often go to great lengths to make inclusive gestures to store owners who are not of Korean heritage and who do not know the tradition. It may well be that those reviving traditions feel most comfortable with letting out-group members participate, since group members feel little threat that another group might appropriate a tradition that has such a strong and clear connection – at least in the presentation of that ritual – to the in-group's country of origin.

The sense of group ownership of particular expressive forms – and a sense that "belonging" can be measured according to the degree to which one en-

gages in these practices – seems to be heightened in the city, where numerous groups exist side-by-side. This proximity of groups who neither share a common history nor a common culture also leads to intriguing changes in the traditions of all of these groups. Among the more intriguing of these developments is the hybridization of traditional expressions, where one group borrows from another group and varies their earlier practices to accommodate these newer practices. A clear example of such hybridization can be found in the celebration of Korean American weddings which often incorporate aspects of a “traditional” Korean wedding with those of a “traditional” American wedding. Interestingly, this fusion of wedding styles is also common in South Korea, and it is not entirely clear whether Korean American weddings are following the lead set in South Korea, or whether the development of a clearly hybrid wedding form is an example of parallel evolution (Kendall 1996). One of the main questions to ask however, is not how the hybrid form came about, but rather what might motivate the tradition participants to engage this type of variation. Certainly, traditions are innovative, and given a new cultural environment, tradition participants have always shown a fascination with the new – an amusing aspect of tradition since institutions who deploy folklore for particular political purposes frequently allude to the conservative, ageless nature of tradition, a position decidedly antithetical to the extraordinary innovation that one encounters in contemporary traditions (Anderson 1983).

### HYBRIDIZATION, APPROPRIATION, ASSIMILATION AND RESISTANCE

One can speculate that some of the motivation for both the hybridization of tradition and the appropriation of tradition is a desire on the part of group members to “fit in.” People who have recently moved to a new city, for example, often try to find others of similar background – in many cases, ethnic background – and continue to engage the traditions with which they are most familiar. Simultaneously, these groups look around to forge alliances with other groups, and to begin the process of carving out a niche in the multicultural

urban environment. This type of cultural maneuvering necessarily includes some form of negotiation since group members rarely agree on what they should do to set themselves apart as a group, and what they should do to signal a desire to increase their membership in a larger community. In situations where an immigrant group is in a clear minority in relation to a clearly dominant ethnic group – certainly the situation that obtains for most of Scandinavia – there may be a strong impetus based on overt pressure from the members of the dominant cultural group for the immigrants to adopt certain well-known traditions of the dominant culture. At the same time members of the dominant culture may be less open to hybridization in their own traditions. Susan Keefe, describing the differences between “ethnic culture,” “ethnic group membership,” and “ethnic identity,” touches on some of the complexities of the interaction between members of different ethnic groups as they negotiate the degree of cultural overlap they want to engage:

Ethnic culture is the component of ethnicity that refers to that pattern of behaviors and beliefs that sets a cultural group apart from others. For recent immigrant groups [...] that pattern is the “traditional” culture brought from the homeland. For more established groups who remain unassimilated [...] the pattern of cultural difference is more a product of the American experience. Ethnic group membership is the social component of ethnicity. It refers to the network of people with whom an individual is in contact and the ethnic affiliation of those people and the groups they form. Finally ethnic identity is used to refer to the perceptions of and affiliation with ethnic groups and cultures. It consists of the identification of one’s own versus other ethnic groups and the kind and degree of sentiment attached to each group and its heritage. Ethnic identity may come about through both self-motivated allegiance and forced identity due to prejudice and discrimination. (Keefe 1992:37)

At the same time as immigrants may be striving to “fit in” and maintain a sense of their own cultural identity, members of the dominant cultural group may

well be trying to exclude immigrants. One indeed finds numerous exclusionary forms including the well-known onslaught of contemporary legend tradition which reinforces negative stereotypes of immigrant groups, equating them on some level with earlier categories of supernatural outside threat (Lindow 1989; Tangherlini 1995).

In recent years in Copenhagen, there has been a marked rise in anti-immigrant rhetoric, perhaps best reflected in the dramatic rise of the *Dansk folkeparti* in 1999 and 2000, and other decidedly anti-immigrant statements made by political gadfly Mogens Glistrup. While the reaction among many Danes to such deliberately ethnocentric and racist expression is one of abhorrence (hence numerous charges brought against Glistrup for his proposal to sell women of West Asian heritage living in Denmark to a South American country), there is without doubt a significant anti-immigrant sentiment among many Danes. Danes of non-Danish heritage (euphemistically referred to as *ny-danskere* [new danes]) and their parents find themselves in a difficult cultural position – at once trying to maintain a sense of cultural identity that is not identical with that of the dominant group and trying to fit in to this new cultural environment. At every corner, they find themselves confronted with a no-win situation: encouraged to abandon their own cultural heritage in favor of Danish traditions, and excluded from those very traditions by the same people who encourage them to “assimilate.” This situation leads to an intriguing process in which aspects of Danish culture are appropriated by the young Danes of non-Danish heritage and used as a tactic of resistance. No better example of this can be found than the *Mujaffah-spillet* mentioned briefly above.

In the game, which is available for download from the website of the Danish national radio, *Danmarks Radio*, contestants play the role of a young immigrant who must modify his car at his cousin's garage, a process that helps him gain “street respect” points. The young man then must cruise the streets of inner Copenhagen, collecting gold chains (to pay for the car modifications) and used condoms (to enable him to have sex with blond women) (Figure 1). The first area he cruises, Nørrebro, is part of many Copenhagen residents' conceptual map of the city, marked as a place where many immigrants live. By driving these streets in the game, the player – in the person of a young immigrant –

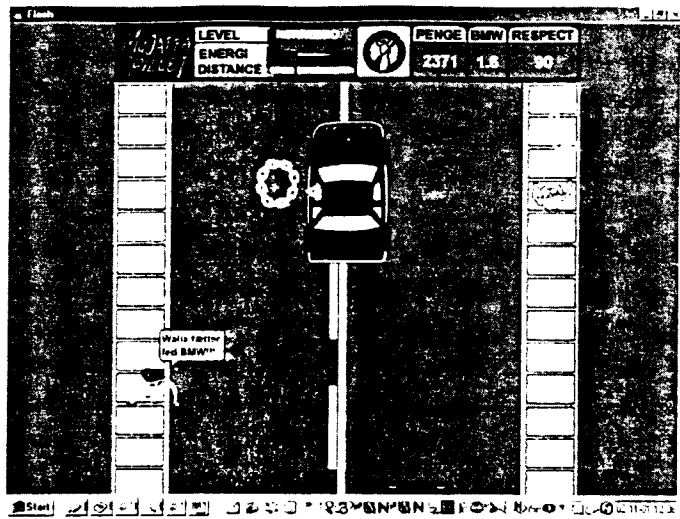


Figure 1: Cruising Nørrebro (note used condom, gold chains, BMW multiplier, street respect points, cousin returning greeting wearing gold chain and baseball hat, and blond woman).

effectively reinforces this conceptual mapping of the city. When the game character has sex with a woman or says hello to his cousin, he gains a certain number of “street respect” points, which are then multiplied by the BMW factor. After each segment, the player returns to his cousin’s garage, where he can have repairs done “without a receipt” and where he includes various accoutrements to the car, including a Taj Mahal mirror hanger, a large rear spoiler, multiple exhaust pipes, and an enormous sound system (Figure 2). At the end of the game, depending on the number of points scored, the player receives a ranking, classifying him either as a “green grocer’s assistant,” “shady street hustler,” “local gang leader,” “ethnic playboy,” or “Top-dawg gangsta boss” (Figure 3). In short, the game makes use of many of the current stereotypes of young male immigrants of West Asian heritage in Copenhagen and, by extension, all Danish cities. Furthermore, it uses the conceptual map of the city shared by many Copenhagen residents and, in so doing, reinforces this conceptual inscription.

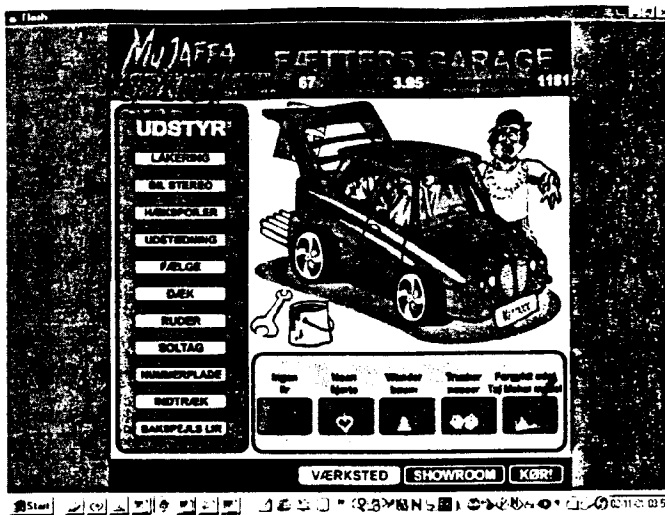


Figure 2: Cousin's garage (along the left hand-side, options to change paint, stereo, spoiler, exhaust, rims, tires, windows, sunroof, license plate, upholstery and rearview mirror hanger. Here the Taj Mahal window hanger has been chosen).

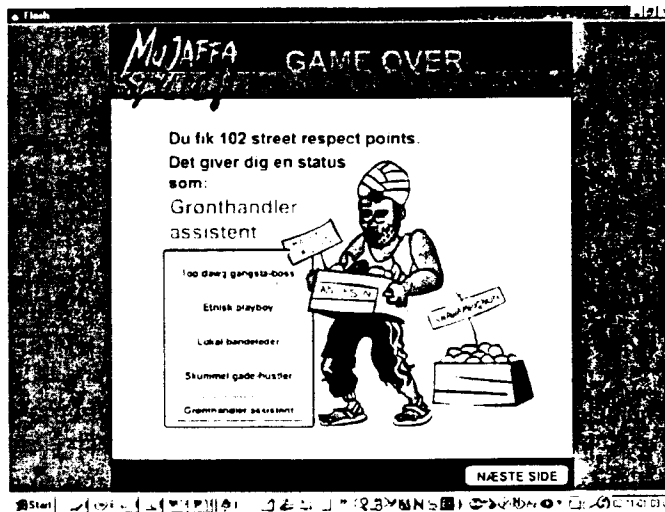


Figure 3: Possible classifications.



In defense of keeping such a blatantly racist game on their website, the Danish radio said that the game was meant to be funny and to initiate a debate over stereotypes – none of my informants (both of Danish and non-Danish heritage) felt that the game enabled any such debate. Rather, they all saw it contributing to reinforcement of already existing stereotypes. As one of my informants quipped, however, the game could just as easily be dubbed the “Brian spillet” and, with only few modifications (the location and the color of the guide’s skin), the game could accurately depict many of the stereotypes circulating among urban residents of the young rural Danish male, reflecting their stereotypical penchant for modifying and racing cars. Indeed, the initial impetus among Danes of West Asian heritage for modifying cars may well have been a gesture toward appropriation and, to a certain extent, assimilation. But, as with car modification in Southern California which started as a markedly pan-ethnic pursuit in a time of heightened racism in the United States, car modification in its current form is seen by those who practice it as a means for setting oneself apart from other groups (Tangherlini 2001).

Interestingly, certain aspects of the Mujaffah game quickly became popular among the young men whom were seemingly parodied in the game itself. Among my informants, there were several young men of West Asian heritage who would frequently greet each other with the game’s greeting, “Walla min fætter” and, despite their own fluency in Danish, would address each other in the broken Danish that characterizes the game’s narrator. While some Danes have used this type of playfulness as proof positive that the game is not offensive, just the opposite is true. Indeed, the young Danes of non-Danish heritage find themselves in a difficult position – their friends of Danish heritage may well find the game amusing. Accordingly, there is likely strong pressure not to openly criticize the game. Instead, the Danes of non-Danish heritage engage the game using a tactic of resistance. They do this in a decidedly post-modern manner by installing the main premise of the game (that this is how this group behaves), evident in their greetings to each other, and simultaneously subverting it, tacitly acknowledging amongst themselves that their playful engagement of the representation of their cohort is one that avers and mocks the stereotype (Hutcheon 1988:3). In the comments of my informants, it became clear that,

from their perspective, when Danes laughed at the game, they were assenting to the depiction of Danes of non-Danish heritage presented in the game. When my informants laughed at the game, however, they were laughing at the Danes laughing at them. According to one informant, while such mockery of the beliefs of the dominant culture may not win the battle against ethnocentrism, guerilla tactics such as this allow the disenfranchised an opportunity to pull themselves up a bit and give them the energy and solidarity necessary to continue their struggle against such negative stereotyping, even when members of the dominant cultural group feel that they are putting them down (regardless of official disclaimers to the contrary).

## CONCLUSION

The urban environment and an emergent multi-culturalism pose certain challenges to researchers and students alike. In the urban environment, the connection between folklore and place becomes foregrounded; people vie for control of spaces, imbue them with meanings and turn undifferentiated spaces into places. No longer does the apparent one-way street of place affecting cultural expression obtain. Rather, in the city, awareness of the two-way street between place and cultural expression (that was likely there all along) becomes heightened. Furthermore, as cities are usually the first place immigrants settle, the urban environment is a locus where the negotiation of cultural identity is played out in public. The interactions among immigrant groups, and the interactions among these groups and a dominant cultural group are ones marked by constant negotiation. It is these negotiated processes that are inextricably linked to those of variation that deserve scrutiny by researchers and students of folklore alike. It is through our continued explorations of these processes and the motivations of the individual tradition participants that animate these processes that folklorists can contribute to the on-going examinations of cultural change and development, and can assist in efforts to eradicate cultural misunderstanding, ethnocentrism and racism.

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