

Editor's Column

Readers of *Oral Tradition* will find in this issue an exceptionally rich and varied assortment of topics. The six essays presented here discuss texts and performances in eight different languages, several of them appearing for the very first time in the journal's pages. As George E. Dunkel ("The Oral Style of the *R̥gveda*") points out in his formulaic analysis of the oldest sacred text of Hinduism, no discussion of *R̥gvedic* orality appears in any of the previous 34 volumes of *Oral Tradition*—a surprising omission given the undeniably oral character of the *R̥gveda*. One has to go all the way back to *Oral Tradition* Volume 4, Number 3, to find even brief mention of the text that stands at the center of Gabriel McGuire's study of what might be called the political ecology of literary genres ("Epic Inside-Out: *Qız Jibek* and the Politics of Genre in Kazakh Oral Literature"): taking the Kazakh "lyric epic" *Qız Jibek* as his example, McGuire explores the strategies used by Soviet scholars to accommodate oral literature within the ideology of the Soviet state. The language and texts discussed by Andrew Cowell ("Coast Miwok Oral Tradition: Grammar and Ethnopoetic Organization in a California Context") represent another first for *Oral Tradition*—and not just for *Oral Tradition*, since Cowell's article includes the first-ever publication of narrative texts in Coast Miwok, a language of the Indigenous inhabitants of the region north of San Francisco Bay. Using texts provided in the 1960s by Sarah Ballard, the last traditional speaker of Coast Miwok, Cowell demonstrates that even fragmentary narratives can exhibit notable verbal artistry. The Basque tradition of *bertsolaritza* will already be familiar to long-time readers of the journal (see Volume 22, Number 2), but Larraitz Ariznabarreta Garabieta ("Founding Fathers, Patrons, Mothers, and Other *Bertso*-School Groupies") generates new perspectives by examining the way *bertso* schools have shaped the modern performance and reception of *bertsolaritza*. Richard K. Wolf ("The Musical Poetry of Endangered Languages: Kota and Wakhi Poem-Songs in South and Central Asia"), drawing on extensive fieldwork in South India and Afghanistan, reveals the productive, vitalizing force of the "poem-song" in two endangered languages, which, again, appear in this journal for the first time. Finally, Cheikh Tidiane Lo explores the importance of "voiced texts" in the contemporary practice of Sufism in West Africa, with special emphasis on texts in West African languages ("Dynamics of Voiced Poetry: Popular Education through Wolof and Soninke Sufi Religious Texts").

These brief descriptions hardly do justice to the six articles contained in this issue—but I hope they suffice to justify my description of the issue as "exceptionally rich and varied." In the coming months readers can look forward to the arrival of another collection of essays that will be no less rich, although it will be more narrowly focused on a common theme: Volume 35, Number 2, to appear in the early summer of 2022, will be a special issue on Iranian religious traditions edited by Philip Kreyenbroek and Khanna Omarkhali. In the meantime, I hope that readers will enjoy the riches of the present issue.

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