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The very same year that ethnologists and folklorists struggled with the concept "tradition"—this being their subject of inquiry (Honko and Laaksonen 1983: 233-249)—, a sociologist published a whole book on the subject. So once again, we see that our academic neighbors are providing us with the necessary theoretical framework.

Shils, who together with T. Parsons and G. Homans developed the theory of functional sociology in the late 1940's and early 1950's, wrote this book with the intention to reintroduce into the social sciences the dimension of time, emphasizing thereby the significance of the past for the present. Synchronic approaches, be they functional or structural, leave the bearing of the past in deep shadow; significantly, the new *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* (1968) does not carry the heading "tradition" at all!

The framework outlined by Shils is of primary importance for the "tradition sciences" as ethnology and folkloristics have lately become labeled. Shils' book merits careful study, as it will help solve many problems that sciences of tradition are struggling with. Were one to turn his propositions into questions, one would have the basis for a research program. Here we can but point out a few of the main points of importance to ethnological and folkloristic inquiry.

Shils' definition of "tradition" is very broad: tradition is a *traditum*, anything which is transmitted or handed down from the past to the present . . . having been created through human actions . . . [of] thought and imagination, it is handed down from one generation to the next" (12). This definition includes both the substance which is being transmitted and the process of transmission. It does not contain the aspects of "how" and "why": how the process of transmission goes on and why it behaves as it does. In the rest of the book, Shils discusses mostly the "how"; the "why" he leaves to his followers to determine.

Shils' definition is somewhat broader than we usually take tradition to mean, but it answers well the problem of "rural traditional culture" vs. "urban modern non-traditional culture." Both are built of tradition complexes; however, these complexes differ as to their kind.

What is the substance of tradition? Shils answers: "All accomplished patterns of the human mind, all patterns of belief or modes of thinking, all achieved patterns of social relationships, all technical practices, and all physical artifacts or natural objects [that] are susceptible to becoming objects of transmission; each is capable of becoming a tradition" (16). This amounts approximately to a full catalogue of human culture. The working out of this catalogue in detail, the enumeration and description of the classes of entities which form the substance of tradition and of their qualities—that is the ethnologist's task.

What has to happen in order for any of these substances to become a "tradition"? It has to become subject to the process of transmission over at least two acts of trans-

mission, i.e., it has to be carried by at least three "generations of practitioners" (15—"generation" does not necessarily mean a biological succession) and "... to become a tradition, and to remain a tradition, a pattern or action must have entered memory" (167).

To these two elements,—the substance and the process of transmission, which form the minimal definition,—one must add the value that the tradition is assigned by society. Tradition is always considered authoritative, normative or prescriptive (23–25). Moreover, there has to be consensus in the society on that point (161). This is the case not only with the "traditional" traditions ("we do so because our ancestors did," "if it was good enough for our fathers, it is good enough for us," "sin (= deviation) is punished"), but applies also to modernist "anti-traditional" traditions (e.g., traditions of liberalism, socialism, or revolutionarism, also traditions of analytic philosophy or scientific research. See recently P. Feyerabend's *Against Method* and *Science in a Free Society* where he attacks the claim to authority of scientific traditionalism.)

These two then, the substance and the transmission process, define our subject fairly clearly, immediately delimiting it from non-traditions, e.g., habits (personal), fashion (social) (307), and from more general categories, e.g., social and economic circumstances (306–307), or personal sentiments (31), etc. Traditions have boundaries, whether clear or vague.

The question then arises: what should be the criteria of classification for classes of substances within tradition? A catalogue of traditions vs. non-traditions, the principles of their classification, and a description of their boundaries on the level of concrete social or cultural units and of abstract theory, is now the next step to be taken. (Example: What is "folk literature"? Which kinds of verbal texts fall inside and outside the range of "folk literature" in a given society at a given period? What are the qualities which define each group of texts and chart the boundaries between them? Does, e.g., "personal narrative" belong to the class of "folk literature" in a certain society at a given time, or does it not belong, and, if so, on what grounds?)

Shils shows us how the accomplishments of the past generation live on in the "present" generation—every generation being its own "present," and how traditions—the very essence of which seems to be stability,—do indeed change, grow, and dwindle. He also describes the general circumstances that cause traditions to be "born" (tradition in making), "die" (283–285) and be "revived" (285–286). How traditions behave in a certain society, a village, an institution, a family—that will be the ethnologist's business to show. Once the "how?" is found out, the "why?" may be asked. Shils provides the theoretical framework for the "how?"

It is no news when Shils speaks of the existence of different traditions. A culture is perforce composed of diverse traditions which can be variously classified; e.g., there are primary and derivative (17) or supplementary (135) traditions; traditions of belief and technical traditions; traditions advocating a clinging to the past (i.e., to traditions) and those which, paradoxically, call for dismantling traditions (e.g., traditions of modernization, the liberal tradition, the tradition of scientific inquiry). Some traditions are by their nature stagnant, others are dynamic (81).

The various traditions of which a culture is composed and on which the society is based, exist in diverse interrelationships (273–283). They could support each other, or, alternatively, they could be in conflict with each other (159; 279–280); they may be in touch, and even overlap or, they may be completely separate and not impinge on each other (57). Traditions may also run parallel to each other or they could form hierarchies (159; 268). Traditions may form "families of dependents" (44), or,

alternatively, "sets of parallel streams" (159). Traditions may also vary as to their position in society: central vs. peripheral (chapter 6. See also Shils 1975). Traditions of a society can also be considered in the context of their confrontation with the traditions of other societies (chapter 6). Every cultural and social unit, from the basic family cell and village community, to a whole state, will have its own assemblage of traditions and sub-traditions. Whether and how far these form a system and of what kind and complexity is a question which awaits further inquiry. (Example: To what extent are written and oral literary traditions in a village at a given time in contact? In what ways do they interact? With which larger frameworks do they interact? How do they do this and to what degree? How does this interaction work in the various genres which folk literature manifests itself in? What are the interrelations of the written and oral literary activities with folk literature (note: a sermon would be "oral" but not "folk")? How does folk literature "die" (283-286)—i.e., what are the processes that lead to the impoverishment and the transformation of a folk literary tradition?

These are just a few hints of the many potentialities that Shils' book offers. He has given us a general framework. Shils, being a theoretical sociologist, talks on the macro-level, on what R. Redfield called "great tradition." It is up to the sciences of tradition to put this framework to use and apply it to analyses of tradition on the level of the small social and cultural unit, the "small tradition," which is our field of inquiry.

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TAYLOR, ARCHER. *The Proverb and An Index to "The Proverb"*. Introduction and Bibliography by Wolfgang Mieder. Sprichwörterforschung Bd. 6. General Editor Wolfgang Mieder. 1931; reprint. Bern: Peter Lang, 1985. 223+105 pages. Paper, SFr. 66.—, ISBN 3-261-04049-1.

This second facsimile edition of *The Proverb* is one of the Peter Lang series of books on proverbs, several of them either written or edited by Wolfgang Mieder. In a labor of tribute to the widely respected teacher, scholar, and administrator Archer Taylor, Mieder provides a biographical sketch and a bibliography of Taylor's works. In the introduction Mieder hails *The Proverb* as a "classic study which even today represents the most comprehensive introduction to the various aspects of proverb studies" (v). The claim and the title of the book, however, may be misleading to readers of *Asian Folklore Studies* because the author has purposely excluded Oriental, African, Malay, Japanese, or Chinese proverbs on the grounds that they "involve such widely differing cultural spheres and have in general so little connection with European proverbs . . ."