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OF POLITICS, DISCIPLINES, AND SCHOLARS: MACEDWARD LEACH AND THE FOUNDING OF THE FOLKLORE PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

On November 4, 1962, newspapers large and small across the United States announced the founding of a new department of folklore at the University of Pennsylvania. Philadelphia's *Sunday Bulletin* and *Inquirer* wrote the longest articles, but one-sentence notices to several paragraph discussions could be found in the daily newspapers of such cities as Washington, D.C.; Williamsport, Pennsylvania; New York, New York; Providence, Rhode Island; Toledo and Columbus, Ohio; Chicago, Illinois; Kansas City, Missouri; Des Moines, Iowa; Boise, Idaho; Corpus Christi, Texas; Tucson, Arizona; and Sacramento and Fresno, California (University of Pennsylvania Archives, a).¹ These papers picked up the announcement released by the University's News Bureau, which wrote: "The first graduate department of folklore in the United States has been established at the University of Pennsylvania." The press release explained that folklore studies at the university had previously been undertaken in the English department and boasted, "Only two other American universities, Indiana University and the University of California at Los Angeles, have programs in folklore, but not departments."

While the news item awarded attention and prestige to folklore at the University of Pennsylvania (Penn), it was, in fact, disseminated on a misstatement. What began at Penn in 1962 was not in fact a new department; it would take many years and other misleading communication for folklore to actually become a department at the university. What was approved in May of 1962 was a graduate group in folklore, capable of granting Ph.D.s, but not an independent department. Born of this miscommunication, and the minor controversy that it ignited, was not just the folklore program at Penn, but a legacy of contested status within the university. This legacy has endured in years both strong and lean throughout the program's forty-two years.

If a contested legacy is what was left to the graduate folklore program from its administrative inception, then equally important was a more stable legacy of interdisciplinary scholarship, avid collecting, and enthusiastic teaching bequeathed by its founder, Professor MacEdward Leach. Though the story of Penn's graduate program in folklore begins in the 1960s with MacEdward Leach, the relationship between folklore and the university began in a much earlier era, during the founding of the American Folklore Society (AFS) and the creation of the department of anthropology at Penn. In 1889, the first meeting of the American Folklore Society was held at the University of Pennsylvania. The December 4, 1889, issue of *The Daily Pennsylvanian* reported that Dr. Daniel G. Brinton, of the University of Pennsylvania and chairman of the General Committee, called the meeting to order; President Francis James Child was absent. Secretary William Wells Newell "spoke of the desirability of disseminating information regarding folk-lore, and stated that Indian folk-lore was specially worthy of being more closely studied. The folk-lore of the Pennsylvania Germans would also be of considerable interest, he said, and might be disseminated in the shape of monologues" Also provided by the newspaper article was a list of the papers read at the meeting.

In *American Folklore Studies*, Simon Bronner explains that Daniel Garrison Brinton (1837-99) was a physician who, along with other post-Civil War anthropological folklorists and professionals, had become attracted to the subjects of language and

mythology. Brinton proposed the establishment of a department of anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania, and, in 1886, became its first professor. He called for professionalism in anthropological studies, which, he was careful to note, included folklore. Brinton encouraged his colleagues to take up ethnology and specialize in the academic study of folklore. His cohort founded a Philadelphia chapter of the American Folklore Society and hosted the organization's above-mentioned first meeting in 1889. Brinton was elected president of the Society the following year (Bronner 1986:14-15).

Anthropologists at Penn maintained an interest in folklore throughout Brinton's tenure and well into the twentieth century. For example, Frank Speck (1880-1948) worked on Cherokee language and culture and served as president of AFS in 1921 and 1922. Alfred Irving Hallowell (1892-1974) worked with the folklore of Native Americans, among other interests, and also served as president of AFS in 1940 and 1941 (for more information on Hallowell's contributions to folklore, see Primiano 1983). However, though the discipline's links to the anthropology department established folklore's relationship to Penn in the late 1880s, the current graduate program traces its lineage back through the English department, and the studies of MacEdward Leach, who entered the department as a doctoral student some thirty years after Brinton's founding activities. After earning a bachelor's degree from the University of Illinois and a master's degree from Johns Hopkins University, where he taught briefly, Leach entered the University of Pennsylvania and began teaching as an instructor of English in 1920. Trained as a philologist and a medievalist, he obtained his Ph.D. in English in 1930 and was hired immediately in 1931 as an assistant professor of English. He climbed the ranks to full professor and devoted his entire career to teaching and working at Penn. He retired in 1966, a year before his death from leukemia. Leach's intellectual pursuits led him to the discipline of folklore and to leadership roles in the American Folklore Society. His work continued the legacy of Brinton and Penn's founding relationship to the Society.

Leach's interest in folklore developed from his study of medieval literature, which led him to the ballad. John Greenway counts among Leach's influences Frank Speck, professor of anthropology at Penn, "who taught the Delaware Indians their forgotten lore (which since has once again become traditional among them)," and Cornelius Weygandt, an English professor whose interests included the German folk culture in Pennsylvania: "The one let him put his feet in the earth of life; the other showed him how to speak about the experience" (Greenway 1968:98). Horace Beck writes about Frank Speck's ability to pass on his enthusiasm to his colleagues and this effect on Leach:

No better recipient could have been found than MacEdward Leach, who accompanied Speck on visits to the Indians in The Dismal Swamp where he saw wild turkeys shot from canoes as they roosted silhouetted against the moon and who traveled with him to the Pamunky Reservation and collected the turkey feather robes mentioned by John Smith. On other occasions he and Speck went into the circumpolar regions north of Lac St. John and lived with the Indians and dined on moose steak and beaver. Few men ever surpassed Frank Speck as a field worker and from him Leach learned the techniques of collection, and, more important, the necessity of a catholic taste toward material. Art, music, medicine, tales, dances, legends, superstitions, and the rest were all gathered with impartiality. Thus he learned early the importance of collecting the whole folk complex and not just songs, or tales, or riddles as so many have done. (Beck 1962:vii-viii)

Beck argues that Leach didn't forsake his training in Middle English for what he learned from Speck and Weygandt, but brought these experiences to bear on his chosen field. It is therefore logical, he argues, that as the years passed Leach's interests turned to

the folk song, especially the Child ballad and the cante fable. He thus pursued and obtained grants for fieldwork in Cape Breton, Labrador, Newfoundland, Jamaica, Virginia, Pennsylvania Dutch country, Maine, Rhode Island, and the Pine Barrens in New Jersey

As a scholar trained in English, yet interested in fieldwork, Leach brings together in the work of one man the two strands of intellectual histories from which folklore emerges. Rosemary Zumwalt characterizes an important intellectual history in folklore as a battle between the anthropological and literary approaches to folklore. These approaches are differentiated by an emphasis on literary works and the unwritten tradition from which they derived, on one hand, and an emphasis on oral cultures and fieldwork, on the other (1988:10). She elaborates on these differences:

The literary folklorists classified folklore into genres which were further divided into major and minor genres. And certain literary folklorists specialized in one area: Child and Kittredge in the ballad, Thompson in the folktale, Taylor in the proverb and riddle. The anthropological folklorists studied folklore as part of culture—a way of learning more about the culture history, as with Boas, or a way of learning more about cultural patterns, as with Benedict. For the literary folklorists, the frame for the study of folklore was the written tradition. Folklore was studied as it existed *within* the literate civilizations, mainly those of the Indo-European world. For the anthropological folklorists, the questions were not directed to folklore *per se*, but rather to culture: what was the nature of culture? and how was this reflected in folklore? (1988:99)

What Leach represents to folklore and the legacy he left the graduate program at Penn is a marriage of the literary and anthropological approaches to folklore. Leach was a ballad scholar in an English department, clearly trained in English and producing folklore scholarship from the literary approach. However, he was not a student of the main literary folklore school in this country, which was developed at Harvard from the work of Francis James Child and his student George Lyman Kittredge. As noted, he was influenced by the work of Anthropologist Frank Speck, who was a student of Franz Boas at Columbia and one of the fathers of the anthropological approach to folklore (Zumwalt 1988:9).

A year after Leach assumed a leadership position in AFS in 1941 as secretary-treasurer, he brought the Society headquarters to Penn; he retained this post until 1960, when he became president of AFS for two years. Of Leach's AFS tenure, his colleague Tristram Coffin wrote in an English department newsletter in 1966: "He inaugurated the Bibliographical and Special Series published by that group, and is generally considered responsible for saving the Society from the brink of extinction by his shrewd handling of membership and finances in the forties." No doubt Leach's tenure in AFS, as a literary folklorist who developed anthropological methods, continued the work of those such as Martha Warren Beckwith (1871-1959), who holds the distinction of being the first chair of folklore in the United States and who argued for the distinctiveness of folklore as a hybrid of literature and anthropology (Bronner 1998:237-38).

Dan Ben-Amos has pointed out that the literary and anthropological folklorists were marked by their different institutional affiliations: "While the anthropological approach remained dominant in the American Folklore Society itself for many years, it was the literary approach, heralded by Bassett and the Chicago Folklore Society, that was the dominant force at the universities" (1973:123). In fact, this was the case at Penn. Although the university's relationship to folklore began with anthropology, it was the English department that, at the time of Leach's tenure, was offering courses in folklore as

well as the ability to obtain a Ph.D. in English with a concentration in folklore, In a Report on Folklore Studies dated March 5, 1964, MacEdward Leach wrote that folklore was first taught at the University of Pennsylvania by Professor Clarence Child in the English department, with one course, the folk narratives of the world, called Epic and the Short Story (University of Pennsylvania Archives, b).² In the report, Leach wrote, "This was a very popular and rewarding course cutting across cultures and revealing the common lore of mankind." A second course, added later, entitled The English and Scottish Popular Ballad, was taught by Percy V. Shelley, and was expanded to become Ballad and Folksong among the English Speaking Peoples.

Leach inherited these courses from his mentors as he came of age in the English department. Gradually, he reported, the first course became General Folklore and was "concerned with myth, folk tales, ritual, song, belief, and minor forms." He also described the two graduate courses established in the English department in the mid 1940s, both with a literary orientation: Folk Elements in English Literature and Folk Elements in American Literature. He discussed the popularity of both the undergraduate and graduate courses. Throughout these years, interested students obtained Ph.D.s in English with a concentration in folklore.

Despite the long-standing place of folklore in English, in the spring of 1962, folklore at Penn split from the English department to become a freestanding program. What led to folklore's independence at this time? In the above-mentioned report, Leach wrote: "The Chairman of the English Department, the Graduate Chairman, and I felt that graduate work in Folklore should be separated from English so Folklore students could get a broader program by taking courses in Cultural Anthropology, Linguistics, and Professor Kramer's courses in Ancient Myth and the like. That was done." And, it appears that it was done, *just like that*. The University Archive holds no mission statement, no minutes from a Graduate committee meeting, nor any more formal indication of deliberation and approval of a graduate program in folklore than a single letter written by Vice Provost and Dean Roy F. Nichols to Dr. Gaylord P. Harnwell, president of the university, on May 17, 1962: "The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences has approved the constitution of a new group committee on folklore studies. I recommend that you appoint Dr. MacEdward Leach chairman of this group committee" (University of Pennsylvania Archives, b).

On May 24, 1962, a similarly succinct letter was written to Professor MacEdward Leach by President Gaylord P. Harnwell:

In accordance with the recommendations of the Provost and the Dean, I would like to ask you if you would be willing to undertake the responsibilities of the Chairman of a new Group Committee on Folklore Studies for the academic year 1962-1963.

I hope that you will be willing to accept this appointment and can assure you of the unqualified support of your colleagues in the Administration. (Samuelson 1983:5)

Thus was born the graduate program in folklore at Penn. For the first time, the University Bulletin of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences for the 1963-64 academic year offered folklore as separate M.A. and Ph.D. degrees. MacEdward Leach was listed as the chairman. The bulletin then listed an Interdisciplinary Committee that was to coordinate instruction in folklore, consisting of MacEdward Leach, Chairman, Tristram P. Coffin, Anthony N.B. Garvan, Ward Goodenough, Alvin Johnson, Samuel Kramer, William Roach, and Alfred Senn (University of Pennsylvania 1963:232).

The graduate program in folklore, however, was essentially Leach's one-man show, with help teaching the core courses from Tristram P. Coffin, his colleague in English, former student, and beloved friend. Coffin had been a student of Leach's in the 1940s; his dissertation, supervised by Leach, *The British Traditional Ballad in North America*, was published the year after he graduated. Coffin went on to teach for nine years at Denison University in Granville, Ohio, before being called back to Penn by Leach to serve as Secretary-Treasurer of AFS. G. Malcolm Laws, also a former student of Leach's, at that time on the English faculty at Penn, had held this position but no longer wanted the responsibility. Laws apparently taught folklore courses for the program, but his name is not mentioned on the faculty list nor does it appear in correspondences or reports about the program in these early years. As for the interdisciplinary committee that was organized to coordinate instruction, it was, for the most part, for show. In a phone interview with me, Coffin explained it this way:

They were just a committee. What happened was Mac [Leach] started this committee, but he didn't have any people, and his idea was to get as many people as he possibly could so the numbers looked good. And he picked up all kinds, he took every stray cat in the graduate school! (Interview, April 18, 2003)

In addition to announcing the program and its governance, the bulletin listed the areas in which the students were to be trained: "Under the program in Folklore students are prepared for (1) positions as teachers of folklore, (2) research and field work in folklore, including archiving, (3) folklore museum curatorships. The demand for properly trained people in all of these areas of folklore far exceeds the supply." Students were required to establish a minor in an allied field (such as English, Anthropology, or American Civilization), and the examinations for the Ph.D. included five fields of folklore: folklore as an historical science, folksong and ballad, folktale and myth, folk belief and ritual, and the utilization of folklore in literature and the arts. There were five core courses offered, with varied topics each term: Folklore 529: Literary Aspects of Folklore—British, and—American; Folklore 600: General Folklore; Folklore 629: Aspects of Primitive and Folk Literature; Folklore 700: Field Work in Folklore; and Folklore 999: Independent Study and Research; and many related courses cross-listed with the departments of American Civilization, Anthropology, English, German, History, Linguistics, Oriental Studies, Religious Thought, Romance Languages, and Sociology (University of Pennsylvania 1963:232-34).

The bulletin also listed "Special Facilities for Folklore Studies at Pennsylvania" and discussed such ethnographic collections as The Lea Collection (which includes rare early books of superstition and witchcraft), the University Museum Library, the Brinton Collection of Indian material, and the ballad and folksong collection in the university's main library. It mentions the varied courses and allied courses available to graduate students, the university headquarters of the American Folklore Society, and the program's association with museums (University of Pennsylvania 1963:235).

To the press, Leach spoke about the motivation for separating the folklore program from the English department, including the distinct program's freedom to accept students who had majors in subjects other than English (*Daily Pennsylvanian*, November 13, 1962). The student newspaper reported:

According to Dr. Leach, graduates in folklore are increasingly in demand. Since both Dr. Leach, president of the American Folklore Society, and Dr. Tristram P. Coffin, secretary of the Society, are at the University, the department receives a great number of requests for people to fill jobs. "We have never been able to fill all the demands," declares Dr. Leach.

The article continued by stating that folklore museums are springing up throughout the country and that the graduate program trains students in museum practice. In another early article about the graduate program, this time in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* (January 13, 1963), students are pictured listening as professional folk singer Tossi Aaron plays her guitar and sings the ballad "Lord Randall." Leach stressed in the article that studies involve much more than singing in class:

Of course, we want the students to experience the vitality of the songs and stories. But there are other aims: to explain much of literature and other arts, to gain understanding of the process and power of tradition, to explode a lot of misbeliefs in history and to achieve insight of the attitudes and thinking processes of people in many lands.

Despite these explanations, one still might ask whether there was a specific catalyst that sparked the transformation of folklore into a separate program in 1962. Why was it important to Leach and others at this time to separate folklore out from English, incidentally, only 4 years before he retired? Leach had been teaching folklore within the English department for decades. His leadership role in AFS brought him prestige and a significant amount of power within the university; for example, he seemed to have considerable influence over faculty appointments, as he was able to earn positions at Penn for his students Laws and Coffin.

One important context in which to reflect on these events is the historic academic expansion of the 1960s. The federal government and foundations during this time were pouring tremendous amounts of money into academia, creating the feeling that anything was possible. Writing about the history of the development of American Studies, Allen F. Davis discusses the affluence of academia in the 1960s, when jobs were plentiful and "there was a mood of expansion":

Looking back, it now seems obvious that the period from 1963 to about 1969 was an aberration, a small window of opportunity that closed quickly, but at the time that brief period of optimism seemed like the model for the future. The National Defense Education Act provided such an abundance of fellowships that many of us worried we were sending graduate students out for their first jobs with no teaching experience. There was a flurry of academic organizing in the sixties. The National Endowment for the Humanities was authorized in 1965 and began giving grants in 1966. The Oral History Association was founded in 1967. The American Folklore Society began meeting on its own the same year. Richard Dorson, writing in 1967, summed up the feelings of many when he wrote: "The academic prospects for folklore and folklorists have reached their highest point ever in The United States." Substitute almost any field, and the sentiments would have been the same. The Western Literature Association, founded in 1965, began its own journal in 1967. The *Journal of Social History* began the same year, and the *Journal of Popular Culture* and the *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* the next. The Popular Culture Association was founded in 1969 during the second American Studies Convention. The first two American Studies national conventions were held at a time of academic optimism. They were part of the trend of expansion and definition of fields in the humanities and the social sciences. (1989:358)

As this was also the era of the sexual revolution, civil rights, and language expansion (Davis reports on learning to say "fuck" in the classroom), folklore's independence from the English department must be located within the liberating politics of the times, which

started to expand the bounds of proper academic study. Also at this time, the *Journal of American Folklore* published its "obscenities" issue (volume 75, 1962). Though tame by today's standards, the journal issue hoped to formulate "a rationale for an organized, intelligent study of traditional erotica" (Hoffmann 1962:189) and, more generally, served to announce folklore as the location within the academy for the study of such subject matter. Therefore, one interpretation of folklore's break from the English department arises from an examination of the material that was being studied by the folklore graduate students. Tristram Coffin explains the background for Leach's interest in a separate folklore program this way:

Leach was a medievalist and he and a fellow who was in anthropology in those days, Frank Speck, had gotten going on folklore, and so they sort of thought it would be nice to have a graduate program. They had one at Indiana in those days under Stith Thompson. And then Wayland Hand out at UCLA was a close friend of MacEdward's and he didn't have an actual program, but you could get a degree in folklore; you had to be in some other department. And, well, Mac wanted to have another one. (Interview, April 18, 2003)

The circumstances that actually allowed the program to come into existence, however, were unique. Again, Coffin explains:

The way it actually started was a little bit oblique. Roger [Abrahams] wrote a thesis with MacEdward, which was called *Deep Down in the Jungle*, he later made it into a book, and it was full of obscenities of all kinds. The English department at that time was very, very conservative and a little bit on the Victorian side, perhaps. And they couldn't stomach that thesis, and Mac had been trying for a long time to get a folklore program started and that thesis sort of broke the back of the English department and they said, "Get out of here! We don't want anything more to do with you. Start your graduate program." And it started as a graduate program. (Interview, April 18, 2003)

Roger Abrahams was a student of Leach's and had begun collecting folklore in the African American neighborhood where he was living while attending graduate school. In an interview with me, conducted in the Folklore Archives of the University of Pennsylvania, he stated:

I want to be clear on this. I did not set out to work in a radically different community. My interest first was picked up when I was living in black Philadelphia because they were playing singing games outside my door and ball bouncing and hand-clapping and I thought, that's my stuff, I'm going to write some articles here. This is just great stuff. And the other stuff just began to trickle in and I didn't know what it was. (Interview, April 23, 2003)

Later Abrahams discovered that he had observed the traditional oral genres of "playing the dozens" and "toasts." What began as play for Abrahams and his neighbors fit well within folklore's field of inquiry, if not the English department's conservative canon. In an interview with M.D. Muthukumaraswamy in *Voicing Folklore*, Abrahams explains that Leach got excited about what he was collecting as a subject of scholarship:

I brought these tapes to McEdward [sic] Leach and his colleagues, and said they had to listen to this stuff. And what happened was McEdward [sic] said: "That's your dissertation. You're going to write about it." They were really excited about it—they had no idea this was going on in Philadelphia. So, that was another reason why they felt I could leave. I had done the collecting in my neighborhood; all I had to do was walk out the front door! (Muthukumaraswamy 2002:14)

Abrahams was the last student of Leach's to earn a folklore degree through the English department. The next Ph.D. dissertation completed after Abrahams's was Kenneth Goldstein's in 1963, whose *A Guide for Fieldworkers in Folklore* was published under the same title in 1964 and has the distinction of being the first dissertation completed in the independent folklore graduate program. About the formation of the folklore graduate program, Abrahams learned later that the dean at the time was "taking care of a problem" (Interview, April 23, 2003). The dean appeared to have believed he would give Leach this program, let him retire in a few years, and Penn's academic folklore problem would go away. But what Leach was able to do, Abrahams explains, was wrangle a position for Goldstein, who finished two years after Abrahams, thus ensuring the continuation of the program after Leach's retirement.

This shift in folklore studies at Penn, from a subspecialty of English to a program of its own independent standing, might be seen to correspond to a shift in paradigms that was occurring more broadly in the field. Thomas S. Kuhn writes about the paradigms that enable scientific study and the shifting perspectives in any given discipline that cause scientists to use new instruments and to view data in a new light; he argues, "Led by a new paradigm, scientists adopt new instruments and look in new places. Even more important, during revolutions scientists see new and different things when looking with familiar instruments in places they have looked before" (Kune 1996:111). What Abrahams's dissertation represented was not just a question of language, but also a question of what subjects were worthy of study and with what methods. In the 1960s, the very definition of folklore itself was at stake. John Greenway's dedication in his book *American Folksongs of Protest*, reiterates this concern of folklore: "To Professor MacEdward Leach, who persuaded me to abandon my share of those inhibitions which have denied these songs the scholarly consideration they have deserved" (1953:viii).

In a related article on folklore's expansion of appropriate subject matter, Kenneth Goldstein wrote about the stakes of censorship (what he called bowdlerization and expurgation) in folklore collecting and presenting in scholarly literature. He wrote:

The lesson is clear for those who intend to work professionally in the area of sexual folklore. When the folk bowdlerize or expurgate they do so in response to a specific social situation in which they prefer to avoid offending someone or lowering their own status in the eyes of the members of their audience. Despite these changes, the materials remain folklore. When a popularizer decides to bowdlerize or expurgate erotic materials for presentation to the general public, his motives may be identical with those of the folk, but the materials he publishes are no longer folklore. The academic folklorist cannot employ such rationalizations in handling sexual folklore since his audience is made up of other professionals who, at least as scholars, have no sensibilities to offend. From the academic folklorists anything less than totally unexpurgated and unbawdlerized data is unacceptable. (1967:384)

Leach's establishment of a separate folklore program enacted a shift from a dependence on a literary model for folklore and an over-dependence on a literary repertoire of "appropriate" materials and methods. Instigated by the explicit language in Abrahams's dissertation, the folklore program's steps to independence in some ways mirrored the larger issues that were being addressed by the discipline at that time. They were part of the academic and scholarly drive intended to recreate folklore as an independent discipline, not as a subspecialty of English or anthropology. It is also noteworthy to consider that, although not yet fully articulated at this time, the performance-centered approach had already begun to ferment, ultimately providing folklore with the conceptual framework

needed to bring together the previously disparate strands of the field (Dwyer-Shick 1979:339).

Indiana University was another academic location where scholars were trying to establish folklore as a serious scholarly discipline, first under the direction of Stith Thompson and later, Richard Dorson. As the two major graduate programs in folklore at the time, Penn and Indiana were bound to develop a rivalry, though many believe it had as much to do with personality and politics as with intellectual differences. The Penn-Indiana rivalry was legion in the 1960s, with Dorson and Leach depicted as leaders of the opposing teams.

Leach's former student and colleague Coffin believes the rivalry was based on personality, specifically Dorson's jealousy of Leach's rapport with students, what Dorson called—according to Coffin—"Mac's 'Pennsy gang'" (Interview, April 18, 2003). Roger Abrahams agrees that Dorson was very competitive, but characterizes the competition as one between insiders and outsiders. He argues that Dorson was a scholar who was anxious to make a name for himself. He entered the Europeanist department of Indiana University as an Americanist, and immediately set out to become a world scholar. Abrahams argued that he did this successfully, but "he did it in the face of what looking back was a cabal. Between MacEdward and Tris [Coffin] and Wayland [Hand] and Archie [Green] and his ex-students and Louis Jones, the New York bunch." Dorson was an outsider to a whole generation of Leach's students and friends scattered throughout the discipline (Interview, April 23, 2003).

Not everyone would agree, however, that the rivalry was fueled by Dorson's desire to exceed Leach's popularity, and in fact other areas of competition and conflict are evident as well. For example, another aspect of the Penn-Indiana rivalry can be found in the two departments' responses to the folksong revival. In the 1960s, an ambivalent attitude toward the popularization of folklore was evident in the discipline. The folksong revival helped establish the folklore program at the University of Pennsylvania, with numerous students entering graduate school because of interests that developed out of participation in the revival. Folksongs and the interests they inspired, consequently, were accepted as appropriate topics for scholarly study at Penn. However, this revival was also responsible for the colloquial uses of the term *folk*, which occasionally served to undermine the discipline's scholarly reputation. In the previously mentioned "Report on Folklore Studies," Leach concluded with the line: "It is too bad that in America the sentimentalists, chauvinists, popularizers, beatniks, have taken over the word *folk*, thereby giving a false image of the discipline in the popular mind" (University of Pennsylvania Archives, b).

In this same period Dorson wrote: "What does the Folk-song Revival have to do with the study of folklore? As matters stand, quite a good deal. The collecting and scrutiny of folk-songs have obsessed numbers of American scholars since the days of Francis James Child and Cecil Sharp; a ballad specialist will be found on college faculties where there is otherwise little or no interest in folklore" (1963:437). Dorson's disregard for ballad scholarship and the study of folksong, which, as the above quote shows, he saw as related, is also obvious in his monumental study of British folklore (1968), in which he makes no mention of the Scottish and English ballad scholars of that time.

The conflict between Dorson and Leach over the popularization of the term *folk* was also evident in the debates about the expansion of the American Folklore Society. Simon Bronner reports that Dorson "unleashed a firestorm by discouraging figures he called 'popularizers' and 'amateurs' from the leadership of the American Folklore Society

In Dorson's view, the popularizers undermined the serious study of folklore, destroyed the integrity of authentic traditions, misrepresented folklore's meaning, and endangered the academic growth of a folkloristic discipline" (Bronner 1998:334). Leach, on the other hand, was secretary-treasurer of the American Folklore Society for all those years and, as Coffin stated above, brought it from "the brink of extinction by his shrewd handling of membership and finances," possibly a reference to a liberal philosophy of membership and the discipline's constituency. As Bronner contends, Leach "thought that popularizers did a service by keeping folklore interests before the public hungry for colorful regional literature" (1998:334).

However, while some prefer to see the Penn-Indiana rivalry as one of personality and institutional politics, Dan Ben-Amos would rather characterize it as a debate about intellectual practice (personal communication, April 14, 2003). As part of the Indiana tradition, he argues that Dorson was committed to developing folklore into a scientific discipline. Stith Thompson had left the legacy of the motif and type indexes, the purpose of which was to provide scientific tools for the scholarly study of folklore. Developing folklore in consonance with scientific principles of rigorous scholarship was an important part of the project that Dorson inherited and carried out with his leadership in folklore at Indiana University. Yet, Dorson was also an avid fieldworker. Perhaps he saw it as his role to unite the major division among folklorists, about which Roger Abrahams writes:

Until the early 1960s, a division existed between folklorists who saw themselves involved in a great international and comparatist "scientific" enterprise and those primarily concerned with the ways in which folklore gave nations, regions, or locales their special character. The former tended to think of themselves as library and archive scholars, while the latter were theorists who had also been involved in field collecting and who were as interested in the singers and storytellers as the songs and the stories. (1993:382)

Leach, according to Ben-Amos, emphasized the *human* element of folklore rather than the scientific. He was a great scholar of medieval literature and skilled in textual analysis; however, despite motif analysis's application to ballad scholarship, Thompson's scientific approach to tradition did not interest him. Ballad scholarship, especially in the 1960s under the influence of the folksong revival, started to move scholars toward field collecting and interaction with people, as opposed to motif and type analysis, which kept the scholarly project at the level of the text. Leach's dedication to fieldwork and his interest in interacting with all kinds of people is obvious in his scholarship, research trips, and governance of the graduate program. The literary-anthropological split in folklore thus became another feature of the Penn-Indiana rivalry. It is possible that Leach's discovery of fieldwork and his interest in leading the Penn folklore program away from the more text-based, genre approach toward a regionalist one was an additional source of competition for Dorson, who may have wanted to maintain Indiana University as the primary location for this approach to folklore studies.³

The controversy over the folklore program at Penn, however, did not remain within disciplinary politics or the theoretical debates of academicians. Disciplines must exist within university structures, and the folklore program's relationship to the administration also began with contestation. On March 4, 1963, Chester Tucker, vice president for development and public relations, wrote a note to Provost David R. Goddard stating that he "detected an overtone of criticism" from Goddard about a press release his office had

written about the new folklore program. Responding immediately, Goddard wrote back to Mr. Tucker on March 4:

I have the news release of Sunday, November 4 concerning the graduate program in Folklore at the University.

First, I might say that we consider Folklore a completely legitimate field of academic study, particularly at the graduate level at the University. I might point out that for many years my father was editor of the *American Journal of Folklore* [sic], published by the organization of which Dr. MacEdward Leach is now president.

We have not organized a department of Folklore; what we have organized is a graduate group permitted to direct students for a doctor's degree, but this is not a University department, nor does it have a chairman, nor does it have a budget. The University of Pennsylvania has a fair number of graduate groups without departments and this is what was organized here.

I do not know who furnished the information to your office concerning the alleged department, and I am sorry that our communications in the University break down occasionally. I am sure that the members of your staff cannot be expected to recognize the intricacies of academic organization in all cases. I feel that no real harm has been done; my criticism was directed at the assumption that we had organized a department when no such department exists. Certainly, any effort to correct the matter with the daily press would create far more harm, and I think the matter should be forgotten.

P.S. Dr. MacEdward Leach is chairman of the graduate group in Folklore. (University of Pennsylvania Archives, b)

The fact that Provost Goddard felt the need first to assure Tucker that he believed folklore to be a legitimate field of study probably says as much about folklore as a discipline at that time as about the program at the university, but clearly the comment and general tone of the letter speaks to the marginalized status of folklore within the university community.

From the beginning it seems clear that Leach referred to the folklore program as a department in the press and other official communications, a practice Goldstein continued in his tenure as chair. It is hard to know whether this terminological misrepresentation was the source of the friction between Goddard and Leach or whether it was a symptom of larger problems. As late as August 31, 1966 (after Leach had retired!), Goddard continued to try to set Leach straight about folklore's status as a program; in a letter regarding a proposal Leach had submitted, Goddard wrote: "The University of Pennsylvania does not have a Department of Folklore, but it does have a graduate group in Folklore" And in a previous letter to Dean Roy Nichols, dated October 8, 1963, Goddard again revealed his desire to reign in Leach, writing, "Has the University given Leach authority to set up an Archive?" (University of Pennsylvania Archives, b).

Coffin explains it as a matter of personalities and styles, arguing that Leach received many accolades but often went about things his own way:

Mac [Leach] was unorthodox. He didn't follow the normal lines of academia. And, he'd ruffle feathers as he went along. But you couldn't dislike the guy, nobody disliked him. But they just felt he was taking advantage of things. I think the most dramatic thing he did was, he was actually born in 1892 and he told everybody he was born in 1896 so he got four extra years of teaching after he was meant to retire. Things like that. That was the way Mac [Leach] worked. But he was a great friend and a loyal man and he really supported anyone who worked with him. Really an amazing character. (Interview, April 18, 2003)

In fact, every published date of Leach's birth says 1896, so if Coffin is correct, he was certainly successful at fooling the rest of the world, as well as the university.

Leach, it becomes clear from the record, was an excellent scholar, collector, and teacher. His knowledge of medieval literature was comprehensive, and his contribution to ballad scholarship of high value. He is also remembered as one of the great collectors of folklore. In a memorial, Wayland Hand wrote:

The effectiveness of MacEdward Leach as a collector rested not alone on a love of people and a curiosity about the most intimate details of their lives, but was based on solid training in philology and literature. This ample grounding was to give him a broad matrix into which he could later fit his study of folklore It was an axiom of collecting with Leach that one should collect not just one genre of folklore, or even two or three, but everything in the folk repertory. This he had learned from his old friend, Frank Speck, eminent anthropologist, on many a field trip. (1968:43)

As early as 1949, Leach had been collecting folksongs, ballads, and instrumental folk music, and immediately upon the founding of the folklore program, Leach established the Folklore Archives as a depository for his own and the program's field research.⁴ The Archives holds several thousand songs collected by Leach in Newfoundland, Jamaica, and the southern mountains of the United States, as well as the work of Coffin, Goldstein, Abrahams, and many later folklore faculty and students.

Though his collecting and scholarship yielded many awards, there seems to be universal agreement that Leach's true abilities lay in teaching. In memoriam, Wayland Hand wrote, "Great as was his work as a field collector and scholar in folklore, MacEdward Leach will be remembered as one of the most successful teachers of folklore in the country..." (1968:43-44). Thirty-five years later, Tristram Coffin echoed Hand's praise: "Mac [Leach] had an amazing ability of capturing students," he explained. "He was a real pied piper where students were concerned. He just got guys, you know, and everybody hung around his office, and that's the way it operated" (Interview, April 18, 2003). Among his students count many scholars who have made serious contributions to the field, including Tristram P. Coffin, G. Malcolm Laws, Edith S. Krappe, Horace P. Beck, William E. Simeone, John Greeway, David Fowler, Ellen Stekert, David Elder, Mary Washington Clarke, Lionel Wyld, Roger Abrahams, Kenneth S. Goldstein, and Archie Green.

Abrahams explained that Leach was a great storyteller and a great listener (Abrahams in Greenway 1968:99); Horace Beck described his "incomparable ability as a raconteur" who was "dedicated to folklore and the improvement of the discipline" (Beck in Greenway 1968:100). And Dorson wrote, "After I moved to Indiana University in 1957 our relations underwent a strain, because of the Indiana-Pennsylvania rivalry in the Society. The chief problem was we saw too little of each other ____" However, he continued by enumerating Leach's positive traits: "There was the dignity and humanity of his presence, and the natural eloquence of his talk. There was the complete lack of egoism and selfish ambition. There was, as corollary, the deep and sensitive understanding of people, whether people as folk or people as students. . . . There was the tolerance" (Dorson in Greenway 1968:104).

Finally, in his introduction to Leach's festschrift, *Folklore in Action: Essays for Discussion in Honor of MacEdward Leach*, Beck wrote:

Despite all of these honors it is as a teacher that he has made his greatest contribution. Blessed with a tremendous enthusiasm for his subject and a peculiar ability to give his material life and vitality, his classes both on the graduate and undergraduate levels at the University of Pennsylvania have been for

years among the most heavily attended. Out of these groups have come a considerable number of scholars. (1962:viii)

Beck's final paragraph pays a vivid tribute to the charismatic and adventurous man that Leach was:

To do justice to any man in a few pages is difficult; for MacEdward - impossible. This man has lived in the Arctic in a tent and eaten roast beaver, has dwelt among the fisherman of Newfoundland and subsisted on seal flippers, lived in the shanties of the hill folk in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia and fed on collard greens and sow belly. In the John Crow Mountains of Jamaica he has slept with his shoes on to keep rats from biting his feet, eaten breadfruit and rice. Everywhere he has gone he has been welcome and has become a kind of legend in his own right. At the University of Pennsylvania he is known as Mr. Folklore - to his numberless friends, as Mac. (1962:ix)

For the first three years of the folklore program, Leach and Coffin taught the core courses and were considered the faculty of the program, with their appointments in the English department. In 1965, Kenneth Goldstein was hired as a non-departmentally affiliated temporary appointment in the Graduate School, and Leach announced his plans to retire from Penn, forcing the administration to decide the future of folklore. According to a Memorandum on the Folklore Program from the "Folklore Committee" to David Goddard, Provost, dated November 15, 1965, a committee was appointed "to consider the present state and future requirements of the University's program in folklore and to make recommendations concerning the University's policy in the folklore area."⁵ The memo described the current state of affairs in folklore, including the fact that about sixty graduate students were currently enrolled in the program, of which fifteen were ABD, and found that, since 1960, at least eleven students earned Ph.D.'s in folklore. The committee identified three problems that demanded the administration's attention: 1) the pending retirement of Leach; 2) the anomalous administrative structure of the program (under the budget of the English department, but administered by an independent group committee); and 3) the inadequate size of the faculty for the number of students and courses offered. The committee then recommended six courses of action:

1. to maintain the folklore program, in light of its "high reputation in folklore studies, the presence of a nucleus of faculty (Drs. Coffin and Goldstein) and of graduate students";
2. to establish the program as a separate department, with its own budget for faculty, secretarial assistance, and expenses and equipment;
3. to consider establishing an undergraduate major;
4. to recruit a new chair from outside the University whose orientation to folklore "should be anthropological or linguistic, rather than literature or music oriented";
5. to appoint a new graduate group committee; and
6. to increase the number of faculty up to five full-time persons.

Of primary concern to the committee was the securing of a "distinguished professor" as chair who "should be prepared to develop folklore vigorously and with concern for hard-minded research" (University of Pennsylvania Archives, c).

Needless to say, these recommendations were not all heeded. In fact, what can be found in the records of the administration's actions regarding the folklore program in the 1965-66 academic year is only the end result of their drive to hire a "distinguished professor" to lead the program. To get the story of the year's events, we must turn to oral history.

The administration appears to have had a single-minded ambition to hire Alan Dundes as chair of the folklore program to replace MacEdward Leach. According to Coffin (Interview, April 18, 2003), Dean Otto Springer was determined to hire Dundes, and his plan was supported by the anthropology department (Ben-Amos, personal communication, April 14, 2003). Coffin reports, however, that Leach was just as determined that Springer wouldn't hire Dundes.

Roger Abrahams explains what happened next. Alan Dundes was invited to Penn for a luncheon and to give a lecture. Leach, Coffin, and Goldstein all closed ranks against Springer by ignoring Dundes's visit. Abrahams explains that for Dundes it was a very strange experience:

He said it was just the strangest experience of his life because he was brought in by the dean to interview and the dean was pulling a flankers move, he was not called in by MacEdward. Well, this is perfectly legitimate, you're not supposed to pick your own successor, you see. But, as a result, Alan gave his speech, and none of the folklorists came.

Dundes picked up on that clue and on March 18, 1966, he wrote to the University of Pennsylvania to decline the offer of chair of the department to stay at the University of California, Berkeley, and build the folklore program there (University of Pennsylvania Archives, c).

Dundes candidacy was also complicated by his perceived criticism of the Penn program. In 1961, as the new secretary-treasurer of the American Folklore Society, Coffin edited an anthology of tales published by the Bibliographical and Special Series of the American Folklore Society entitled *Indian Tales of North America*. Dundes, having recently published *Morphology of Indian Folktales*, wrote a scathing review of the publication, which harkened back to the old debate between the anthropological and literary approaches to folklore. "The editor is a folklorist trained in the history of literature and seems to use this as an excuse for ignoring the anthropological aspects of the tales," Dundes wrote (1964:69). Possibly, this review provided some of the impetus for Leach, Coffin, and Goldstein's actions.

In any event, by the end of the spring semester of 1966, Leach was still without a replacement as chair of the folklore program. In a letter to Goddard on May 3, Leach inquired to whom he was supposed to turn over his materials (University of Pennsylvania Archives, b). No decision had yet been made. Kenneth Goldstein had just been appointed to the faculty that year (his temporary appointment was made permanent retroactively later in the academic year), and Tristram Coffin was now working as Vice Provost and unable to take over the chair of the program. On May 18, 1966, President Gaylord P. Harnwell wrote Don Yoder, from the Department of Religious Thought, a letter nearly identical to the one written by Harnwell to Leach, four years earlier, asking him to assume the chair of the Group Committee in Folklore (University of Pennsylvania Archives, b).

Yoder was a logical choice to draft into the folklore program at this time. He came to Penn from Franklin and Marshall College, which established the first department of folklore in the United States, and taught the first folk religion class at Penn in 1957, well before folklore became an independent program. However, Yoder and Leach's paths rarely crossed, despite the fact that Yoder succeeded one of Leach's teachers, Professor Weygandt (Yoder, personal communication, April 25, 2003). Penn had a distinguished history of scholarship of the Pennsylvania German community, to which Yoder devoted much of his own scholarly interests. Once chair, Yoder quickly broadened the field of

folklore to include folklife studies and helped to get the term registered in the Library of Congress. Shortly after Yoder became chair, the program changed its name to the Program in Folklore and Folklife.

On October 31, 1966, Dean Michael H. Jameson wrote a confidential letter to Provost David R. Goddard with recommendations for the folklore program. Through this letter and others, Jameson proved to be a strong advocate for folklore and made careful recommendations in the best interests of the program. He was supportive of continuing the program and of its various strengths. He alluded to "last year's fight" over the Dundes hire, and made more modest suggestions to improve the program. He discussed the anthropology-versus-literary approaches to folklore and argued that this division was no longer valid. "Goldstein and Yoder are interested in an independent Folklore, concentrating on collecting, field work, musical and visual records, area studies, and the like," he wrote. "They are glad to take advantage of Sapir's, Hymes' and Wallace's work in Anthropology. They need an appointment in the folktale (who could be of use to English as well)." Later in the letter, he stated, "In general, I would not want to see the Folklore program collapse but would like to give it a chance to develop greater strength. Very likely a single, vigorous appointment on the assistant professor level is all they need at the moment. One candidate they have suggested is an Israeli teaching at UCLA who could handle the folktale and has had African fieldwork" (University of Pennsylvania Archives, b).

Thus, in 1967 Dan Ben-Amos, who earned his Ph.D. at Indiana University, began his work as assistant professor. His hire was also an attempt to alleviate the Penn-Indiana competition and ameliorate Penn's deficiency in prose narrative. The next publication of the University Bulletin after Yoder became chair and Ben-Amos was hired reflects the largest change in program information since its independence in 1962. In the bulletin published for the 1967-68 year, the program was called *Folklore and Folklife*, and the faculty list included Leach as *Emeritus Professor*, and Yoder (chair), Coffin, Ben-Amos, and Goldstein. In addition, new faculty were listed on the Interdisciplinary Committee, notably Dell Hymes and David Sapir (University of Pennsylvania 1967:254).

Although folklore seemed on its way to establishing itself within the university, its status remained tenuous in the eyes of the faculty. On May 17, 1971, Kenny Goldstein wrote to Provost Curtis Reitz asking for a decision "concerning the status of the Folklore Department" and of the promotions of Ben-Amos, Yoder, and himself. He stated that he was on his way to the annual meeting of the American Folklore Society and would like to "squash once and for all the rumors concerning the demise and destruction of the Graduate Folklore and Folklife Program here at Penn" (University of Pennsylvania Archives, b).

There is much more history in between Ben-Amos's hire in 1967 and Goldstein's 1971 letter to Reitz, and, of course, much more that follows. What seems clear, however, is that in this era, while folklore was on its way to establishing itself as a vital and independent discipline within the academy, faculty and students still had to fight for status and recognition within this particular university. The model for the program at Penn, however, shaped by the inimitable MacEdward Leach and taken up and expanded by Don Yoder and Kenneth Goldstein, served to establish folklore within this institution and the academy as an independent discipline, autonomous of English and anthropology, and in fact, as the next decade would reveal, capable of forging new connections to education, linguistics, and related fields.

As this article goes to press, folklore at the University of Pennsylvania is once again in a precarious position. Having gained departmental status in the 1970s, folklore returned to a graduate *program* once again in 1999, trading its undergraduate major and its departmental privilege for the "flexibility" of a graduate group. The strength of the folklore program at Penn, however, has been diminished by many years of faculty attrition due to retirement and resignation, largely unreplaced by the administration. In December of 2003, the deans of the School of Arts and Sciences suspended admissions to the graduate program for the 2004-2005 academic year, citing the program's limited faculty resources and general cutbacks across the university. The twenty-five currently enrolled graduate students will be permitted to finish their coursework and obtain their degrees. While over the past year many alumni and folklore colleagues from around the country and world have petitioned the university's administration on folklore's behalf, the deans recently ruled again to suspend admissions, this time indefinitely. However, at a recent meeting with folklore graduate students and faculty, Dean Sam Preston stated, "a reformulation of graduate studies in folklore is possible." Several plans for a reconstituted folklore program at the University of Pennsylvania are being developed.

In June of 1971, former Dean Michael Jameson wrote to the provost at the time, Curtis Reitz, in defense of the folklore program. He wrote about being "disturbed by rumors that the program in Folklore may be sacrificed to the pressure to tighten our belt, pull in our horns, do without frills, or whatever." He also expressed concern over the "hostile atmosphere" for "small, innovative and integrating fields" as well as the overemphasis on the "large, over-staffed departments with political clout" (University of Pennsylvania Archives, b). More than forty years after MacEdward Leach convinced the administration to give him his own graduate program, folklore's founding legacy of contested status within the University of Pennsylvania endures, and the program is once again striving to reinvent itself.

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