

ORALITY AND ORAL TRADITIONS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE FOR ARCHAEOLOGY

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Received: 14 Mar 2021

Accepted: 03 Apr 2021

Published: 17 Apr 2021

ABSTRACT

Oral traditions or dialogic tradition is transmission of knowledge, ideas, art, customs, from one generation to another in effort to preserve the past through vocal utterance for millennia prior to the invention of writing. Religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Catholicism have used oral traditions along with writing system to transmit their hymn, poems, rituals, mythologies, folk stories to future generations. Until about 4000 BCE, all literature was transmitted orally then writings developed in Egypt and the Mesopotamian civilizations. Just like the sites we cover, the objects we obtain, the bones we discover, the monuments we see, oral traditions too has a potent contribution in the archaeological study of past. This is really important to understand the importance of the long oral traditions. Even contemporary or modern scientifically prosperous archaeologists accept the need of dialogic tradition for the reconstruction of past. "Proximity is not alien to us in India. We are able to talk at some length. Krishna Menon's record of the longest speech ever delivered at the United Nations (nine hours non-stop), established half a century ago (when Menon was leading the Indian delegation), has not been equalled by anyone from anywhere" (The Argumentative Indian pg.21). Thus, it is hard to avoid the significance of dialogue in the historical studies of our country. To understand the past of India it is important to recognise the importance of Indian Argumentative heritage and investigate the interactions and evolving traditions. Scientific experts may argue that their analyses are different from oral traditions by criteria of scientific research and authenticity whereas oral historiography clearly has its own criteria of applauding and evaluating the events of the past. "In Hopi clan histories, there is no disagreement that the Snake clan came from the archaeologically known site of Tokoonavi (near Navajo Mountain) On the historical side of Hopi narrative, directly historical features include the named village sites themselves. Surely, as Fewkes suggests, many of these are directly identifiable and verifiable with Hopi clan histories: We thus have the names of three pueblos occupied by the Patki [Water clan] during their migration from Palatkwabi, before they arrived at Chaves pass, which have not yet been identified. These are Kwiniapa, Utcevaca, and Kuiichalpi. The determination of the sites of these villages, and a study of their archaeology, would prove to be an important contribution to the knowledge of the origin of the Patki clans. Anawita, chief of the Patki, a very reliable man, can point them out to any archaeologist who has the means to prosecute these studies in Arizona (Fewkes 1900), or the Water clan from Homol'ovi (near Winslow, Arizona)" (Whiteley pg.407). Also, Australian aboriginal culture has thrived on oral traditions especially of the Guditjmarra people of south-western Victoria who have been transmitting oral histories for about 60,000 years to reflect their strong bond with the landscape. They used to navigate their territories by through short songs popularly known as songlines.

KEYWORDS: *Orality and Oral Traditions, Archaeology*