



Oral Traditions of Western Rajasthan

FROM FATHER, TO SON...

Mapping the Role of Oral Traditions in Shaping Communal
Ideologies over Generations

LIST OF STUDENTS

	NAMES	SIGNATURES
1.	Aditi Trivedi	
2.	Arkana Dutta	
3.	Deepak Kewalramani	
4.	Juhi Shah	
5.	Prachi Bansal	
6.	Sanjna Mukhi	
7.	Sharanya Narayanan	
8.	Stuti Banthiya	
9.	Viha Rai	
10.	Vishruta Choudhary	

AUTHENTICATION CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work incorporated in this report entitled “From Father to Son: Oral Traditions of Western Rajasthan” submitted by the undersigned research team was carried out under my supervision. The research material obtained from other source has been duly acknowledged.

	NAMES	SIGNATURES
1.	Aditi Trivedi	
2.	Arkana Dutta	
3.	Deepak Kewalramani	
4.	Juhi Shah	
5.	Prachi Bansal	
6.	Sanjna Mukhi	
7.	Sharanya Narayanan	
8.	Stuti Banthiya	
9.	Viha Rai	
10.	Vishruta Choudhary	

Name of the mentor: Professor Gauri Gandhi

Signature:

Date:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A course like the Discover India Project is unique in nature. We would like to thank Foundation for Liberal and Management Education (FLAME) for having provided us with the opportunity to conduct a research of this magnitude at our current level of education. While working towards gathering data according to the research topic was the aim, the things we learnt through interacting with people from different backgrounds and with different perspectives will remain a cherished aspect of this course.

Our heartfelt gratitude to the DIP committee, headed by Dr. Suniti Vadalkar, for having helped us transition smoothly from selection of group to finalising on a topic and then working towards exploring our topic further. We would also like to thank our mentor, Prof. Gauri Gandhi for having helped us through the entire process of DIP and for her feedbacks and inputs which were always constructive. In addition we appreciate the continuous guidance provided to us by Dr. Meenakshi Rawani, Dr. Viraj Shah and Prof. Kunal Ray.

Our work on-field laid the basis for our project and for this reason we acknowledge the help provided to us by all those we met during the research trip. We express our gratitude towards Mr. Kuldeep Kothari (Secretary and Spokesperson for Rupayan Sansthan and the Arna Jharna Desert Museum) for his insights into our research topic, Mrs. Shilpa, Mr. Anil Sharma and Mr. Ravindra Rathore (authorities from Rupayan Sansthan and the Arna Jharna Desert Museum) for having helped us with our stay at the Arna Jharna Desert Museum and for bringing forth a few factors that were beyond the scope of our research but interesting to learn, nonetheless.

At last, the group of people that we would be most grateful to are the performers that we interacted with. Not only did they patiently answer all our questions and perform for us, but also welcomed us into their own villages and houses and enabled us to capture a glimpse of their lives. The patrons we met were equally hospitable and helped us understand the oral traditions from their own perspectives.

ABSTRACT

Oral traditions can be explained as verbal testimonies that bring aspects of the past to the present. They transmit historical data (facts, myths, legends, tales etc) from generation to generation, eventually leading to the shaping of a community's thoughts, values, belief systems and ideologies. Consequently, this research focuses on **“Mapping the role of oral traditions in shaping communal ideologies over generations”**. Given the patriarchal and highly complex society of Rajasthan, the oral traditions of this area constitute more than one dimension of origin, influence and evolution. Further narrowing down the focus to western Rajasthan enables a deeper study of the diversity this limited area has to offer.

These communal ideologies have been studied through the oral practices of five communities – the Kamads, the Kaavadiya Bhats, the Langhas, the Charans and the Phad performers. Each of these communities have continued with their method of oral expression despite the availability of ways of maintaining written records. Hence, it is this trait of still carrying forward their “legacy” of words that instilled the sense of curiosity and enthusiasm towards exploring this topic.

Scholarly research work in the field of oral traditions all over the globe has been extensive and multi-dimensional. The numerous perspectives used to study these oral forms of expressions range from their relevance as historical sources, the degree of reliability of their content, gender studies, their role in defining communal identities, esoteric traditions and inclusion of mnemonic devices, etc. All the above mentioned aspects form the basis to the analytical section of this research. In addition, the objectives of this research can be summarized as the documentation elements of nature of the oral traditions (performers, content, purpose, techniques, special features, etc.) and patronage (performer-“jajmaan” relationship); while the aspects of evolution and comparison of all the features above, form the analytical perspectives. The idea is to intertwine the extensive primary and secondary data collected, such that the features of the five oral traditions are studied individually to contribute to the study of oral traditions as a whole.

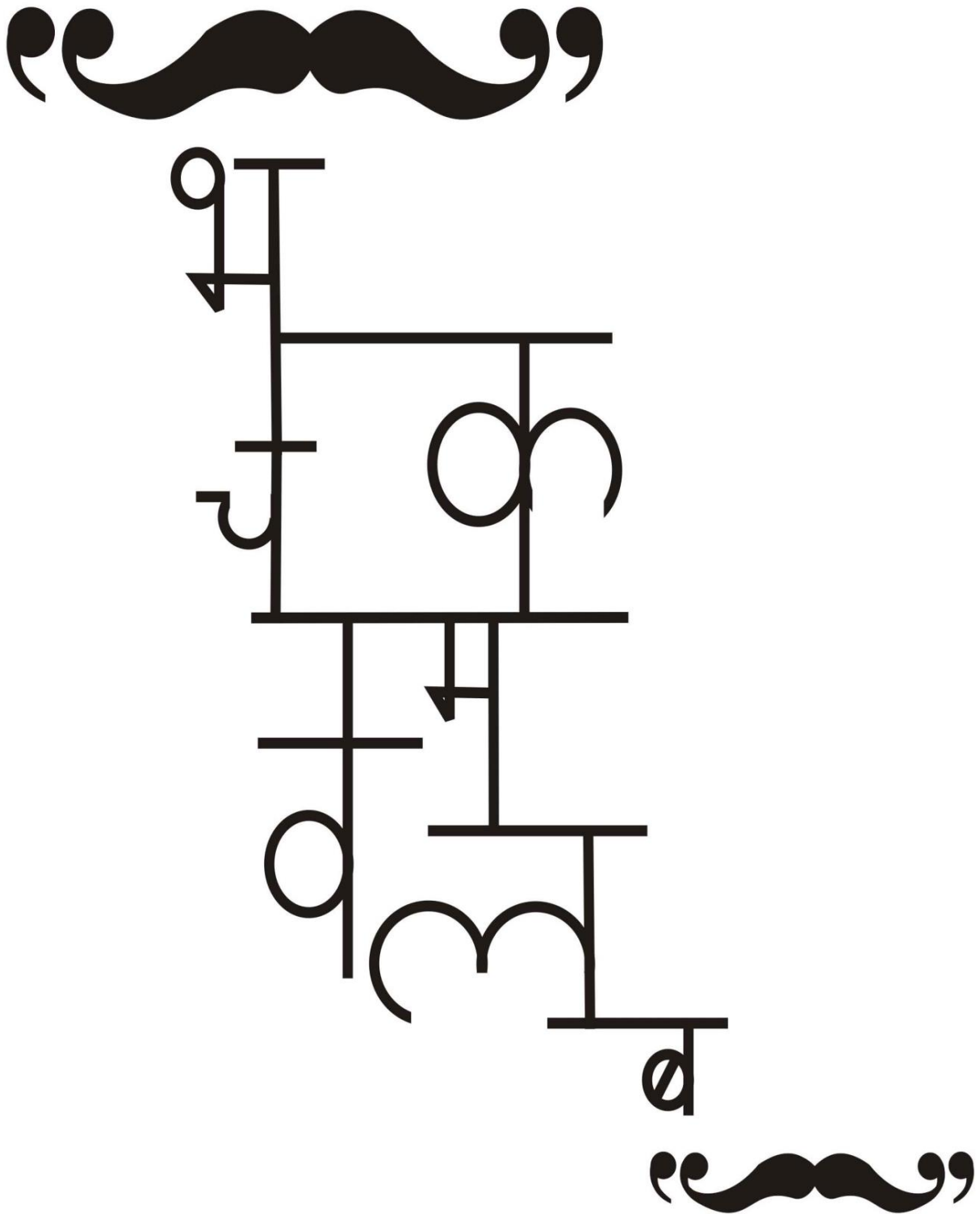
Based on the similarities, discrepancies and inferences from the analysis, (further supported by the limitations of this research), the importance of oral traditions in shaping communal ideologies can be understood. Using the focus of “From father, to son”, the patriarchal nature of the oral traditions under study is gauged, so as to succeed in capturing at least the essence of “much more than what meets the ears.”

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Overview	2
1.2 Research Topic	5
Chapter 2: Literature Review	7
2.1 From Around the World	8
2.2 Moving Closer to Home	9
2.3 Mumbles of the Moustache, Tales of the Turban	14
2.4 After All, Life Is a Stage and We Are the Performers	17
Chapter 3: Research Methodology	19
3.1 Objectives and Focus	26
3.2 Research Design	27
3.3 Limitations	29
Chapter 4: Data Collection and Analysis	33
4.1 Nature of the Oral Traditions	35
4.2 Patronage	36
4.3 From Scholars, to Students	69
Chapter 5: Conclusion	74
Chapter 6: Bibliography	80
Chapter 7: Appendices	86
Appendix 1: Objectives and Research Questions	87
Appendix 2: List of Question Used for Semi-Structured Interviews	88
Appendix 3: List of People Interviewed	89

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Western Rajasthan (Marwar Region)	3
Figure 2: Transition from Oral Traditions to Written Documentation	10
Figure 3: Classification of Oral Traditions (based on their degree of credibility).....	11
Figure 4: Categorisation of Oral Traditions.....	12
Figure 5: Formation of Communal Identity through Oral Epics	15
Figure 6: Summary of Secondary Data Available for the Chosen Oral Traditions	20
Figure 7: Relevant Concepts of Literature Review.....	25
Figure 8: Factors Associated with Each Objective	28
Figure 9: Map Depicting the Villages Visited	30
Figure 10: Community-specific Sampling.....	32
Figure 11: Connecting Objects to Concepts from Literature Review.....	34
Figure 12: Mr. Devalji, Author and Member of Charan Community	36
Figure 13: “Midway through Myths”: Mr. Bansi Lal, Kaavadiya Bhat.....	37
Figure 14: Melodious Narration of Legends: Mr. Sugna Ram, Bhopa.....	38
Figure 15: Engrossed in Melodies: Mr. Mehruddin Langha and Team.....	39
Figure 16: Melodies of the Manjira: Mr Roop Das Kamad and Family	40
Figure 17: Narrating the Myth of Shravan Kumar: Mr. Bansi Lal, Kaavadiya Bhat.....	43
Figure 18: The Life and Deeds of Pabuji: Phad Performance by Mr. Sugna Ram	44
Figure 19: Revealing the Content Inside a Kaavad.....	46
Figure 20: Religiously Unfolding the Contents of a Kaavad.....	49
Figure 21: The Sarangi Used by the Langha Performers.....	54
Figure 22: The Morechang Used by the Langha Performers.....	54
Figure 23: The Ravanhatta Used by the Phad Performers	55
Figure 24: The Tambura Used by the Kamads	55
Figure 25: Sounds of the Cymbals: Teratali Performance.....	57
Figure 26: Grace Personified: Teratali Performance	58
Figure 27: Grace Personified: Teratali Performance	58
Figure 28: Mesmerising Melodies: Langha Performance.....	60
Figure 29: “Gathas” Performed by Bhopa and Bhopi.....	61
Figure 30: “Tale”ing: Narration by Kaavadiya Bhat	62
Figure 31: Mr. Narsingh Ram, Kaavadiya Bhat, with his Patrons.....	65
Figure 32: Langhas at their Patron’s House.....	66
Figure 33: Summary of the Research Report.....	79



Introduction

1.1 OVERVIEW

*In the Vast Expanse of the Brown Ocean
Lie Majestic, Rustic Cities
With Fortified Walls, Cemented with History
Inhabited by Colour-charged People
Whose Words Speak Louder than Words...*

Recreating an image of the past can be reflective of an attempt at solving a jigsaw puzzle. Numerous loops that fit into multiple holes; all answers appearing alternatively and simultaneously correct; every source occurring seemingly believable. With the multiplicity of sources, accurately solving this puzzle is nearly impossible. Oral traditions are one of these sources that form the roots of passing on pieces of the past. Given the high proportion of subjectivity associated with them, each loop of this jigsaw puzzle could be modified to suit the player. Hence when embarking on a venture with a fragile base one has to take appropriate measures: tread carefully, dig tactfully, document selectively and analyse rationally.

One of the earliest methods of conveying the highlights of the preceding times, oral traditions are used to express ideas, beliefs and values that shape the lives of an entire group of people. One version of its conventional definition illustrates oral traditions as verbal expressions, which involves usage of words of speech in a highly stylized and artistic way¹. Reiterating the element of subjectivity associated with its interpretation, this tradition could be portrayed as a medium of carrying forward the rich heritage of the past in the multi-dimensional form it has always been. For example, the exemplary actions of local heroes (sometimes exalted to the position of human gods) are sung as hymns, poetically composed, and/or performed as theatrical acts against beautifully painted visual backdrops. Each of these, not only pass on the significant events of the past but also help the future generations to visualize, feel and imbibe the essence of those times. Hence bringing to the audience, more than one dimension of the culturally rich legacy they take after.

Rajasthan is a state renowned for its diversity in terms of the communities, their cultures, arts and traditions that have been carried forward over generations. The folklores of

¹Vansina, Jan. *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*. N.p.: Transaction, 1972. *Google Books*. Web. 26 Dec. 2013.

Rajasthan have imbibed the content from the inherent beauty and diversity of their land.² Western Rajasthan is, characteristically, an agro-pastoral peasant economy and this lifestyle is reflected in the oral traditions preserved by the communities that reside in this region.³



Figure 1: Western Rajasthan (Marwar Region)

Pabuji's Phad is one such art form that represents this multi-coloured facet of Rajasthan⁴. Practiced mainly by the Bhopas and Bhopis of the Nayak and Bhil communities of Rajasthan, the painting and the performance centres around the lives of great local heroes like Pabuji and Devnarayan. Phad, the painted piece of cloth that serves as the visual backdrop for the performers, is created by a community in Bhilwara⁵. On the same lines is the practice of the Kamads/Kamadiyas. They sing songs and hymns in praise of Ramdeoiji. The women of this community perform a dance called 'Teratali', which again is in keeping with their devotion towards Ramdeoiji⁶. Visual aids of another kind are used by the Kaavadiya

²Bharucha, Rustom, and Komal Kothari. "Oral Epics." *Rajasthan, an Oral History: Conversations with Komal Kothari*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2003. 85-117. Print.

³Bharucha, Rustom, and Komal Kothari. "Oral Epics." *Rajasthan, an Oral History: Conversations with Komal Kothari*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2003. 85-117. Print.

⁴"Phad Paintings." *Arts & Crafts | Central Board of Secondary Education*. Central Board of Secondary Education, 16 July 2012. Web. 02 Sept. 2013. <<http://heritage.cbseacademic.in/blog/index.php/arts-and-crafts-2/>>.

⁵Wickett, Elizabeth. "The Epic of Pabuji Ki Par in Performance." World Oral Literature Project (University of Cambridge), 19 Oct. 2010. Web. 03 Sept. 2013. <https://www.repository.cam.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1810/226673/WOLP_OP_03_lores.pdf;jsessionid=242AF5C092A31E61138D8258C0FC901C?sequence=2>.

⁶Barucha, Rustom, and Komal Kothari. *Rajasthan, an Oral History: Conversation with Komal Kothari*. N.p.: Penguin India, 2003. *Google Books*. Web. 02 Sept. 2013.

Bhats who keep a record of the ancestries of their patrons. The genealogies are presented in rhythmic narrations along with the sequential opening of the panels of a sacred wooden box⁷. Charans are from a community of bards, who talk about their royal patrons' great achievements and ancestries in the absence of any visual or audio aids⁸. Langhas are a group of hereditary musicians who entertain their audiences and patrons with songs about birth, death, matrimony, genealogies, myths and history⁹.

Evidently, these are just a few pieces of the 'larger than life' jigsaw puzzle being attempted to reconstruct. Nevertheless, these oral traditions form some of the most prominent pieces of passing on information about the past. They bring to light a relatively broad picture of the image being re-created by each father, for his son, over generations. The diversity of the country is one of the factors that define India, as does the process of passing on traditions orally. By focusing on one region (Western Rajasthan) that is blessed with such diversity, an insight can be obtained into how similar traditions could have varied intentions and methods of transmission, despite being in the same geographical vicinity.

While passing on the art of a community is a prevalent practice throughout the country, the focus of this research is on the content (i.e., values, morality, ancestry, beliefs) in them. The techniques hold information not just about the performers and their communities but also that of the patrons, which they wish to see being carried forward through their children. A combination of the content, techniques, patrons and performers, performance and special features, all comprise of the nature that is intended to be documented. Most studies so far have focused only on the history, failing to record the present day scenario and the changes it has brought to these arts¹⁰. As a result, a need arises for studying the evolution of the relationship between the performers and their patrons. All of these characteristics add the much-required colour to the image being 'puzzled' together. And thus will be further enhanced by the perspective of comparison between these oral traditions.

<<http://books.google.co.in/books?id=41duAAAAMAAJ&q=Kamad,+Rajasthan&dq=Kamad,+Rajasthan&hl=en&sa=X&ei=2JAKUpasAcfHrQegzYHIDQ&ved=0CFIQ6AEwBw>>.

⁷Jensen, Jan, and Henk W.J Maier, eds. *Epic Adventures: Heroic Narrative in the Oral Performance Traditions of Four Continents*. N.p.: Transaction, 2004. *Google Books*.Web. 02 Sept. 2013.

<<http://books.google.co.in/books?id=UJEyHSUy8GMC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>>.

⁸Kamphorst, Janet. *In Praise of Death: History and Poetry in Medieval Marwar (South Asia)*. N.p.: Leiden UP, 2008. <http://dare.uva.nl/document/131478>. Universiteit Van Amsterdam. Web. 02 Sept. 2013.

<<http://dare.uva.nl/document/131478>>.

⁹Folk musical instruments of Rajasthan: a folio. Rajasthan Institute of Folklore, 1977.<http://books.google.co.in/books/about/Folk_Musical_Instruments_of_Rajasthan.html?id=VaFjXwAACA&redir_esc=y>.

¹⁰Vansina, Jan. *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*. N.p.: Transaction, 1972. *Google Books*.Web. 26 Dec. 2013

Therefore, using the connecting loops and holes, the aim is to piece together this jigsaw with its vibrant colours, such that it provides a close study of this medium of passing on history and its transgression over years.

1.2 RESEARCH TOPIC

Oral traditions, as a medium of gifting one's cultural legacy to the succeeding generations, are undoubtedly a very broad subject under study. Consequently the focus has been narrowed down to one aspect that guides the approach of studying oral traditions. Hence the underlying research focus is: **"Mapping the Role of Oral Traditions in Shaping Communal Ideologies over Generations."**

"Mapping", when viewed in an academic light, is "the act of associating one element of a given set, with one or more elements of another set."¹¹ This academic precision reflects the infinity of emotions this research aims to capture; the act of a father passing on culture, traditions and knowledge he possesses, to his son through oral traditions. The head of one family, laying the basis to the beginning (and smooth functioning) of another family headed by his son – from the element of one set to that of the other. Eventually fulfilling his "role" of sowing the seed of values and then nurturing his young one. Enhancing the role of the father, is the role of the medium he uses to impart his culture, traditions, values and a means of livelihood – the medium of, oral traditions. "Oral Traditions are the verbal testimonies, which transfer the past in the present, through the medium of language"¹².

Consequently, we intend to form the mirror that reflects the shadow a father would want to cast on his son while he masters the nuances of a life he would be stepping into – as an integral element of a family, a society and a community. Hence, identifying the patriarchal attempt at continuing the process of preserving "communal ideologies over generations." Thus apart from documenting the nature, themes, performance elements and evolution of the oral traditions, the focus is also on relationships – be it father to son or performer to patron. Each relationship provides an enticing route of "mapping" the association between the two 'sets' of people.

¹¹"Definition of Mapping in English." *Mapping: Definition of Mapping in Oxford Dictionary (British & World English)*. N.p., n.d. Web. 2 Feb. 2014. <<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/mapping>>.

¹²Vansina, Jan. *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*. N.p.: Transaction, 1972. Google Books. Web. 26 Dec. 2013.

Therefore, the intention of this research is to identify the role that oral traditions play in shaping the ideologies of any community they are associated with. Nevertheless, similar to the case of a shadow, the reducing credibility of oral traditions (and their content) due to the limited precision they offer (in comparison to the modern practice of relying mainly on the written word) cannot be ignored. Hence though the idea is to reflect an image of a shadow, its blurry edges and unreliable precision will be tactfully rationalised and selectively mirrored.



Literature Review

ORAL TRADITIONS – SCHOLARLY PERSPECTIVES

“Oral traditions consist of all verbal testimonies which are reported statements concerning the past. Not all oral sources are oral traditions, but only those which are reported statements- that is, sources which have been transmitted from one person to another through the medium of language.”¹³ From generation to generation, from father to son, oral traditions communicate more than just stories, they transmit the past in the present.¹⁴

Most scholars view oral traditions as historical sources of a special nature; their special nature stems from their characteristic of being unwritten and instead embedded in a form that is suitable for oral transmission. Hence, their preservation depends on the retention capacity of the successive generations of human beings. Inferences from previous research suggest that oral traditions still continue to exist at the heart of the surroundings that gave rise to them; it is in these areas that they have not been torn away from their natural context, to be replaced by written documents. Evidently, it is these places and their unique oral traditions, which lay the foundation to multiple perspectives (history, ethnography, philosophy, gender studies, musicology, etc.) that guide research work conducted by scholars from all over the globe¹⁵. Some of these research inferences have been detailed in the sections that follow.

¹³ Vansina, Jan. *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*. N.p.: Transaction, 1972. Google Books. Web. 26 Dec. 2013.

¹⁴ Bharucha, Rustom, and Komal Kothari. "Oral Epics." *Rajasthan, an Oral History: Conversations with Komal Kothari*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2003. 85-117. Print.

¹⁵ Vansina, Jan. "1. Oral Tradition and Historical Methodology." *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*. Trans. H. M. Wright. 2nd ed. New Brunswick: Transaction, 2009. 1-3. Print.

2.1 FROM AROUND THE WORLD...

Oral Traditions as Sources of History

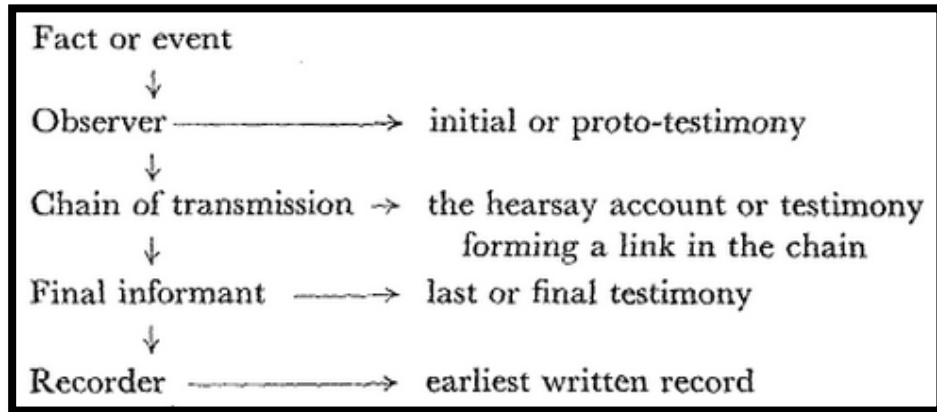
Jan Vansina, a professor emeritus of history and anthropology, has carried out elaborate research in the field of African oral traditions. He and his contemporaries have analysed oral traditions and their special features as historical sources – based on the proposition that these traditions are not only the sources of history for peoples without writing, but also the basis to many of the written sources (especially those of Classical Antiquity and Early Middle Ages). Vansina's research has been based on present day pre-literate social groups, primarily those that function as guardians of African oral traditions. Similarly, other scholars such as A. Van Gennep have studied the transmission of historical content through oral traditions in Europe; but the focus in such studies has acknowledged the possibility of multiple distortions of the content as its gets passed down over generations. Hence extensive research of this kind has been carried out to evaluate the reliability of such traditional material especially with regards to the historical and legendary content.

To provide another dimension to the much debated issue of the reliability of oral traditions as historical sources, academicians like E. Sapir use their fieldwork in the Americas to propagate the notion of using oral traditions as one of the main sources available to an ethno-historian. Supporting this claim is his study that focuses on the act of migration of Pueblo Indians and Aztec people, which led him to conclude that “a ring of history” does exist in the accounts of these migrants. In addition to the history, culture, traditions and way of life, migration triggers a transfer of the essence that underlies the oral tradition. When considered in tandem with the Chinese story telling art called “Chuan-Pien”, there is an indication of a possible assimilation of characteristically Indian story telling elements. Sources suggest that the Indian Buddhist Monks took with them not only the historical and religious content, but also techniques common to India's “chantfables” such as those which alternate between narratives and songs¹⁶.

Reiterating the terms coined by E.Sapir, the existence of a “ring of history” has been debated and further explained by multiple scholars. While some express an overt faith in the information derived from oral traditions, many others maintain that it is the philosophical and

¹⁶Mair, Victor H. "The Buddhist Tradition of Prosimetric Oral Narrative in Chinese Literature." *Oral Tradition Journal* 3.1-2 (1988): 106-21. *Oral Tradition Journal*. Web. 17 Feb. 2014. <http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/articles/3i-ii/6_mair.pdf>.

psychological elements of the people, which are revealed through the content. Jan Vansina illustrates the transition of an oral tradition through the various stages, from its probable origin/derivation until it is documented as a written record:



17

Figure 2: Transition from Oral Traditions to Written Documentation

On the other hand, numerous scholarly views identify the role of oral traditions in customary law, portrayal of myths and legends rather than historical facts. The stage of “Chain of transmission” in the above illustration cannot be devoid of the selectiveness, bias and distortions that accompany the multiplicity of propagators, which has proved to reduce credibility of content over time. Since history has always possessed a conjectural quality¹⁸ and its reconstruction is always a matter of degree of truthfulness, oral traditions have been categorised as the following¹⁹:

¹⁷Vansina, Jan. "2.Tradition As a Chain of Testimonies." *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*. Trans. H. M. Wright. 2nd ed. New Brunswick: Transaction, 2009. 21. Print.

¹⁸Vansina, Jan. "1.Oral Tradition and Historical Methodology." *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*. Trans. H. M. Wright. 2nd ed. New Brunswick: Transaction, 2009. 13. Print.

¹⁹Vansina, Jan. "1.Oral Tradition and Historical Methodology." *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*. Trans. H. M. Wright. 2nd ed. New Brunswick: Transaction, 2009. 8-14. Print.

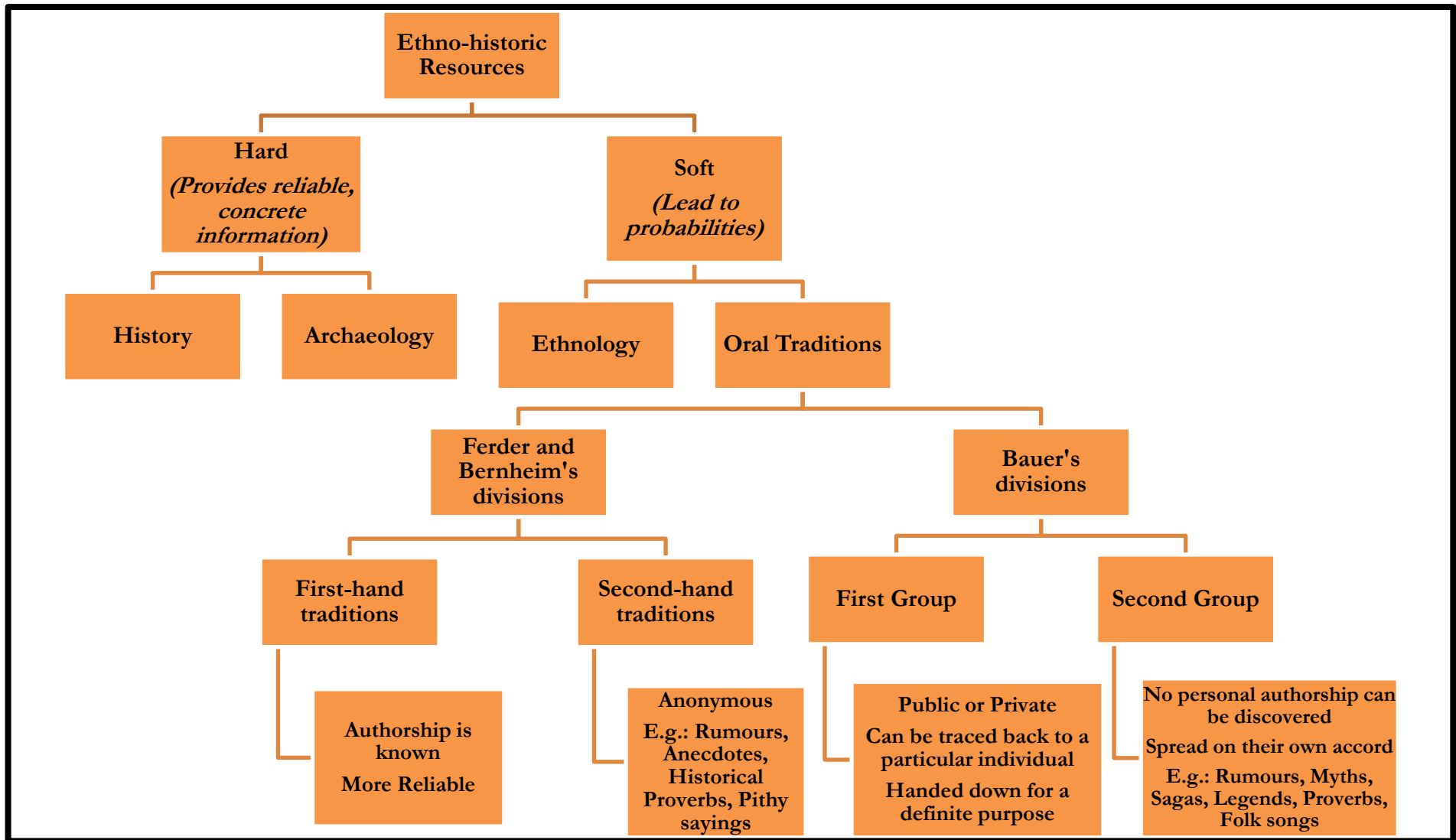


Figure 3: Classification of Oral Traditions (based on their degree of credibility)

Segregation based on authorship and propagation of oral tradition is only one of the ways of classification. However, the tabular representation below provides a pattern of segregation based on the content and techniques associated with the various types of oral tradition²⁰.

	CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	TYPES	DESCRIPTION
1	Formulae	-	Titles	Personal status
			Slogans	Character of a particular group of people – family, clan, district or country.
			Didactic formulae	Proverbs, riddles, saying, epigrams
			Ritual formulae	Codified rites and judicial oaths
2	Poetry	<i>Official</i>	Historical	Account of historical events
			Panegyric	Poems of praise
		<i>Private</i>	Religious	Prayers, hymns and dogmatic texts
			Personal	Free expression of feelings
3	Lists	-	Place names	Places known and unknown to informants revealed through records of migration.
			Personal names	Genealogical information
4	Tales	<i>Historical</i>	General	History of centralized societies
			Local	History of smaller units within the state
			Family	History of lineages
		<i>Didactic</i>	Aetiological myths	Local legends, tales about natural phenomena, popular etymologies, tales about cultural traits
		<i>Artistic</i>	Artistic	Historical element reduced to background, other elements added for pleasure of listener and performer
		<i>Personal</i>	Personal memories	Preserved in memory of the informant, stay within family or neighbourhood
5	Commentaries	<i>Legal</i>	Precedents	Supply directives for solving legal problems
		<i>Auxiliary</i>	Explanatory	Recited alongside other types of oral traditions to provide additional explanations; can be true or falsely invented
		<i>Sporadic</i>	Occasional comments	Secondary information which reflects diffusion of cultural traits and ideas

Figure 4: Categorisation of Oral Traditions

²⁰Vansina, Jan. "6. Historical Knowledge." *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*. Trans. H. M. Wright. 2nd ed. New Brunswick: Transaction, 2009. 141-163. Print.

From the Works of Ethnologists

Adding the ethnological perspective to the study of oral traditions, multiple scholars have also addressed their gender specific attributes, which is reflective of the social system. The studies carried out in South Asian countries focus on the paradoxes of gender roles and hierarchy of the Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist people inhabiting these countries. Women's oral traditions (especially their songs) have been viewed as examples that explain some aspects of gender relations and self-image, as it exists in their milieus (social environment). They identify these songs as a method to convey thoughts, emotions and opinions, which they may not be able to express through regular communication – the voice beneath their overpowering silence. Hence, women centric oral traditions have been studied as mediums of expression entailing a crucial aspect of the social structure. For example, the Indian and Nepali women's narratives speak volumes of the relationship between both genders²¹ and that of different age groups in the same gender (the various social roles of women, power struggles between a mother-in-law and a newlywed daughter-in-law, etc.)²²

Incomplete without Accompaniments

In addition to the narration of content, each “guardian of this oral source” has brought to light a different medium of oral transmission. The concept of oral traditions has taken shape with an inclusion of a performance element – while some traditions continue to include chants or narrative styles, some have incorporated performance-based elements like songs, poetic recitations, dances etc. On the other hand, some traditions make use of mnemonic devices, which are essentially material objects that facilitate remembrance of content. Their significance is heightened due to the practice of passing them down through generations along with the content itself; thus they remain firmly engraved as an integral and constant part of the community and tradition. If not used as mnemonic devices, they are merely material objects with sacred value. In addition, geographical setting and rhythm of songs can serve as mnemonic devices²³.

²¹Raheja, Gloria G. "Introduction - The Paradoxes of Power and Community: Women's Oral Traditions and the Uses of Ethnography." *Oral Tradition Journal* 12.1 (1997): 1-22. *Oral Tradition Journal*. Web. 17 Feb. 2014. <http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/articles/12i/1e_Raheja_Introduction.pdf>.

²²Lamb, Sarah. "The Beggared Mother: Older Women's Narratives in West Bengal." *Oral Tradition Journal* 12.1 (1997): 54-75. *Oral Tradition Journal*. Web. 17 Feb. 2014. <http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/articles/12i/3_lamb.pdf>.

²³Vansina, Jan. "2.Tradition As a Chain of Testimonies." *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*. Trans. H. M. Wright. 2nd ed. New Brunswick: Transaction, 2009. 36-39. Print.

2.2 MOVING CLOSER TO HOME...

Oral traditions form a medium of passing on some of the key elements of Indian culture. The culture that has been constituted and carried forward by inhabitants of our populous country, so much so that the traditional essence remains ‘close to its roots’. To transmit the information of peoples without writing, oral traditions form the basis of preserving the knowledge essential to be passed on. In India it is the traditions, values, beliefs, the profession and the art of the performance unique to that group of people, which gets intertwined to constitute the knowledge passed down over generations.

Beginning from the Vedas, the earliest (academically traced back) record of the existence of oral tradition in India dates back to approximately 1500 BCE²⁴. Until the commencement of written documentation, the individual texts within the Vedic Literature were “organic parts” of highly developed bardic and priestly tradition, which despite being documented in the form of many critically edited texts continued to be transmitted orally into the 21st century. Be it the Vedas or the Indian Epics, the oral transmission has been content-based; it brings to the present, pieces of the past.

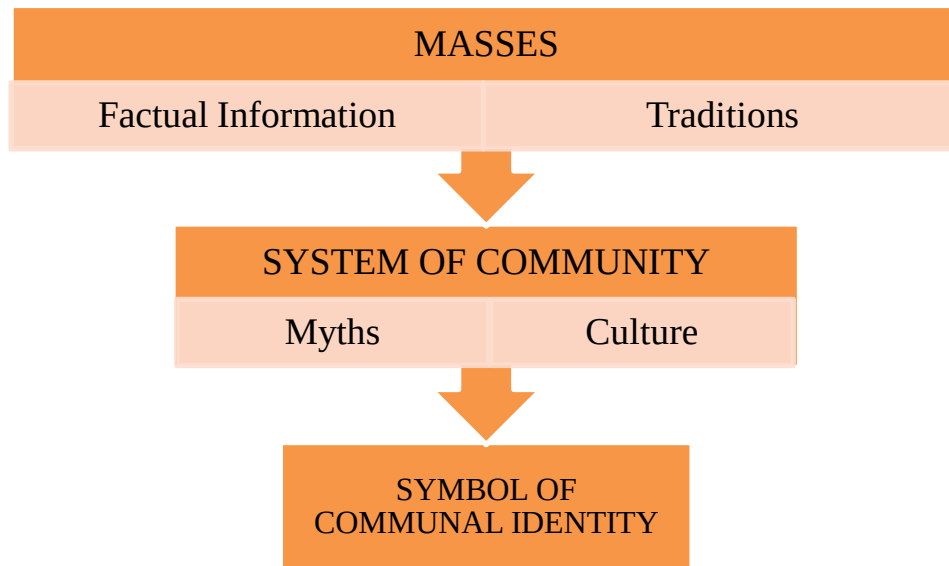
“Epic”ally Portrayed

Oral Epics as have been defined by the scholar Lauri Honko are “epic poems or prose narratives that live or have lived in oral traditions”, those that have “survived in the minds of the performers as mental texts, that may have undergone some editing”. Thus, he and most of his contemporaries have viewed oral epics as shapers of the performers’ regional and/or communal identity – “Oral Epics: Tales of Identity”²⁵. As seen in the table below, he presents the process as: the incorporation of oral epics in a community’s culture from the factual information and ideologies already prevalent amongst the masses. This, followed by the integration of such factual information and ideologies into the local concept of world order by according them the sacredness of a myth, eventually led to the formation of a

²⁴Thapar, Romila. "The Theory of Aryan Race and India: History and Politics." *Social Scientist* 24.1/3 (1996): 8. *JSTOR*.Web. 30 July 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3520116>>.

²⁵Honko, Lauri. "Epic and Identity: National, Regional, Communal, Individual." *Oral Tradition Journal* 11.1 (1996): 18-36. *Oral Tradition Journal*.Web. 17 Feb. 2014. <http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/articles/11i/6_honko.pdf>.

common identity²⁶. The moral values, religious ideologies contained in the epics/myths, form the basis to the emergence of the communal identity²⁷.



28

Figure 5: Formation of Communal Identity through Oral Epics

In India, the content passed down orally has also been viewed as a piece of information rather than a tradition itself. More specifically, scholars identify such pieces of information as “folk epics” which refer to oral or written versions of original epics, which have been conveyed through multiple regional languages. The Mahabharata and Ramayana form examples of such folk epics because their vernacular versions have been identified as those which develop alongside frequent interactions with the original Sanskrit version. Hence post processes of “fragmentation”, and “proximation” (that includes “localization”, “adaption/domestication”, “contemporarization”) the content passed down orally retains the traits of the original version while still remaining contextually relevant to the region and community it is adapted by²⁹.

²⁶Honko, Lauri. "Epic and Identity: National, Regional, Communal, Individual." *Oral Tradition Journal* 11.1 (1996): 18-36. *Oral Tradition Journal*.Web. 17 Feb. 2014. <http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/articles/11i/6_honko.pdf>.

²⁷Koskikallio, Petteri. "From Classical to Postclassical: Changing Ideologies and Changing Epics in India." *Oral Tradition Journal* 11.1 (1996): 144-53. *Oral Tradition Journal*.Web. 17 Feb. 2014. <http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/articles/11i/13_koskikallio.pdf>.

²⁸Koskikallio, Petteri. "From Classical to Postclassical: Changing Ideologies and Changing Epics in India." *Oral Tradition Journal* 11.1 (1996): 144-53. *Oral Tradition Journal*.Web. 17 Feb. 2014. <http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/articles/11i/13_koskikallio.pdf>.

²⁹Koskikallio, Petteri. "From Classical to Postclassical: Changing Ideologies and Changing Epics in India." *Oral Tradition Journal* 11.1 (1996): 144-53. *Oral Tradition Journal*.Web. 17 Feb. 2014. <http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/articles/11i/13_koskikallio.pdf>.

Voices from beneath the “Ghunghat”

Women’s songs as a form of oral traditions have been studied extensively around the world. When considering India in isolation, it is observed that the pattern of studying oral traditions concerned with women, is equally vast. The older women’s narratives of West Bengal, women’s folk songs from Tamil Nadu, tales from Karnataka³⁰ and Rajasthani folklore³¹ are all examples that showcase the variety of mediums women’s oral traditions cover. The earliest record of similar female centric ethnographic research dates back to 1910, when William Crooke (renowned folklorist in colonial India) published a collection of “Religious Songs from Northern India”³².

The “Jajman” Connection

The few available scholarly sources exploring the aspect of patronage in oral traditions are indicative of the striking similarity between the position of women and that of the performers, whose treatment was at the discretion of the patrons. A recent study of the performer-patron relationship in the context of North India’s caste patronage (“jajmaani”) system reveals the existence of a derogatory approach taken by the patrons where “the poor were defined as beggars because the payments were given only when asked for with folded hands” and that “to beg is to make oneself like a woman, namely, powerless.” Consequently, the idea of patronage in the 1990s is largely identified as that which looked down upon the performers. However, no source defies the existence of “other social situations” wherein the “receiver of gifts is honoured, loved and considered worthy of worship.”³³

³⁰Lamb, Sarah. "The Beggared Mother: Older Women’s Narratives in West Bengal." *Oral Tradition Journal* 12.1 (1997): 54-75. *Oral Tradition Journal*.Web. 17 Feb. 2014.
<http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/articles/12i/3_lamb.pdf>.

³¹Raheja, Gloria G. "Introduction - The Paradoxes of Power and Community: Women’s Oral Traditions and the Uses of Ethnography." *Oral Tradition Journal* 12.1 (1997): 1-22.*Oral Tradition Journal*. Web. 17 Feb. 2014.
<http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/articles/12i/1e_Raheja_Introduction.pdf>.

³²Raheja, Gloria G. "Introduction - The Paradoxes of Power and Community: Women’s Oral Traditions and the Uses of Ethnography." *Oral Tradition Journal* 12.1 (1997): 1-22.*Oral Tradition Journal*. Web. 17 Feb. 2014.
<http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/articles/12i/1e_Raheja_Introduction.pdf>.

³³Gold, Ann G. "Outspoken Women: Representations of Female Voices in a Rajasthani Folklore Community." *Oral Tradition Journal* 12.1 (119): 103-33. *Oral Tradition Journal*.Web. 17 Feb. 2014.
<http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/articles/12i/5_gold.pdf>.

2.3 MUMBLES OF THE MOUSTACHE, TALKS OF THE TURBAN...

Folklore, the Rajasthani Way

Folklore as a type of oral tradition in Rajasthan has been studied by scholars like Ann Gold and Gloria Goodwin Raheja³⁴ whose focus is an extension of the previously done research on gender based oral traditions. Alongside, identifying the differences between men's and women's folklore they have also focussed upon the contradictions put forth by each perspective. For example, women's folklore views the emphasis on the fulfilment of a woman's desires in a positive light, whereas men's folklore considers the same as being demands put forth as threats and curses. Also, their observation of performances has revealed a distinct pattern where the certain elements (like "spousal intimacy" and "women's forthright speech") are discouraged in public performances through men's feigned indifference towards "the species of women"; actions that are otherwise valued in private settings³⁵. Hence, clearly highlighting the selectiveness of the content when presenting oral traditions as performances.

Complemented by Melodies

Folk Music in the context of oral traditions, has been documented more than academically analysed. It appears to be a process of surfacing the hidden ("much rooted") traditions of a vastly diverse Indian culture by recording them in their original form so as to at least preserve them. This can be exemplified through the experience shared by Mr. Komal Kothari, a renowned ethnomusicologist who has been instrumental in reviving fading oral traditions practiced by multiple Rajasthani musicians and bringing to them not just recognition but also international fame. Supported by the unending efforts of Mr. Vijay Dan Detha, multiple folk music traditions have been revived from the brink of fading. It is their work that provides the necessary insight into the performance based oral traditions of Rajasthan³⁶.

³⁴Raheja, Gloria G. "Introduction - The Paradoxes of Power and Community: Women's Oral Traditions and the Uses of Ethnography." *Oral Tradition Journal* 12.1 (1997): 1-22. *Oral Tradition Journal*. Web. 17 Feb. 2014. <http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/articles/12i/1e_Raheja_Introduction.pdf>.

³⁵Gold, Ann G. "Outspoken Women: Representations of Female Voices in a Rajasthani Folklore Community." *Oral Tradition Journal* 12.1 (119): 103-33. *Oral Tradition Journal*. Web. 17 Feb. 2014. <http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/articles/12i/5_gold.pdf>.

³⁶Bharucha, Rustom, and Komal Kothari. "11. From the Local to the Global: Rajasthani Folk Music in Performance." *Rajasthan, an Oral History: Conversations with Komal Kothari*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2003. 236-37. Print.

The work done in the field explored by ethnomusicologists can be summarized as transcription of songs performed by communities like the Langhas and the Manganiyars, audio recordings of their performances, publishing of these transcribed lyrics in journals like “Prerna” and “Parampara”; eventually leading to the communities’ national recognition³⁷. With the help of foreign researchers, a more sophisticated approach of recording and documentation was implemented and essential contacts were established such that the 1980s opened international gateways for folk musician communities like Langhas, Manganiyars, Kamads (Teratali) and Bhopa-Bhopis (Pabuji ki Par). It is crucial to note that though these performers have gained recognition on their performance based grounds, they were the subject of Mr. Kothari’s research work primarily due to their literary content. Hence the minimal amount of academic analysis that has been done in the field of folk music (oral) tradition stems from this literary element it possesses³⁸.

³⁷Bharucha, Rustom, and Komal Kothari. "11. From the Local to the Global: Rajasthani Folk Music in Performance." *Rajasthan, an Oral History: Conversations with Komal Kothari*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2003. 237+244. Print.

³⁸Bharucha, Rustom, and Komal Kothari. "11. From the Local to the Global: Rajasthani Folk Music in Performance." *Rajasthan, an Oral History: Conversations with Komal Kothari*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2003. 244-45. Print.

2.4 AFTER ALL, LIFE IS A STAGE, INCOMPLETE WITHOUT THE PERFORMERS

The literature review is based primarily on the studies done on individual communities and their arts. However, a few books focusing on ballads and poetry in more than one of the communities have also been referred to. In addition, some of the understanding is based on journal articles a few of the communities in focus. Majority of these sources focus on the artists and other members of the performing community (including the aspects which are not related to oral traditions). The Arna Jharna Desert Museum's archive has documents based on research previously done on oral traditions of Rajasthan.

Attention in the previously done research has been given to the means through which oral traditions are passed on. With very little reference to the people associated with these traditions, the only concrete explanation has been in terms of technical distinction of certain oral traditions as esoteric traditions. Some communities have been described as those which possess esoteric knowledge, i.e. information which is exclusively meant for a selected group of people; no one else is allowed to transmit, view or own the rights to access this information even if they are well-informed about the tradition as a whole. An idea that was commonly associated with the aristocracy and priesthood in earlier times, this exclusivity is also assumed by social groups³⁹. Some of these esoteric traditions fall under the scope of this research and the data available in the context of each community has been tabulated below:

³⁹Vansina, Jan. "2.Tradition As a Chain of Testimonies." *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*. Trans. H. M. Wright. 2nd ed. New Brunswick: Transaction, 2009. 34-36. Print.

Oral Traditions of Western Rajasthan

TRADITION	NATURE			PATRONAGE	EVOLUTION
	<i>Performers</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>Techniques and Performance elements</i>		
Kamad and Teratali	• The performing community belongs to a caste called “Kamad” • Referred to as “wandering minstrels” or “jugglers”⁴⁰ • Devotees of local hero Ramdeo • Consists of male and female performers who might belong to the same family⁴¹	• Ritualistic and commercial elements are intertwined to popularise the heroic deeds and divine attributes of Ramdeo • Ritualistic attributes put forth through bhajans/hymns, stutis (panegyric verses), and aartis⁴²	• The hymns sung by males form the most integral element which is enhanced by women’s “teratali” dance performance⁴³ • Males sing to the tunes of dholak, tal (heavy cymbals) and khartals • Women perform using cymbals (manjiras) • Performances are planned as all night singing sessions called “jagrans” • Dance movements inspired by daily domestic activities such as grinding, pounding, churning, spinning, etc.⁴⁴	• The patrons community comprises of Meghwals of Nagaur district • Staunch devotees of Ramdeo⁴⁵	• Reduced involvement of women in recent times due to social pressures • Increased proportion of ritualistic elements leading to Kamads officially assuming the role of priests at Ramdeo’s temples⁴⁶ • Arabic influence (due to probable political changes) has shaped the performance – transition of “jagrans” to the Arabic “jamat” • These jamats exclude the teratali dance⁴⁷

⁴⁰Khan, Dominique Sila. "The Kamad of Rajasthan: Priests of a Forgotten Tradition." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 3rd ser. 6.1 (1996): 29-56. *Jstor*.Web. 15 Dec. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25183118>>.

⁴¹Bharucha, Rustom, and Komal Kothari. "Teratali." *Rajasthan, an Oral History: Conversations with Komal Kothari*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2003. 181-87. Print.

⁴²Khan, Dominique Sila. "The Kamad of Rajasthan: Priests of a Forgotten Tradition." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 3rd ser. 6.1 (1996): 29-56. *Jstor*.Web. 15 Dec. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25183118>>.

Oral Traditions of Western Rajasthan

Charan	• Equivalent to wandering minstrels • Devoted to literary pursuit • Originally herders but performed the role of bards for the Rajasthani royalty⁴⁸	• Poetries of praise and encouragement for Rajput kings • Genealogies • Could also contain subtle criticisms⁴⁹	• Recitation of poetic compositions written in Marwari language • Performed in the royal court or at battlefields⁵⁰	• Appointed by Rajput kings • Their skills and presence in the court enhance the king's prestige • Accompany kings to the battlefield to stimulate their warrior patrons to perform heroic deeds⁵¹ • Enjoyed great respect and power in royal courts⁵²	• Community lost importance after the advent of the British • Replaced by many lower class communities who adopted the same name • Substitute communities cater to the modern Rajputs (or landlords)⁵³
--------	--	---	---	---	---

⁴³Khan, Dominique Sila. "The Kamad of Rajasthan: Priests of a Forgotten Tradition." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 3rd ser. 6.1 (1996): 29-56. *Jstor*.Web. 15 Dec. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25183118>>.

⁴⁴Bharucha, Rustom, and Komal Kothari. "Teratali." *Rajasthan, an Oral History: Conversations with Komal Kothari*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2003. 181-87. Print.

⁴⁵Bharucha, Rustom, and Komal Kothari. "Teratali." *Rajasthan, an Oral History: Conversations with Komal Kothari*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2003. 181-87. Print.

⁴⁶Bharucha, Rustom, and Komal Kothari. "Teratali." *Rajasthan, an Oral History: Conversations with Komal Kothari*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2003. 181-87. Print.

⁴⁷Bharucha, Rustom, and Komal Kothari. "Teratali." *Rajasthan, an Oral History: Conversations with Komal Kothari*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2003. 181-87. Print.

⁴⁸Snodgrass, Jeffrey G. "The Centre Cannot Hold: Tales of Hierarchy and Poetic Composition from Modern Rajasthan." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 10.2 (2004): 261-85. *JSTOR*.Web. 15 Dec. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3804151>>.

⁴⁹Snodgrass, Jeffrey G. "The Centre Cannot Hold: Tales of Hierarchy and Poetic Composition from Modern Rajasthan." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 10.2 (2004): 261-85. *JSTOR*.Web. 15 Dec. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3804151>>.

⁵⁰Snodgrass, Jeffrey G. "The Centre Cannot Hold: Tales of Hierarchy and Poetic Composition from Modern Rajasthan." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 10.2 (2004): 261-85. *JSTOR*.Web. 15 Dec. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3804151>>.

⁵¹Ratnawat, Shyam Singh., and Krishna Gopal.Sharma. *History and Culture of Rajasthan: From Earliest times Upto 1956 A.D.* Jaipur: Centre for Rajasthan Studies, University of Rajasthan, 1999. Print.

⁵²Snodgrass, Jeffrey G. "The Centre Cannot Hold: Tales of Hierarchy and Poetic Composition from Modern Rajasthan." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 10.2 (2004): 261-85. *JSTOR*.Web. 15 Dec. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3804151>>.

⁵³Snodgrass, Jeffrey G. "The Centre Cannot Hold: Tales of Hierarchy and Poetic Composition from Modern Rajasthan." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 10.2 (2004): 261-85. *JSTOR*.Web. 15 Dec. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3804151>>.

Oral Traditions of Western Rajasthan

Langha	• The Langha community has been divided into two (depending on the choice of the instrument used): 1. Surnaiya langha (use “shehnai”) 2. Sarangiya langha (use “sarangi”)⁵⁴ • Possibility of the Sarangiya Langhas belonging to the Manganiyar community and were assimilated into the Langhas about five generations ago • Existence of hierarchy amongst the two sections of the community⁵⁵	• Sarangiya Langhas’ songs can be divided into two: 1. Lyrics of women’s songs sung to the tune of a sarangi 2. Ballads based on romance and achievements of local heroes • Some ballads narrate epic love stories through love songs⁵⁶	• Songs sung on various celebratory occasions – in front of an audience of the patron community • Some songs have also been used to complement dances like “ghoomar” and “kanudo”⁵⁷	• Belong to the Sindhi Sipahi community⁵⁸ • The patrons invite the performers to perform on celebratory occasions (births and weddings)⁵⁹	• The performing community consisted of people who were originally followers of Hinduism • Their conversion to Islam was an outcome of the Mughal reign in India and Pakistan⁶⁰
--------	--	---	---	--	---

⁵⁴Neuman, Daniel, Shubha Chaudhuri, and Komal Kothari. "Barmer District." *Bards, Ballads and Boundaries: An Ethnographic Atlas of Music Traditions in West Rajasthan*. N.p.: Seagull, 2006. 217. Print.

⁵⁵Neuman, Daniel, Shubha Chaudhuri, and Komal Kothari. "Barmer District." *Bards, Ballads and Boundaries: An Ethnographic Atlas of Music Traditions in West Rajasthan*. N.p.: Seagull, 2006. 219-20. Print.

⁵⁶Neuman, Daniel, Shubha Chaudhuri, and Komal Kothari. "Barmer District." *Bards, Ballads and Boundaries: An Ethnographic Atlas of Music Traditions in West Rajasthan*. N.p.: Seagull, 2006. 230. Print.

⁵⁷Neuman, Daniel, Shubha Chaudhuri, and Komal Kothari. "Barmer District." *Bards, Ballads and Boundaries: An Ethnographic Atlas of Music Traditions in West Rajasthan*. N.p.: Seagull, 2006. 230. Print.

⁵⁸Neuman, Daniel, Shubha Chaudhuri, and Komal Kothari. "Barmer District." *Bards, Ballads and Boundaries: An Ethnographic Atlas of Music Traditions in West Rajasthan*. N.p.: Seagull, 2006. 217. Print.

Oral Traditions of Western Rajasthan

Phad	• Called Bhopa (male performers) and Bhopi (female performers) • Belong to Nayak or Bhil community⁶¹ • Sub-categories of these communities are based on the following features: • 3 possible combinations of pairings: 1. One male, one female 2. Two males 3. Two males but one is dressed as a female⁶²	• The heroic acts of local hero Pabuji • His divine attributes are narrated through multiple divine events in his life story⁶³	• Par vachno – A prominent ritual • Bhopas and Bhopis perform in front of a backdrop of the painted scroll, called “Par/Phad”, that illustrates the life and deeds of Pabuji • A bowed instrument called “Ravanhatta” used as an accompaniment to recitation of the content on the painted cloth • The Bhopa also performs a swirling dance to entertain the audience⁶⁴	• Raika community (consisting of herdsmen) form the patron community • They are the principle worshippers of Pabuji⁶⁵	• Duration of performance has been made flexible where the Bhopa can use his discretion based upon the reactions of the audience⁶⁶
------	---	--	---	---	---

⁵⁹Neuman, Daniel, Shubha Chaudhuri, and Komal Kothari."Barmer District." *Bards, Ballads and Boundaries: An Ethnographic Atlas of Music Traditions in West Rajasthan*. N.p.: Seagull, 2006. 230. Print.

⁶⁰Neuman, Daniel, Shubha Chaudhuri, and Komal Kothari."Barmer District." *Bards, Ballads and Boundaries: An Ethnographic Atlas of Music Traditions in West Rajasthan*. N.p.: Seagull, 2006. 218. Print.

⁶¹Bharucha, Rustom, and Komal Kothari."Oral Epics." *Rajasthan, an Oral History: Conversations with Komal Kothari*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2003. 86-117. Print.

⁶²Neuman, Daniel, Shubha Chaudhuri, and Komal Kothari."Music Concepts and Musical Instruments." *Bards, Ballads and Boundaries: An Ethnographic Atlas of Music Traditions in West Rajasthan*. N.p.: Seagull, 2006. 75-78. Print.

⁶³Neuman, Daniel, Shubha Chaudhuri, and Komal Kothari."Music Concepts and Musical Instruments." *Bards, Ballads and Boundaries: An Ethnographic Atlas of Music Traditions in West Rajasthan*. N.p.: Seagull, 2006. 75-78. Print.

⁶⁴Neuman, Daniel, Shubha Chaudhuri, and Komal Kothari."Music Concepts and Musical Instruments." *Bards, Ballads and Boundaries: An Ethnographic Atlas of Music Traditions in West Rajasthan*. N.p.: Seagull, 2006. 75-78. Print.

⁶⁵Neuman, Daniel, Shubha Chaudhuri, and Komal Kothari."Music Concepts and Musical Instruments." *Bards, Ballads and Boundaries: An Ethnographic Atlas of Music Traditions in West Rajasthan*. N.p.: Seagull, 2006. 75-78. Print.

Oral Traditions of Western Rajasthan

Kaavad	• Known as Kaavadiya Bhats • Ritual-serving community • Also viewed as genealogists⁶⁷	• Tales of deities, mythical figures, local saints • Genealogies⁶⁸	• Sequential unfolding of panels of the wooden box – kaavad⁶⁹ • Each panel is painted with an image of the tale • Rhythmic narration of each tale on the panel⁷⁰	• From the Jassa Bhati community⁷¹	
--------	--	--	--	---	--

Figure 6: Summary of Secondary Data Available for the Chosen Oral Traditions

In terms of each of communities mentioned above, the sources available are that of research studies that have concluded in documentation and factual representation of the communities and their practiced arts. The information gathered on the oral traditions is mainly focused on the nature of the communities practicing these oral traditions (history, social development, evolution, etc.), technical aspects (instruments/visual aids, melodies, style of performance, etc.) of the arts and up to some extent on the content. However, studying all these elements (that have been described for each community above) from the perspective of being oral traditions that carry forward a legacy of the past from generation to generation is a relatively unexplored dimension. Thus the aspect of exploring the cultural elements that include the dimension of patronage, evolution and comparison adds value to this research.

⁶⁶Neuman, Daniel, Shubha Chaudhuri, and Komal Kothari. "Music Concepts and Musical Instruments." *Bards, Ballads and Boundaries: An Ethnographic Atlas of Music Traditions in West Rajasthan*. N.p.: Seagull, 2006. 75-78. Print.

⁶⁷Bharucha, Rustom, and Komal Kothari. "Puppetry." *Rajasthan, an Oral History: Conversations with Komal Kothari*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2003. 209. Print.

⁶⁸Neuman, Daniel, Shubha Chaudhuri, and Komal Kothari. "Music Concepts and Musical Instruments." *Bards, Ballads and Boundaries: An Ethnographic Atlas of Music Traditions in West Rajasthan*. N.p.: Seagull, 2006. 75-78. Print.

⁶⁹Bharucha, Rustom, and Komal Kothari. "Puppetry." *Rajasthan, an Oral History: Conversations with Komal Kothari*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2003. 209. Print.

⁷⁰Neuman, Daniel, Shubha Chaudhuri, and Komal Kothari. "Music Concepts and Musical Instruments." *Bards, Ballads and Boundaries: An Ethnographic Atlas of Music Traditions in West Rajasthan*. N.p.: Seagull, 2006. 75-78. Print.

⁷¹Neuman, Daniel, Shubha Chaudhuri, and Komal Kothari. "Music Concepts and Musical Instruments." *Bards, Ballads and Boundaries: An Ethnographic Atlas of Music Traditions in West Rajasthan*. N.p.: Seagull, 2006. 75-78. Print.

Relevant Concepts of Literature Review

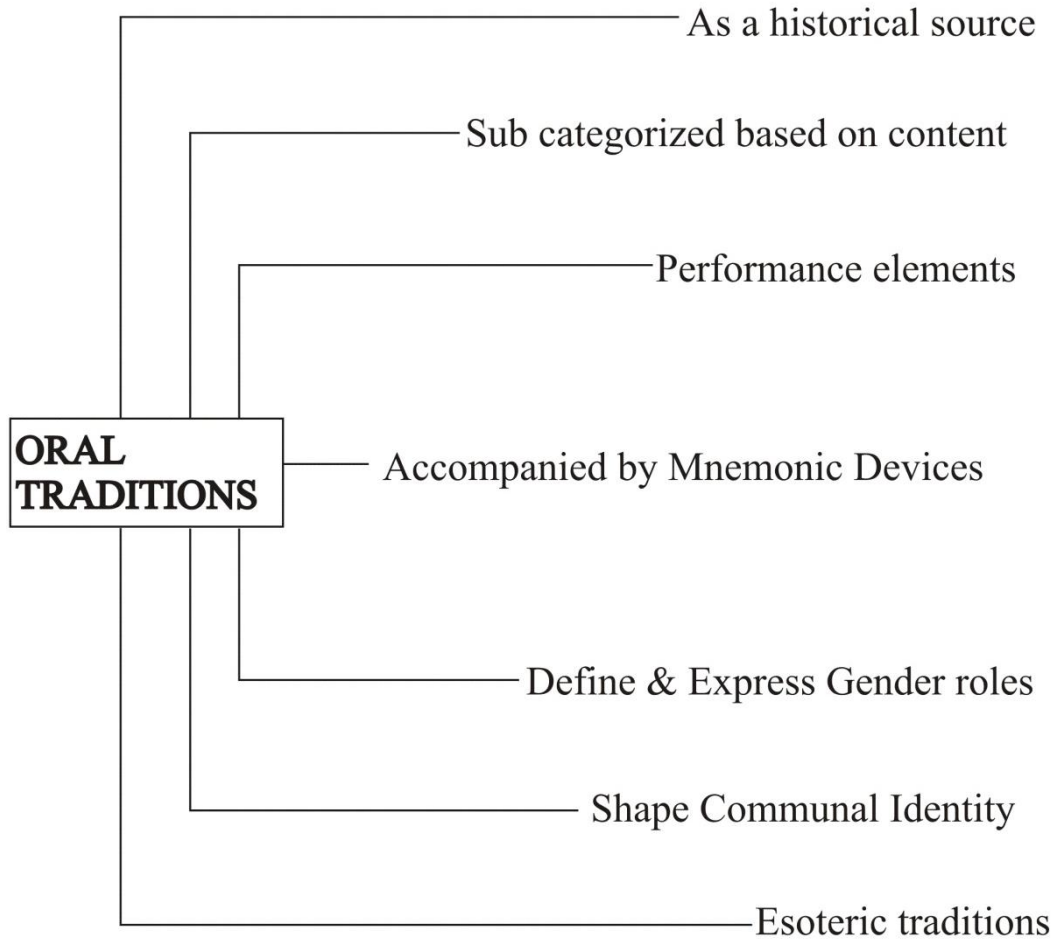


Figure 7: Relevant Concepts of Literature Review



Research Methodology

3.1 FOCUS AND OBJECTIVES

In the process of “mapping the role of oral traditions in shaping communal ideologies over generations”, the subtle nuances, which form the building blocks of this research, have to be brought to light. Considering the multiplicity of dimensions that characterise the existing research on oral traditions, the documentation of the nature of such traditions forms only the outline of the jigsaw puzzle that this field of research is perceived as. The nature of these traditions comprises not only the technique, performance and content, but also includes the “guardians” who preserve the essence of these practices; where the preservation does not exclude distortions (changes) and biases but maintains the core characteristics, in their own unique state. Performance elements like costumes, staging and instruments form the end pieces of the puzzle (hence not used as a subjects of study themselves) but their absence would definitely leave the image incomplete. Lastly, to enhance the interpretation of these attributes, it is crucial to study the various influences (time of the day, time of the year - seasons, festivals and other significant occasions) on the nature of the oral traditions.

Just as a jigsaw puzzle has multiple pieces, each as important as other, oral traditions too have numerous facets which have been shuffled around only briefly so far, so as to provide an image closer to the whole picture. Evolution and patronage are two such dimensions that remain relatively less explored in context of oral traditions of Rajasthan. In addition to the identification of the patrons for each community performing the oral tradition, the bi-directional (mutually dependent) relationship between the performers and patrons, will be explored in the analysis. Zooming out to view the broader picture, each of the above aspects have been undergone a process of evolution since their inception. Throughout its oral transmission over generations, modifications (that occur in each component of the traditions as detailed above), due to external and internal influences have been inevitable. Inferences of the earlier times, as obtained from academic/research based documentation, will be weighed against the observations from the primary research; thus changes in perceptions will be approximated with their probable causes. Hence, bringing forth this transformation from the times of their origin is an integral objective.

Given the diversity of the five different oral traditions under study, comparing their integral components to observe certain similar patterns, common influences and signs of mutual evolution due to co-existence, is also intended. Detailing the comparative factors and tracing the evolution will aid the addition of colours to the jigsaw puzzle. Hence, the focus of this

research has been narrowed down to oral traditions of specifically Western Rajasthan, which have been approached through the following objectives:

1. **To document the nature of the selected oral traditions of western Rajasthan**
2. **To identify the patrons/audience associated with each of the traditions**
3. **To trace the evolution of these traditions**
4. **To compare the selected oral traditions**

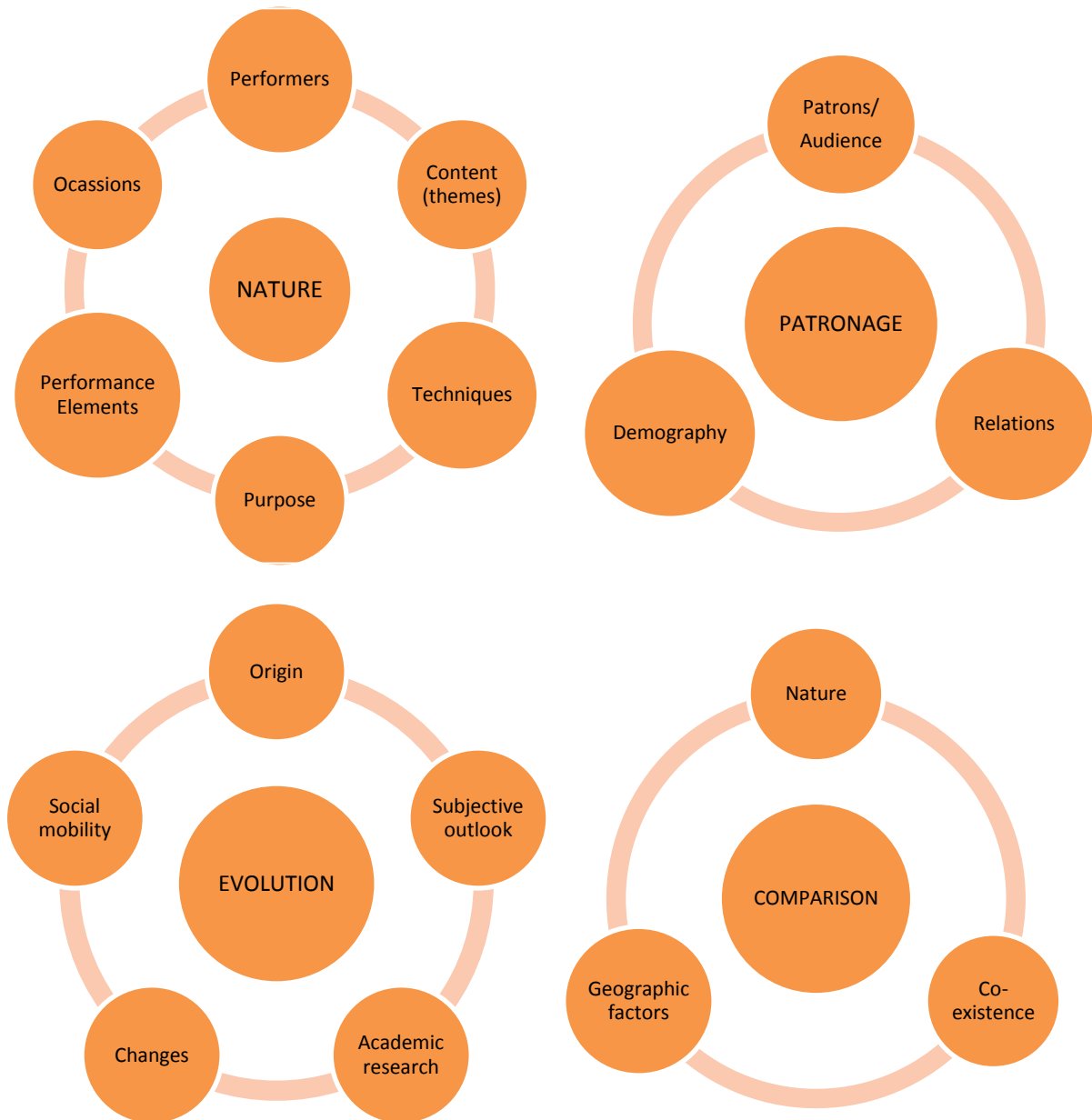


Figure 8: Factors Associated with Each Objective

3.2 Research Design

Secondary Research

The sources of secondary data referred to in this report are mainly the research works of scholars. Majority of them comprise of books, e-books and journal articles, and have been authored by academics from various fields. In addition, considering the nature of oral traditions, video and audio archives present at the Arna Jharna Museum were accessed. The type of research done on the topic of oral traditions and the changes in methods of studying them have been focused upon in the ‘Literature Review’ section (see Chapter 2).

Primary research

The diversity of oral traditions under study leads to a mainly descriptive form of research. Accounting the techniques and content of each of the traditions is important. These basic components, once identified, can aid the process of finding similarities as well as differences between the different traditions. This would, to some extent reflect the purpose of maintaining these traditions orally till date, even after literary means of recording them are available. While the artists and art forms are some of the aspects involved in this process, another important aspect is patronage, since it is the patrons for whom they are being recorded or performed. Understanding the views of those at the receiving end enables an insight into another dimension of these traditions. Since, patronage has not been focused on extensively in the previously done research on the topic of oral traditions of western Rajasthan (see Literature Review), this research is also exploratory in nature. By combining the two methods of research, the analysis can be synergetic and provide an overview which takes into consideration the different perspectives on the same tradition.

In order to gather data about all the following communities, non-participatory, overt observations of the performances were conducted. An in-depth, semi-structured interview followed. The flexibility of this type of interview enables addition of queries based on the performances to the pre-set list of questions. Informal interviews were also conducted in the form of casual conversations when travelling to places (such as Barnawa and Bhakhrani) where the oral traditions under study, are still performed. Because these interviews were taken in the villages where the communities hail from, some of the performers were not used

to performing commercially and interacting with outsiders. Consequently, having conversations with them instead of structured interviews ensured that they were not self-conscious while they shared information. The natural setting helped in creating a better understanding. The interviews were normally conducted by two or three students while two others always noted the answers alongside making observation notes. In addition, audio, video and photographic recordings were also made.



Figure 9: Map Depicting the Villages Visited

While keeping the above mentioned methods common, the variation in the oral traditions requires certain specific methods for studying each of them individually.

- Charan – The community of Charans consists of bards who in their poetic compositions conveyed praises of the Rajput kings (who formed their original group of patrons). Given the modern day practice of maintaining written records, (as per secondary sources) some of the members also carry books containing genealogical information⁷². The true essence of these however lies in the poetic recitation of the stories and genealogies. Interviews were conducted with three different members of the Charan community who each continue to do poetry in some form even while pursuing different careers.
- Kamad – Kamads are most popular for being priests at the temple of Ramdeo, a local deity, whose grave is worshipped. The men of the Kamad community sing about

⁷²Kamphorst, Janet. *In Praise of Death: History and Poetry in Medieval Marwar (South Asia)*. N.p.: Leiden UP, 2008. [Http://dare.uva.nl/document/131478](http://dare.uva.nl/document/131478). Universiteit Van Amsterdam. Web. 02 Sept. 2013. <<http://dare.uva.nl/document/131478>>.

Ramdeo's life and the values that one can gain by understanding his life. The women of this community normally perform a dance called Teratali while songs about Ramdeo are being sung. The observation of their performances was divided in two parts – the song and dance – in order to understand how the cult of Ramdeo is propagated alongside incorporating dohas that contains lessons for shaping the behaviour of an ideal person.

- Kaavad – The panels of a wooden box thought to be sacred are unfolded by the Kaavadiya Bhats who also tell the tale of a deity, stories of a local hero or pass on the genealogy of the family simultaneously. The stories narrated by the performers encompass many topics and all these types were studied. Also, the box itself was examined to understand the sequence of the panels, as in some cases, it was based on the ideal order in which the stories or the genealogies are supposed to be passed on. For this research, two Kaavadiya Bhats were interviewed since both of them narrated mythological and legendary stories but only one of them practiced maintenance of genealogy through Kaavads. Interactions were also held with the patrons after observing a Kaavadiya Bhat narrate stories for his patrons.
- Langha – Langhas have been categorised into two groups broadly on the basis of their choice of instrument – the shehnai or the sarangi. The Sarangiya Langhas were studied in this research. They are a group of singers whose songs focus on love stories, mythological stories and legends about local heroes. They also record genealogy melodically. Performers from the Langha community were interviewed after their performances and the presence of their patrons was helpful since they provided an insight into their relationship with the performers.
- Phad – Phad is more popularly known as a form of painting where events are depicted on a piece of cloth. These events can correspond to various parts of the lives of local heroes or mythological figures. However, in order to communicate the story better, Bhopas and Bhopis perform (i.e. dance and sing) certain parts of the painting. The techniques of painting and the importance of having the Phad in the backdrop were also studied. The choice of depicting and performing only a few events was understood too as it was based on the aim of passing on certain values. The performance includes placing a candle or the bow of the ravanhatta (the main instrument used for accompaniment) in front of the part of the cloth being performed. This further emphasises that some parts may be more significant than the others. The

aspect of patronage was explored through interviews with the performers and their patrons.

Sampling

The sampling technique chosen is opportunity (convenience) sampling because interviews were conducted with the artists and patrons available at the various locations (i.e. the museum and the villages). The artists to be interviewed belonged to five different communities. Many of them were commercial performers but a few resided in villages and practiced it for their original patrons/audiences. The patrons interviewed too belonged to different social groups as they were associated with different oral traditions. In addition, an interview was conducted with Mr. Kuldeep Kothari, son of Late Komal Kothari (who has conducted extensive research on oral traditions of Rajasthan). Other employees at the Arna Jharna Desert Museum also provided an insight into their work with oral traditions of Rajasthan and the communities associated with them.

	STATUS	NUMBER	GENDER	LOCATION
Phad	Performers	4	3 Males, 1 Females	Arna Jharna Desert Museum; Bhakhrani village
	Patrons	13	6 Males, 7 Females	Bhakhrani village
Charan	Poets and Community members	2	Male	Jodhpur
	Community member	1	Female	Rupayan Sansthan Head Office (Jodhpur)
Langha	Performers	5 + 17	Male	Arna Jharna Desert Museum; Barnawa Village
	Patrons	3	Male	Barnawa Village
Kaavad	Performers	2	Male	Arna Jharna Desert Museum; Phalodi village
	Patrons	6	Male	Phalodi village
Kamad	Performers	5	3 Males, 2 Females	Arna Jharna Desert Museum
Additional interviews	Employees of the Rupayan Sansthan	2	Male	Arna Jharna Desert Museum; Rupayan Sansthan Head Office (Jodhpur)
	Secretary, Spokesperson for Rupayan Sansthan and Arna Jharna Desert Museum	1	Male	Rupayan Sansthan Head Office (Jodhpur)

Figure 10: Community-specific Sampling

3.3 LIMITATIONS

Research in fields that study people and their culture is normally influenced by the subjectivity that accompanies the information provided by every respondent. Due to this reason, the credibility of the information obtained can be questioned to some extent. Because the topic in focus was oral traditions, this factor could be greatly observed and has been acknowledged by researchers who have studied oral traditions as medium of passing historical data.

In order to attain more than one perspective into the various aspects of oral tradition, it is important to interact with performers as well as patrons in a large number. However, given the shortage of time, two or three group were used as representatives for gaining an insight into the oral traditions under study. The factor of time also limited the number of places that could be visited, narrowing the field work to only some villages in the western part of Rajasthan. The differences observed in the different types of oral traditions at the Arna Jharna Desert Museum and at the villages were based upon one or two performances per community. Also, only few of the patrons were willing to share their thoughts on the oral traditions associated with their communities which formed another major limitation. Further, the limited understanding of differing dialects of Marwari throughout the western region hampered the note-taking process which was based upon on-the-spot translation of answers given by performers and patrons during interviews.

Evidently, it is necessary to tactfully analyse the data obtained, keeping in mind the biases and limited scope of credibility.

Concepts of Literature Review in context with the objectives of this research

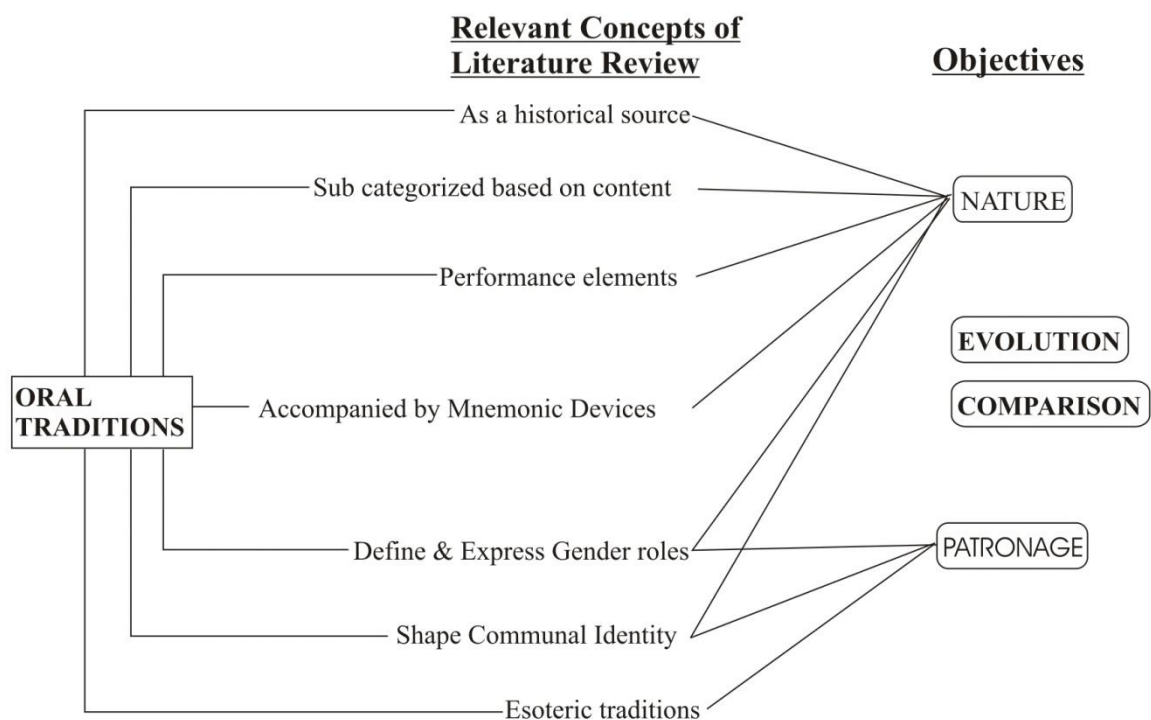
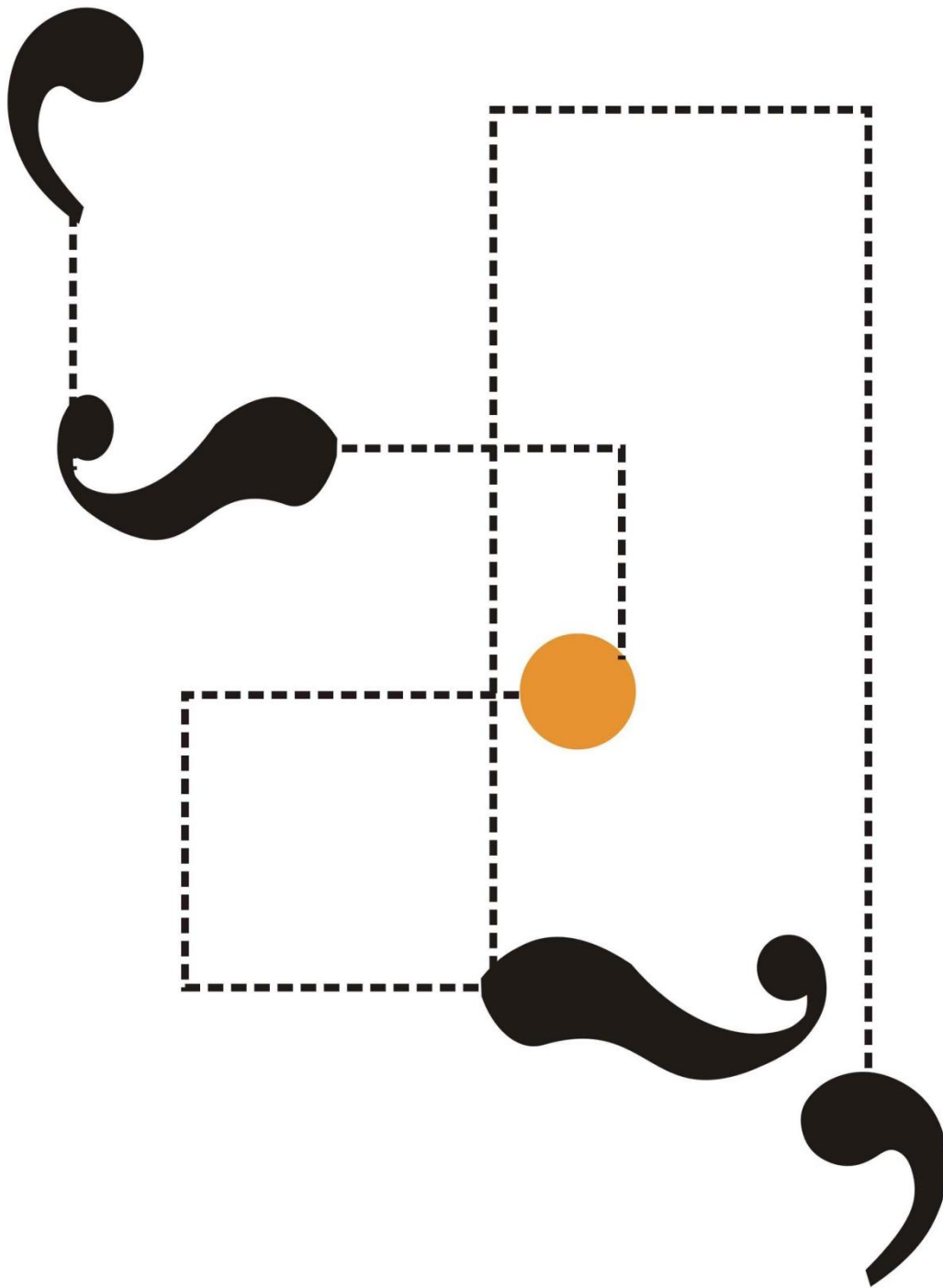


Figure 11: Connecting Objectives to Concepts from Literature Review



Data Collection and Analysis

4.1 NATURE OF THE ORAL TRADITIONS

The faces behind the voices

All the oral traditions focused upon in this research have an element of performance or entertainment attached to them. The diversity of the oral traditions is also reflected in the variety of communities that are involved in transmitting them. Each of the oral traditions is practiced by people from different communities and some of them are also performed by those belonging to more than a single community. However, in the case of Charans' recitation of poetry and genealogy, the tradition is esoteric in nature, i.e. practiced only by the male members of the Charan community⁷³. The community by itself is divided into three sub-sections, one of which resides in the state of Gujarat. As Charans were the only group of people well-versed with Dingal, a language which naturally sounds encouraging, they were hired by the Rajput kings as royal bards in order to praise them and motivate them in their fights against the Arab invaders⁷⁴. Over time, multiple communities have tried to take on the same role and claim to be Charan themselves⁷⁵.



Figure 12: Mr. Devalji, Author and Member of Charan Community

⁷³Mr. Shubhkaran Deval, Charan Community, Personal Interview, 10 Jan. 2014.

⁷⁴Mrs. Shilpa, Charan Community, Personal Interview, 10th Jan. 2014.

⁷⁵Snodgrass, Jeffrey G. "The Centre Cannot Hold: Tales of Hierarchy and Poetic Composition from Modern Rajasthan." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 10.2 (2004): 261-85. JSTOR.Web. 15 Dec. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3804151>>.

Most of the Kaavadiya Bhats are a part of the Rao caste. They receive their name from the “Kaavad”, a small wooden box whose panels are unfolded to narrate stories. Unlike most other oral traditions, the narration of Kaavads is done by solely by one person⁷⁶. The content painted on the Kaavad is religious in nature which demands that the performers recite some of the panels in a ritualistic manner⁷⁷. The profession is passed on from one generation to the next, with the patron communities of a father being divided amongst his sons after his death. Kaavadiya Bhats can generally be found near the Bhopalgarh in Jodhpur district⁷⁸



Figure 13: "Midway through Myths:: Mr.Bansi Lal, Kaavadiya Bhat

In contrast to Charans and Kaavadiya Bhats, Phad performers belong to different communities even if the Phad they are performing is based on stories of Pabuji, a local deified hero. According to secondary sources, most performers are from the Nayak community⁷⁹ but two sections of the Bhil community practice this tradition too⁸⁰. The Phad performers interviewed for this research were from one of the two sections which is called Manjhirana Bhil. People from this community perform Phad in pairs. The male performer is

⁷⁶Mr. Bansi Lal, Kaavad Bhat, Personal Interview, 5th Jan. 2014.

⁷⁷Bharucha, Rustom, and Komal Kothari."Puppetry." *Rajasthan, an Oral History: Conversations with Komal Kothari*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2003. 209. Print.

⁷⁸Mr. Narsingh Ram, Kaavadiya Bhat, Personal Interview, 9th Jan. 2014.

⁷⁹Neuman, Daniel, Shubha Chaudhuri, and Komal Kothari."Music Concepts and Musical Instruments." *Bards, Ballads and Boundaries: An Ethnographic Atlas of Music Traditions in West Rajasthan*. N.p.: Seagull, 2006. 75-78. Print.

⁸⁰Bharucha, Rustom, and Komal Kothari."Oral Epics." *Rajasthan, an Oral History: Conversations with Komal Kothari*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2003. 86-117. Print.

called Bhopa and the female performer is called Bhopi⁸¹. The other section of the Bhils performs in a pair of males but one of them is dressed up like a female while the Nayaks perform in pairs of two male performers. Since the content remains largely unchanged, the difference in combinations of partners serves as a mark of identification of the community from which the Phad performers come⁸². Depending upon the type of Phad performed, the performing community can differ. For example, Devnarayan's Phad is performed by members of the Kumar and Gujjar communities. Most of the Phad performers reside in Jodhpur, Nagaur and Barmer districts of Rajasthan. Those from Barmer tend to perform in male pairs because women are discouraged from learning the art and performing⁸³.



Figure 14: Melodious Narration of Legends: Mr. Sugna Ram, Bhopa

Another community which has divisions is that of the Langhas. Langhas are divided into two groups – Surnaiya Langhas and Sarangiya Langhas. As the name suggests, the instrument used for their performances (either shehnai or sarangi) is what primarily

⁸¹Mr. Sugna Ram and family, Phad Performers, Personal Interview, 6th Jan. 2014.

⁸²Neuman, Daniel, Shubha Chaudhuri, and Komal Kothari."Music Concepts and Musical Instruments." *Bards, Ballads and Boundaries: An Ethnographic Atlas of Music Traditions in West Rajasthan*. N.p.: Seagull, 2006. 75-78. Print.

⁸³Mr. Sugna Ram and family, Phad Performers, Personal Interview, 6th Jan. 2014.

distinguishes the two groups⁸⁴. Further, Surnaiya Langhas perform only instrumental music while the Sarangiya Langhas also have vocals in their songs. This makes the latter group a transmitter of oral traditions for their patrons. The distinction between Langhas also makes them endogamous groups since the Surnaiya Langhas consider themselves superior to the Sarangiya Langhas. Langhas are believed to have originally come from Sindh region of Pakistan and claim to be descendants of Tan Sen, a famous musician from the court of the Mughal emperor Akbar. Their name is derived from their action of crossing (“langhna”) the river for getting to India⁸⁵. Secondary research also indicates the possibility of them originally being followers of Hinduism who converted to Islam during Aurangzeb’s reign⁸⁶. Currently, Langhas are divided into thirty-six “coms” which are related to each other through matrimony. Like the Charans, the performers from the Langhas community too comprise only the male members⁸⁷.



Figure 15: Engrossed in Melodies : Mr. Mehruddin Langha and Team

Another community that utilises musical elements in their performance of oral traditions is the Kamad community. Kamads perform as a family normally, and like the Phad

⁸⁴Neuman, Daniel, Shubha Chaudhuri, and Komal Kothari."Barmer District." *Bards, Ballads and Boundaries: An Ethnographic Atlas of Music Traditions in West Rajasthan*. N.p.: Seagull, 2006. 217. Print.

⁸⁵Mr. Mehruddin Langha and family, Langha Community, Personal Interview, 7th Jan. 2014.

⁸⁶Neuman, Daniel, Shubha Chaudhuri, and Komal Kothari."Barmer District." *Bards, Ballads and Boundaries: An Ethnographic Atlas of Music Traditions in West Rajasthan*. N.p.: Seagull, 2006. 218. Print.

⁸⁷Mr. Mehruddin Langha and family, Langha Community, Personal Interview, 7th Jan. 2014.

performers, they too involve both males and females in their performances. While the men sing, the women perform the “teratali” dance with the help of “manjiras” (small cymbals)⁸⁸. Their songs are normally associated with Ramdeo ji, a folk deity, and many of them also serve as priests in Ramdeo temples. Earlier, they were also referred to as “wandering minstrels or jugglers”⁸⁹. Areas in and around Udaipur and Pali district are where most Kamad families live. The Kamads interviewed for this research hail from a village near the city of Ranakpur⁹⁰.



Figure 16: Melodies of the Manjira: Mr. Roop Das Kamad and Family

Except for the Charans, all other communities consider it important to continue performing the oral traditions generation after generation. The profession is hereditary in nature also because, in some cases, the children continue to cater to the same patron families that their parents catered to. Charans, Bhopas-Bhopis and Kamads also practice agriculture but performing remains the main occupation. However, Kaavadiya Bhats and Langhas only work as performers and a major supply of their food requirements are provided by their patrons in the form of rewards. A common aspect observable in all of these oral tradition practicing communities is the method used to ensure that the children learn the nuances of their parents’ profession. Most children learn through observation since they are encouraged to accompany their parents when they perform for the patrons. Most people interviewed insisted that while taking up these professions is considered important, there is not always a need to enforce it upon the new generation because most of them choose to do the same thing willingly⁹¹.

⁸⁸Observation of performance by Mr. Roop Das and family

⁸⁹Khan, Dominique Sila. "The Kamad of Rajasthan: Priests of a Forgotten Tradition." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 3rd ser. 6.1 (1996): 29-56. *Jstor*.Web. 15 Dec. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25183118>>.

⁹⁰Mr. Roop Das and family, Kamad Community, Personal Interview, 4th Jan. 2014.

⁹¹On-field interviews and observations

The “Origin”al faces

Charans: Historical origin

The 10th century was a period of ‘varna vyavastha’, a time when the caste system was not an existing concept⁹². The Charans occupied the Sindh area and apart from them being agriculturalists, they were mainly horse traders who supplied horses to the Indian Warrior Community of the Kshatriyas. The invasion of the Arabs had major implications on the livelihood of the Charans, who were assigned jobs and positions by the warrior community. The decline in ‘varnavyavastha’ gave rise to the starkly differentiated caste system. Kavasths, the administrative heads and Brahmins, the religious heads, were at the higher end of the hierarchy, while the Kshatriyas held a relatively mediocre stance. Charans constituted the intellectuals of the society, who worked as literary heads due to their advanced relations with the Rajputs of the Kshatriya community. Bhats, being the intellectual and educated Brahmins of the society, maintained a record of the kings’ genealogies. Gradually, ‘Bhats’ began to be recognized as ‘Bhaats’, who were in essence genealogists, and who were a mandatory feature of every saamanth⁹³. While one of the divisions came to be known as pothivanchaks (those who read from books), the other came to be known as mukhvanchaks (those who memorise genealogies)⁹⁴.

The concept of kingship started diminishing with the ushering of the period of feudalism. The coming of the Mughals and their subsequent wars against the Kshatriyas required someone to galvanize the Rajput spirits and the Veer Rasa (emotion of a warrior) encrypted this emotion through the provoking Dingal language⁹⁵.

Towards the end of the 10th cent and 11th century, the title of “Deviputra” was accorded to the Charans⁹⁶. This stems from the Kshatriyas’ conception of the “Shakta Dharma” (worshipping the power of the goddess Shakti) to protect themselves during the trying time of Arab invasions. Consequently, the women of the Charan community were perceived as a symbol of goddess Shakti and hence respected by all communities, an idea that continues till date. In addition to their concept of female divinity, the Charans believe that the

⁹²Snodgrass, Jeffrey G. "The Centre Cannot Hold: Tales of Hierarchy and Poetic Composition from Modern Rajasthan." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 10.2 (2004): 261-85. JSTOR.Web. 15 Dec. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3804151>>.

⁹³Mrs. Shilpa, Charan Community, Personal Interview, 10th Jan. 2014.

⁹⁴Mr. Anil Sharma, The Arna Jharna Desert Museum, Personal Interview, 5th Jan. 2014.

⁹⁵Mrs. Shilpa, Charan Community, Personal Interview, 10th Jan. 2014.

⁹⁶Mrs. Shilpa, Charan Community, Personal Interview, 10th Jan. 2014.

goddess blesses their community so much so that ‘She’ showers her blessings in the form of her reincarnation as a Charan woman periodically. Consequently, marking her descent as local deities such as Karni Mata. Hence justifying the status of a Charan man as a “deviputra” (son of the goddess/ “devi”)⁹⁷.

Charans: Mythical origin

Primary sources indicate that the Mahabharata and the Bhagvad Gita serve as evidence for “Charan” being identified as one of Brahma’s twelve sons. Interspersing this myth with that of Goddess Ganga’s descent on Earth, it is believed that Charan, who was Brahma’s favourite son, would accompany Goddess Ganga. This was decided by Brahma as an endeavour to assure Ganga of her continual worship by the descendants of Charan, even on Earth⁹⁸. To further assure Ganga, Parvati promised her repeated descent on Earth as a divine woman of the Charan community, so as to accompany her beloved sister at all times. The existence of many such divine females as local deities is further justified by citing the Vedas, which indicate that “Kaliyug” will be dominated by multiple folk deities⁹⁹.

Kamads

The Kamad community’s oral tradition is believed to have started in Padarla region of Pali district, 500-600 years ago. Mangibai, a disciple of Goramdasji is credited for taking forward the tradition¹⁰⁰.

Langhas

Back in Pakistan, a man had two sons (Mir and Hamza), who were sent beyond their homeland to study. Out of the two, one showed a great inclination towards music and subsequently his father asked him to leave. The origin of the Langhas has been traced back to this musician, Mir. Tansen, a popular figure at the Mughal Court is believed to be an ancestor of the Langhas. The term ‘langha’ has been derived from the hindi verb “langhna” which denotes the act of crossing over (in this context, crossing over the river). This holds significance in the context of these musicians since they had crossed the river to come to India. The ones who remained on the other side of the river live on to be known as ‘Mirs’.

⁹⁷ Mrs. Shilpa, Charan Community, Personal Interview, 10th Jan. 2014.

⁹⁸ Mrs. Shilpa, Charan Community, Personal Interview, 10th Jan. 2014.

⁹⁹ Mrs. Shilpa, Charan Community, Personal Interview, 10th Jan. 2014.

¹⁰⁰ Mr. Roop Das and family, Kamad Community, Personal Interview, 4th Jan. 2014.

Kaavadiya bhats

The mythical story of King Dashrath's nephew Shravan Kumar's act of taking his blind parents on a pilgrimage, carrying them on his shoulders, provides the roots to the Kaavad tradition. The physical attributes resemble the wooden stock on which Shravan Kumar carried his parents (the kaavad is also carried on the Kaavadiya Bhats' shoulders). It is believed that Shravankumar's eldest son, Jeshta (which could also mean the 'elder son') created the first Kaavad, being inspired by his father's method of carrying his parents. It is held that Jeshta gave the kaavad to Kudanabai, who in turn passed on the tradition to the Kaavadiya Bhats. This seemingly legendary tale is supported by the presence of a secret panel in the innermost portion of the kaavad which opens to a painting of Kundanabai and which is opened only for a select few. Hence, they claim their descent from Shravan Kumar¹⁰¹.



Figure 17: Narrating the Myth of Shravan Kumar: Mr. Bansi Lal, Kaavadiya Bhat

¹⁰¹Mr. Bansi Lal and Mr. Narsingh Ram, Kaavadiya Bhat, Personal Interview, 5th Jan. 2014, 9th Jan. 2014.

“Content” matters

The themes that are covered by each of the narrations and songs lie at the core of every oral tradition. The aim of most of them is to capture the essence of the daily life of not only the patrons but also the performers and the society as a whole. A large section of the content contained in the oral traditions can be classified as being religious in nature. Par vachno (performance or Phad) is one tradition whose main content comprises stories of the local hero and deity Pabuji. All the stories depicted on the Phad are based upon his deeds not just in his life as Pabuji but also as Lord Ram’s brother Laxman in his previous incarnation. Lyrics of the songs address this local deity as “Kolu na raja” (the king of Kolu). Since worship of Pabuji is the main reason behind performing the Phad, all the songs are based upon the scenes related to Pabuji (his divine birth, from the womb of Kesar-pari, his achievements and his unfortunate death etc) depicted on the Phad (a painted scroll). Phads based on other local deities such as Devnarayan, Ramdeoji, Gogaji and Tejaji also exist, where the stories painted on the Phad are based upon the deity in focus.



Figure 18: The Life and Deeds of Pabuji: Phad Performance by Mr. Sugna Ram

Similar to Phad performers, members of the Kamad community are also devotional singers. Their songs mainly revolve around Ramdeoji, a local deity, whose main shrine is in Ramdeora, and is worshipped to some extent in even the states of Gujarat, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh¹⁰². However, now, even “dohas” (poetic couplets) by saints Kabir

¹⁰²Bharucha, Rustom, and Komal Kothari. "Teratali." *Rajasthan, an Oral History: Conversations with Komal Kothari*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2003. 181-87. Print.

and Mirabai are incorporated into some of the songs while others are based entirely on them. A striking contrast can be observed in case of Langhas where the songs are rarely religious in nature but still include dohas in order to add lessons on morality and good conduct to the songs which are otherwise sung just for entertainment. According to secondary research, the songs sung by the Langhas can be briefly divided into two types. The first one is the women's songs which are sung by the Langhas without making changes to any of the lyrics and by maintaining the original melody, except for the times when a sarangi is used to play along. The other type of songs comprise of ballads based on romance and heroes and their achievements¹⁰³. The choice of the theme of the song is supposed to even influence the projection of voice and the words of the passages sung. Some of the ballads narrate epic love stories and contain common love songs too¹⁰⁴. In addition, some of the songs are focused on passing on moral values, are sung to complement dances such as ghoomar and kanudo¹⁰⁵.

Kaavad, a portable wooden shrine, contains not just religious stories but also many other tales which are historical in nature. The stories depicted on the kaavad are excerpts from epics like the Mahabharata (Pandu, Pandavas and Draupadi) and the Ramayan (Ram, Lakshman and Sita who form the main idols beneath the innermost glass panel of the shrine; Ravan, Hanuman, Lakshman). Puranic and local deities like Krishna (associated with Mirabai), Ganesh, Kalka Devi, Jagdamba, Shiva (in the linga form) and Ramdeo are also shown on the kaavad and some of the myths associated with them are narrated too. Local kings and heroes such as Harishchandra appear on some of the panels, as do stories about sati (a woman who burned alongside her husband on his funeral pyre), since they contain information about the social system and the norms within it. Many stories aim to propagate traits of selflessness and altruism¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰³Neuman, Daniel, Shubha Chaudhuri, and Komal Kothari."Barmer District." *Bards, Ballads and Boundaries: An Ethnographic Atlas of Music Traditions in West Rajasthan*. N.p.: Seagull, 2006. 230. Print.

¹⁰⁴Observation of performance by Mr. Mehruddin Langha and family

¹⁰⁵Neuman, Daniel, Shubha Chaudhuri, and Komal Kothari."Barmer District." *Bards, Ballads and Boundaries: An Ethnographic Atlas of Music Traditions in West Rajasthan*. N.p.: Seagull, 2006. 230. Print.

¹⁰⁶Mr. Bansilal, Kaavadiya Bhat, Observation of narration, 5th Jan. 2014.

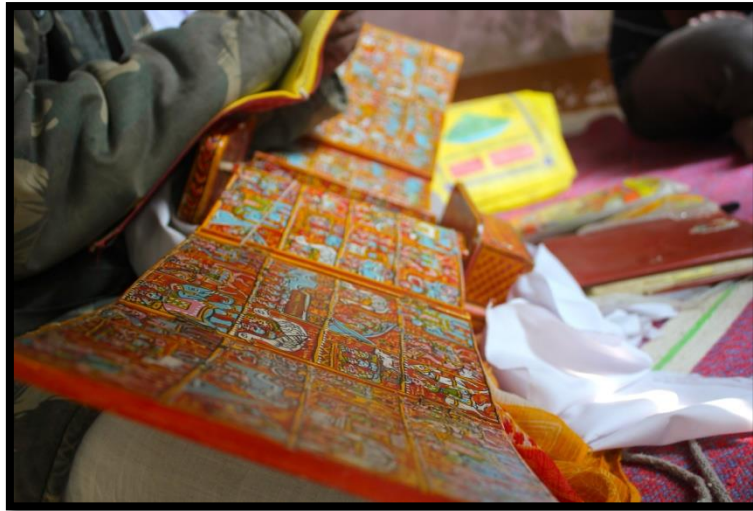


Figure 19: Revealing the Content Inside a Kaavad

Like Langhas and Kamads, Kaavadiya Bhats also talk about Mirabai and elaborate on some of the stories associated with her devotion for Lord Krishna. They too use these stories to propagate social messages. Some of the values are further stressed upon by linking them to myths of various deities. For example, Krishna saving Mirabai's life when she is poisoned by her own husband for spending majority of her time in worship of Krishna, is meant to put forth the idea that punishment is meted out to all wrong acts (lying, stealing, not donating, ill-treating others). The divinity is not excluded from this as is evident from the story of Krishna stealing buttermilk as a child and then getting punished for it¹⁰⁷. By attaching miraculous, divine elements in tales, the expected social behaviour can be ingrained amongst the people as it creates a fear of being punished for acting in socially unacceptable ways.

Some of the songs sung by the Langhas make use of symbolism and metaphors in order to ensure that the notion of good and bad personality is inculcated by the patrons who listen to them. Bamboo symbolises a bad or dangerous person as bamboo can easily be set of fire and can burn things around it in the process, while calling a character sugarcane-like is suggestive of their sweet personality. People are also motivated through some of the songs where objects such as mangoes and buckets are used. Since mango remains sweet and strong even after people throw stones at it, and the bucket placed near a well continues to serve others even after it has been kicked by not letting that affect its performance, their "qualities" are focused upon despite them being ordinary objects. Even the material silk is used as a metaphor for strong bonding between two people¹⁰⁸.

¹⁰⁷Mr. Bansi Lal, Kaavadiya Bhat, Observation of narration, 5th Jan. 2014.

¹⁰⁸Mr. Mehruddin Langha and family, Langha Community, Personal Interview, 7th Jan. 2014.

Keeping a record of genealogy through oral traditions is another important aspect of the content of oral traditions of the Charans, Langhas and Kaavadiya Bhats. The performers trace the genealogy of a family back to many generations. This is especially evident in case of Charans since the Rajput kings they catered to took pride in stories about their ancestors and found the motivation and courage to fight off invaders through them¹⁰⁹. Langhas too focus on ancestral stories but the genealogical element is normally restricted to a simple recitation of the genealogy of a family (called “shubhraaj”), which is done especially after a bride arrives to her husband’s house right after the wedding¹¹⁰. Kaavadiya Bhats on the other hand also keep a record of the donations made by their patrons alongside maintaining the list of people from the patron family and their immediate relatives¹¹¹.

Despite the variations in the duration for which each of the traditions are performed and their span of existence, most of them are primarily based on religious themes. Even concepts such as morality are incorporated into religious stories to strengthen the impact of the message. While Puranic deities continue to be prevalent in many of the traditions, local deities and saints (Mirabai and Kabir) are talked of more since their dohas contain lessons for life even when looked at in isolation from the religious element attached to them. Unlike the other ones, performance of Phad is one tradition where the prime focus is on propagating the stories of Pabuji (or other local deities) rather than including other content which might be more relevant to the audience or patrons. Nonetheless, it does share the common element of including stories from Indian Epics with kaavads. Heroism as a theme also can be observed in many of the traditions since stories associated with courage can be used to popularise that type of behaviour. Currently, songs from movies or folk music have also been added to the performances by some of the communities as a transition has taken place from catering the patrons to entertaining the audience.

¹⁰⁹Mrs. Shilpa, Charan Community, Personal Interview, 10th Jan. 2014.

¹¹⁰Mr. Mehruddin Langha and family, Langha Community, Personal Interview, 7th Jan. 2014.

¹¹¹Mr. Narsingh Ram, Kaavadiya Bhat, Personal Interview, 9th Jan. 2014.

“Purpose”fully performed

The primary purpose of performing a Phad was to create a portable shrine for those who could not visit Kolu, the residence of Pabuji. Having a Phad performance in the village is considered equal to having Kolu in one's own village. However, a few people also get Phad performances done in Kolu itself. More specifically catering to an agrarian setup, a local deity like Pabuji, who is believed to protect the cattle of each of the households and is believed to ensure good health, holds much significance. This significance is reflected in the tradition of calling Phad performers at the arrival of obstacles. In case the deity has blessed them with support to overcome the difficulties, another performance is held in gratitude. Sometimes, the Phad is simply performed to educate the patrons about Pabuji and his stories. The whole village is called for such performances and a feast is organised to complement the performance¹¹².

Ramdeoji is one of the many heroic local deities along with Pabuji. The Kamad Community constitutes followers of this local deity whose prime motive for performing and singing about Ramdeo is to earn his blessings, such that they continue to be blessed with an income by singing his songs¹¹³. On the other hand, the purpose of narrating using the other kind of portable shrine, the kaavad outlines the importance of the existence of a religious body in some form. The concept of kaavad emerged due to the lack of temples in all villages. The content of the kaavad is used as a medium of communicating social values which are coded in the tales. Whereas, Genealogist Kaavadiyas maintain the genealogy of patrons and keep a record of birth, death and marriage in the family based on which they make additions or deductions to the chart¹¹⁴.

The Kaavadiyas explain the purpose of their profession and the act of the viewers listening to them as a legendary tale of the divine, teaching his beloved human beings that: ears are meant to hear {the divine's stories}, the mouth for chanting god's name {Kaavadiyas keep relating gods stories}, the eyes are meant to see god everywhere and in everyone/everything {kaavadiya sees his audience as god and the patrons see the performer as god}, the hands to help and donate {the bottom drawer of the kaavad is meant for such donations in cash or kind}, legs to go on pilgrimage/tirth {kaavadiyas travel on foot carrying the kaavad like Shravan Kumar, hence it is symbolic of “tirth” (pilgrimage) and passing on

¹¹² Mr. Sugna Ram and family, Phad Performers, Personal Interview, 6th Jan. 2014.

¹¹³ Mr. Roop Das and family, Kamad Community, Personal Interview, 4th Jan. 2014.

¹¹⁴ Mr. Narsingh Ram, Kaavadiya Bhat, Personal Interview, 9th Jan. 2014.

the message of the importance of going on tirth to their patrons}. Hence the social system incorporates all these acts through the various duties people have¹¹⁵.



Figure 20: Religiously Unfolding the Contents of a Kaavad

From the broader picture that entails the purpose of the performances in general, **occasion specific** performances can be described. Spiritual and religious tendencies may not require specific time periods. But, the Phad performers hold festivals such as Navratri and the month of Bhado as the most important times of the year for performance of Phad. Otherwise, the first half of the month, leading up to the full moon, is thought of as the auspicious half to perform Phad. Not just time period, but specifications are defined in terms of the location of the performance as well¹¹⁶. In contrast to the pious performers, the Langhas stage their act at births and weddings. Being entertainers, their most popular occasions to sing are at births, marriages (before, during and after) and any other happy occasions for the patron. These are performed at night around fire and no alterations are made in the content for performance for the patrons since they prefer the original method¹¹⁷.

Rajputs, the patrons of the Kamads, called the performers home specifically in the period of 'beej', commonly in the "Bhaadv" month and on several other special occasions, which are associated to Ramdeoji and were celebrated in the form of fairs. These

¹¹⁵Mr. Bansi Lal, Kaavadiya Bhat, Personal Interview, 5th Jan. 2014.

¹¹⁶Mr. Sugna Ram and family, and patrons of Phad performances, Phad Performers, Personal Interview, 6th Jan. 2014, 8th Jan. 2014.

¹¹⁷Mr. Mehruddin Langha and family, Langha Community, Personal Interview, 7th Jan. 2014.

performances were largely conducted during jagrans¹¹⁸. While the tradition has sustained itself, the relationship with the patron is fading, with rare invitations to their jajmaan's house only during beej¹¹⁹. Strikingly similar are the causes of reducing importance given to kaavadiyas. Before the advent of technology and entertaining modes like the television, the Kaavadiyas, who only related tales, would travel from village to village and narrate in front of a large gathering under a tree. The audience has been declining ever since the introduction of other mediums of entertainment¹²⁰.

However, the Genealogist Kaavadiya Bhats travel from village to village. Mr. Narsingh Ram, our interviewee travels to about 16 villages. Having established secure relations with their patrons, a Kaavadiya Bhat can also go out of the state for patrons who have migrated. The tradition and taut relations entail a voluntary visit to the patrons' house every 1-2 years even in the absence of a special occasion¹²¹.

¹¹⁸Khan, Dominique Sila. "The Kamad of Rajasthan: Priests of a Forgotten Tradition." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 3rd ser. 6.1 (1996): 29-56. *Jstor*.Web. 15 Dec. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25183118>>.

¹¹⁹Mr. Roop Das and family, Kamad Community, Personal Interview, 4th Jan. 2014.

¹²⁰Mr. Bansi Lal, Kaavadiya Bhat, Personal Interview, 5th Jan. 2014.

¹²¹Mr. Narsingh Ram, Kaavadiya Bhat, Personal Interview, 9th Jan. 2014.

Performance highlights

As has been entailed in the Literature Review (Chapter 2), oral traditions are verbal expressions that have been embedded in a medium suited for oral transmission; accompanied by elements that not only facilitate the retention of the content in the performers' mind but also enhance the visual and auditory appeal for the viewers¹²². Hence, the existence of performance-based elements (distinct attire, instruments, expression through music/songs, supported by dance, mnemonic devices etc) is a characteristic feature of all the five communities under study. In addition, though the techniques and original essence of each tradition and its performance remains the same, its adaptation into various sub-sections of the performing community and the uniqueness of each performer, brings out the appealing flavour of the tradition. Some of the common performance elements and techniques of each oral tradition under study have been described below:

Numerically diverse

The performing groups of each oral tradition can comprise of a varying number of people – The Kaavadiya Bhats and Charans form solo 'showmen' of their performances, unlike the Langhas, Kamads and Phad reciting communities. Melodies of the Langhas are presented by a group of five or six members, whereas the Phad recitation is done by a pair (can be a male and female, two males or two males with one dressed as a female)¹²³. A completely distinct and unique feature is of the four or five members of the Kamad community, where two females perform the Teratali dance to the tunes of the hymns sung by two or three males. A common feature amongst the latter three communities is that the performing group may consist of members of the same family; especially the Kamads, who have men of the family singing in tandem with the dance executed by the women of the house¹²⁴. Primary sources also indicate that the Phad is recited by a husband and wife or a bachelor with his mother or a bachelorette with her father¹²⁵.

¹²²Vansina, Jan. "2.Tradition As a Chain of Testimonies." *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*. Trans. H. M. Wright. 2nd ed. New Brunswick: Transaction, 2009. 34-36. Print.

¹²³Observation of performances of all communities at Arna Jharna Desert Museum, 4th Jan. 2014, 5th Jan. 2014, 6th Jan. 2014, 7th Jan. 2014.

¹²⁴Mr. Roop Das and family, Kamad Community, Observation of performance and Personal Interview, 4th Jan. 2014.

¹²⁵Mr. Sugna Ram and family, Phad Performers, Personal Interview, 6th Jan. 2014.

Synced with time

“Par (Phad) vachno” is a prominent ritual, which involves the performance of the ‘Par’, a painted scroll that incorporates the life and deeds of Pabuji. The epic is rehearsed during the course of the night by Bhopas of the Nayak castes. The length of these performances may fluctuate depending on the discretion of the Bhopa with regards to the preferences of the spectators.¹²⁶ Primary sources indicate that initially, the performances were for the duration for an entire week but over time, but over time it has reduced to three to four days. It is believed (could be a superstition) that performing for seven days causes either the performer or the patron to lose his life. Usually, the performance starts approximately at nine in the evening, after the performance of a set of religious rites. Some of the rituals are further intertwined into the performance, conducted at one o’clock in the morning and then again at nine o’clock in the morning, right before taking a pause for the day. The performance is resumed again at nine in the evening¹²⁷.

“(T)-actfully” set

The staging of the episodes depicted in the cloth is equivalent to that of a portable temple, since the peripatetic performers operate on a demand-basis¹²⁸. This concept of narrating the contents depicted on portable shrine is strikingly similar to that of a Kaavad but its performance is relatively dissimilar to that of Phad, especially in context of the setting. A Kaavad is recited at a central location within the village or inside the jajman’s house (for the genealogist Kaavadiya Bhats), without any specific time of performance; as the performer travels from one village to the other, his transit through any village cannot be tracked by time¹²⁹. Nevertheless, the genealogist Kaavadiya is invited by his jajmans on certain significant (but not specific) occasions. Langhas function with a similar system of “invitation”¹³⁰; nevertheless, the performance is received with an overwhelming response from the audience (similar to that of a “jaagran” for the Phad performance)¹³¹. Primary sources suggest that the Kamads’ performances largely take place during jagrans that are

¹²⁶Neuman, Daniel, Shubha Chaudhuri, and Komal Kothari."Music Concepts and Musical Instruments." *Bards, Ballads and Boundaries: An Ethnographic Atlas of Music Traditions in West Rajasthan*. N.p.: Seagull, 2006. 75-78. Print.

¹²⁷Mr. Sugna Ram and family, Phad Performers, Personal Interview, 6th Jan. 2014.

¹²⁸Neuman, Daniel, Shubha Chaudhuri, and Komal Kothari."Music Concepts and Musical Instruments." *Bards, Ballads and Boundaries: An Ethnographic Atlas of Music Traditions in West Rajasthan*. N.p.: Seagull, 2006. 75-78. Print.

¹²⁹Mr. Narsingh Ram, Kaavadiya Bhat, Personal Interview, 9th Jan. 2014.

¹³⁰Patrons of Phad, Phad Performers, Personal interview, 8th Jan. 2014.

¹³¹Mr. Narsingh Ram, Kaavadiya Bhat, Observation of Narration, 9th Jan. 2014.

organized as an outcome of a mannat, for which the Kamads travel from one village to the other. However, these communities also share experiences of having a strong bond with their jajmans so much so that they voluntarily “walk into their jajmaans’ houses”¹³².

“Kathas” or “Gathas”

A significant element that gives basis to the setting is the medium of conveying the content; elements like musical or dance performances for a ritualistic tradition attract larger audiences than the narrative ones (rituals with entertainment being preferred over merely listening to tales – “gathas” overshadow the “kathas”)¹³³. The performances of Langhas, Kamads and Phad clearly classify as “gathas” or musical expressions. While the Kamad performance and Phad recitation include dance movements as well, the Langha songs remain restricted to musical attributes¹³⁴. Specifically in the case of the Kamads which is intertwined with attributes for ritualistic and commercial (entertainment to support the imparting of Ramdeo ji’s life stories) purposes, secondary sources suggest that their performances were always for an audience¹³⁵; be it specific ritual or religious ceremonies, they catered to the requirements of the patrons/audience and could perform up to 8-12 hours¹³⁶. However, today, the content and length of performance varies according to audience’s/patrons’ preferences¹³⁷.

As a complete contradiction, the Charan and Kaavadiya Bhat community merely narrate the content. Nevertheless, each community (with the exception of Charans, who according to primary sources, rarely express orally) has an accompanying device/instrument that is characteristic only to that community/group of performers. In tandem with both, the primary¹³⁸ and secondary data¹³⁹, the Langha community can be divided into two sub-sections primarily on the basis of the instruments they use; the Surnaiya Langha use the “Shehnai”, whereas the Sarangiya Langha use the “Sarangi”. The focus of this research is on the latter; hence the much-emphasized significance of the sarangi has been brought to light.

¹³² Mr. Roop Das and family, Kamad Community, Personal Interview, 4th Jan. 2014.

¹³³ Mr. Ravindra Rathore, Supervisor of The Arna Jharna Desert Museum, Personal interview, 6th Jan. 2014.

¹³⁴ Interviews and Observation of performances, 4th Jan. 2014, 5th Jan. 2014, 6th Jan. 2014, 7th Jan. 2014.

¹³⁵ Khan, Dominique Sila. "The Kamad of Rajasthan: Priests of a Forgotten Tradition." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 3rd ser. 6.1 (1996): 29-56. *Jstor*.Web. 15 Dec. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25183118>>.

¹³⁶ Bharucha, Rustom, and Komal Kothari. "Teratali." *Rajasthan, an Oral History: Conversations with Komal Kothari*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2003. 181-87. Print.

¹³⁷ Interview with the performers, 4th Jan. 2014, 5th Jan. 2014, 6th Jan. 2014, 7th Jan. 2014.

¹³⁸ Mehruddin Langha, Langha Community, Personal Interview, 7th Jan. 2014.

¹³⁹ Neuman, Daniel, Shubha Chaudhuri, and Komal Kothari. "Barmer District." *Bards, Ballads and Boundaries: An Ethnographic Atlas of Music Traditions in West Rajasthan*. N.p.: Seagull, 2006. 217. Print.

Mnemonic devices

The importance of the instrument is made evident with the practice of passing on the “Sindhi Sarangi” from generation to generation, within the family for about 500 years. Made in Sindh, Pakistan, this instrument is regarded as a priceless legacy of the performing community, which each young performer wishes to inherit, as much as the content of the oral tradition. Supported by the “Morchang” and “Khartal” (wooden cymbals), the melodies of the Langha community are today also characterized by the “Dholak”, “Surinda”, “Pungi” and “Harmonium” (instruments that were not used in the earlier times)¹⁴⁰.



Figure 21 and 22: The Sarangi and the Morchang Used by the Langha Performers

The community of Kamads, guardians of the other music-oriented tradition share a similar range of instruments. The religious/devotional songs are sung by males dressed in a white attire and saffron turban, who initially only played Tambura (veena) made out of “aam ki lakdi” (wood of the mango plant) by the Suthars of Ramdeora. Evolution over the years has triggered the inclusion of “Dholaks”. Complementing the performance is the females’ teratali dance, which is performed in a bright red attire with “chudas” (white bangles) right up to the shoulders. An interesting example of evolution is that earlier, they were dressed in bright cotton sarees with a long ghunghat (veil) extending to below the neck, nearly covering the ornamentation of manjiras, (which were tied on their arms, legs fingers even forehead as a

¹⁴⁰Mr. Mehruddin Langha and family, Langha Community, Personal Interview and Observation of Performances, 7th Jan. 2014.

“maangtika”). However, with the changing times, performance requirements have been taken into consideration and changes in attire have occurred consequently; the modern attire consists of a ghunghat that doesn’t cover face and can be marked by a variety of colours. Parallel to the other instruments are the accompaniments for the dance, namely – a sword (believed to belong to Bhavani maa), a kalash (small metal pot), agarbatti (perfumed incense sticks), and a diya (oil lamp)¹⁴¹.



Figure 23: The Ravanhatta Used by the Phad Performers



Figure 24: The Tambura used by the Kamads

Exemplifying the accompaniments of traditions that are not music-oriented are the Phad (painted cloth) and the Kaavad (painted, multi-panelled wooden boxes), which, like the instruments not only support the entire performance, but also form the basis of the content being orally transmitted. The Phad is a painted scroll that incorporates the life and deeds of Pabuji and functions as a backdrop for the performance. It has images of multiple deities painted on it and though the major focus is on folk deities like Pabuji, Ramdeoji, Gogaji, etc, other deities like Ganesha and Mataji are also depicted. The type of cloth used to make the Phad is known as khadi. The Joshi family, who are Brahmans, paint this cloth in a town called Shahpura near Bhilwara. The holiness accorded to this element is evident from the fact that instead of disposing the old Phads, they are given a ritualistic departure where they are immersed in a water-body in the holy city of Pushkar. There exists a variation in the images depicted, based on the type of Phad being narrated; Devnarayanji’s (another Rajasthani local

¹⁴¹Mr. Roop Das and family, Kamad Community, Personal Interview and Observation of Performances, 4th Jan. 2014.

deity) Phad is depicted differently. Hence, their main attributes are used as indicators for making the distinctions. For example, Pabuji is depicted with a snake but Devnarayan holds a staff (bhala). To enhance the rhythmic recitation of the Phad images, a Bhopa uses the “Ravanhatta” and adorns “gunghroos” (bells ties to his foot). The wood for a bamboo shoot is used to make the Ravanhatta. The strings of the bow are horsehair and a blecha is added to the instrument to make is aesthetically more appealing¹⁴². A bow-like instrument, the Ravanhatta is helpful when the performers alternate between singing and narrating as it can be used to point to the part of the cloth, which is being elaborated on¹⁴³.

On the other hand, the tradition of narrating a Kaavad is almost entirely devoid of melodies and hence its presentation depends on the Kaavad itself. Kaavads are essentially wooden boxes with multiple hinged panels that unfold to portray numerous images that depict stories. They serve the purpose of portable shrines, especially in areas that are devoid of temples. Hence the tales are associated largely with the portrayal of the divine but also commonly end with a social or moral teaching. As per our primary data, the kaavad unfolds into multiple panels with nine sections of images on each panel. Multi-coloured images on a red background give basis to the largely red physical appearance of the kaavad. The stories may or may not be continuous through the sections of one panel and similarly the panels may or may not be of the same size¹⁴⁴; but there exists a standard range of the size and other features of kaavad. The creation of Gangrad Bassi area of Rajasthan, most Kaavadiyas believe in the authenticity of kaavads of mainly this locality¹⁴⁵.

On the stage, in the act: Kamads

The performance of Kamads includes males of this community singing hymns and songs while the women of their family dance¹⁴⁶. The performance commences with a slow paced “Ganesh vandana” (seeking blessings of Lord Ganesh), followed by a transition to faster beats when the women join the men in singing and basic movements with “manjiras” (small cymbals). The “bhajans” (religious/devotional pieces) that succeed the Ganesh vandana, are characterized by a set pattern of tune and movements, with a variation in pace over the course of the performance. Evidently the crucial and more audience-friendly element

¹⁴² Mr. Sugna Ram and his Family, Phad Performers, Personal Interviews, 6th Jan. 2014.

¹⁴³ Mr. Sugna Ram and his wife, Phad Performers, Observation of performances, 6th Jan. 2014.

¹⁴⁴ Mr. Bansi Lal and Mr. Narsingh ram, Kaavadiya Bhat, Observation of narration, 5th Jan. 2014, 9th Jan. 2014.

¹⁴⁵ Mr. Bansi Lal, Kaavadiya Bhats, Personal Interview, 5th Jan. 2014.

¹⁴⁶ Khan, Dominique Sila. "The Kamad of Rajasthan: Priests of a Forgotten Tradition." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 3rd ser. 6.1 (1996): 29-56. *Jstor*.Web. 15 Dec. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25183118>>.

of the performance is the “Teratali” dance which includes women in seated position, dancing with elaborate gestures and movements clanging the multiple cymbals (manjiras) tied to their legs, shoulders and arms with those held in their hands¹⁴⁷. Though the initial interpretation indicated that the term “Teratali” stems from the thirteen manjiras used, recent studies indicate no such specification¹⁴⁸. However, primary research provides for the interpretation that the term “Teratali” is coined due to the existence of thirteen types of movements used to play the manjira¹⁴⁹.



Figure 25: Sounds of the Cymbals: Teratali Performance

The women begin with playing the two manjiras, each held in one hand, in different directions and styles. Following which, the ones in their hands are played against the ones on their legs. Variation in posture, pace of movement and beats of the songs being sung by the males, go in tandem with each other and continue to build in pace. The complexity of movements increases gradually, to an extent where the fast paced music is accompanied by fast paced dance movements with one or more kalash (pots) balanced on the head and a sword held between the teeth¹⁵⁰. It is these additional elements and fast paced music that form the highlight of the performance¹⁵¹. Reiterating the importance of such ‘highlight’ elements is that it has triggered the evolution of the performance - most Teratali groups were constituted by extended family members and the crucial involvement of women triggered adaptation of characteristic movements from their daily household activities (such as pounding the grain,

¹⁴⁷ Bharucha, Rustom, and Komal Kothari. "Teratali." *Rajasthan, an Oral History: Conversations with Komal Kothari*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2003. 181-87. Print.

¹⁴⁸ Bharucha, Rustom, and Komal Kothari. "Teratali." *Rajasthan, an Oral History: Conversations with Komal Kothari*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2003. 181-87. Print.

¹⁴⁹ Mr. Roop Das and family, Kamad Community, Personal Interview, 4th Jan. 2014.

¹⁵⁰ Observation of performances by Kamads, Kamad Community, 4th Jan. 2014.

¹⁵¹ Bharucha, Rustom, and Komal Kothari. "Teratali." *Rajasthan, an Oral History: Conversations with Komal Kothari*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2003. 181-87. Print.

spinning charkha, churning yogurt, etc.)¹⁵². But according to secondary sources, the tendency to emulate higher sections of the society gave impetus to the exclusion of the women's dance; it was not deemed appropriate for a man to allow the women of his family to dance in public, especially with the given variety of postures the women danced in¹⁵³. Nevertheless, a chronological change, to revert back to the inclusion of the Teratali dance has been indicated through the primary research. With changing times, the proportion of entertainment in the performance has exceeded that of devotion, so as to suit the liking of the viewers, be it an audience at a jagran or a family of patrons. The dance movements, their highlight moments and complexity of movements ventured into by the women, appeals to the viewers. It not only attracts attention by instilling a sense of enjoyment or entertainment, but also awakens feelings of devotion. In addition, the desire to see the face of the female performer has contributed in the ghunghat not covering the face (limited to the forehead). Also, since the movements are enjoyed when larger and louder, the women stand and dance to songs that are modified for the preferences of the modern generation. At the end of the act, the performers get 'tipped' (rewarded) by patrons/audience for singing¹⁵⁴.



Figure 26 and 27: Grace Personified: Teratali Performance

¹⁵²Bharucha, Rustom, and Komal Kothari. "Teratali." *Rajasthan, an Oral History: Conversations with Komal Kothari*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2003. 181-87. Print.

¹⁵³Khan, Dominique Sila. "The Kamad of Rajasthan: Priests of a Forgotten Tradition." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 3rd ser. 6.1 (1996): 29-56. *Jstor*.Web. 15 Dec. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25183118>>.

¹⁵⁴Mr. Roop Das and family, Kamad Community, Personal Interview, 4th Jan. 2014.

A noticeable feature of this oral tradition is the inclusion of various dialects of the Rajasthani languages with notable Arabic and Persian influences¹⁵⁵. These influences can be exemplified from the derivation of the term “jama” from the Arabic “jamat” which means congregation of the faithful¹⁵⁶. These “jamas” differ from the original night-long sessions called “jagrans” where the spirit of Ramdeo is invoked. The former excludes the Teratali dance, constitutes only the songs and hymns and includes a special aspect of the “Rupande ri bel” (a poetic composition that is longer than the ballad but shorter than the epic)¹⁵⁷. Hence the ritualistic all-night performances or ceremonies continue with bhajans/hymns and devotional songs, stutis (panegyric verses) and “aarti”, all in honour of the divine hero.

On the stage, in the act: Langhas

Parallel to the melodious performance of the Kamads is that of the Langhas; though not ritualistic, the Langha's sing mainly on occasions of revelry and hence it is their enthusiasm skill that brings out the much-required flavour to the event. The Langhas commence their performance through “shubhraaj” – a breathless recitation of their patrons' genealogy. It enables the preservation of the patron family's ancestry and history, beginning right from the propagation of Islam by its pioneers and traced down to the specific community whose genealogy it is and finally the family. True to the essence of oral traditions, this content is completely memorized - “recorded in heart” (as the Langhas refer to it). This “shubhraaj” is followed by the melodies characteristic to this community – be it bhajans of Kabir and Mirabai (despite being a Muslim tradition) or more popular songs of today's generation to meet the demands of their young audience, in India and globally¹⁵⁸.

¹⁵⁵Khan, Dominique Sila. "The Kamad of Rajasthan: Priests of a Forgotten Tradition." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 3rd ser. 6.1 (1996): 29-56. *Jstor*.Web. 15 Dec. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25183118>>.

¹⁵⁶Bharucha, Rustom, and Komal Kothari."Teratali." *Rajasthan, an Oral History: Conversations with Komal Kothari*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2003. 181-87. Print.

¹⁵⁷Bharucha, Rustom, and Komal Kothari."Teratali." *Rajasthan, an Oral History: Conversations with Komal Kothari*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2003. 181-87. Print.

¹⁵⁸Observation of performances by Langhas, Langha Community, 7th Jan. 2014.



Figure 28: Mesmerising Melodies: Langha Performance

On the stage, in the act: Phad performance

Based on primary research, the Phad performance is performed by a couple, usually a husband and wife. The bhopi wears a sari with a long ghunghat while the Bhopa wears a “baga”. While both of them sing together, the woman has to cover her head in the “ghunghat” of her sari and face the Phad hung as a backdrop, so as to avoid the audience from catching a view of her face. In the case of a Bhopa who is a bachelor, his mother serves as his bhopi¹⁵⁹. The male performer usually stands to the left of the Phad while the woman is on the right. However, as the performance proceeds, male performers start moving in circles occasionally. “Ghungroos” (bells) attached to the bow of the Ravanhatta played by Bhopa provide rhythmic support, since the footwork is complementary to the beats. Every first and third beat of the bar are used as points on which the bow is jerked. The songs or dohas sung as well as the narratives focus on the same parts but are just different techniques of story-telling¹⁶⁰. A variation can be observed in cases where the Bhopa plays the “mataa” instead of ravanhatta. Here, the performer sits instead of standing as the pot needs to be stably kept on the ground. However, the popularity of ravanhatta based performances supersedes the variation. Most bachelors learn to play the ravanhatta from their fathers but observational learning is also widely practiced. Unmarried women are also allowed to perform and do not have to adorn a

¹⁵⁹Mr. Sugna Ram and family, Phad Performers, Personal Interview, 6th Jan. 2014.

¹⁶⁰Mr. Sugna Ram and wife, Phad Performers, Observation of performances, 6th Jan. 2014.

ghunghat. It is not compulsory for each family of the community to perform but if a family is involved with Phad performance, the son is expected to continue with the same profession¹⁶¹.

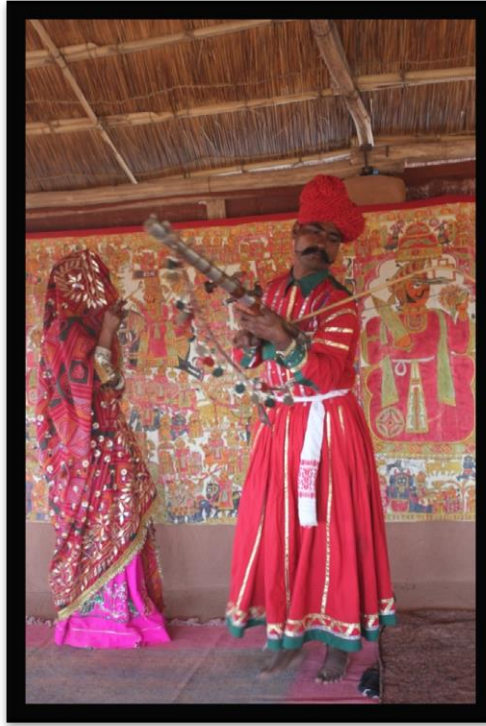


Figure 29: 'Gathas' Performed by Bhopa and Bhopi

On the stage, in the act: Kaavadiya Bhat

Reflecting a similar but unique pattern of performance, the Kaavad forms the visual aid that is the basis to the tradition. This object bears the images of deities, mythical figures, excerpts from epics, depictions of local saints like Dhanna Bhagat, Pipa Bhagat, Sen Bhagat, which may be engraved or painted on the hinged panels. Contemporary human figures are also sometimes a common theme on these mobile shrines, with symbolic images around a particular person indicating themes of life after death. This form of communicating through chanting, moves beyond the representation of Hindu deities and circumscribes stories of the patron families ancestors¹⁶². A soft, sacred cloth is used to cover the panels and procrastinate the fading of their colour. In case of the genealogist Kaavadiyas, the kaavad contains the same images but also includes the written records of patrons' names on the sections they were rewarded for; an early evidence of the oral tradition being replaced by written records.

¹⁶¹Mr. Sugna Ram and family, Phad Performers, Personal Interview, 6th Jan. 2014.

¹⁶²Neuman, Daniel, Shubha Chaudhuri, and Komal Kothari."Music Concepts and Musical Instruments." *Bards, Ballads and Boundaries: An Ethnographic Atlas of Music Traditions in West Rajasthan*. N.p.: Seagull, 2006. 75-78. Print.

Though the process of the performance is subjective from one Kaavadiya to the other, a generic sequence of events (as inferred from primary and secondary sources) remains the same¹⁶³.



Figure 30: 'Tale'ing: Narration by Kaavadiya Bhat

¹⁶³ Mr. Bansi Lal and Mr. Narsingh Ram, Kaavadiya Bhat, Observation of narrations, 5th Jan. 2014, 9th Jan. 2014.

4.2 PATRONAGE

The institute of patronage has had both negative and positive connotation attached to it in India. While some patrons view those catering to them as those who beg, others provide them with uttermost respect, to the extent that they are considered worthy of worship. In either of the cases, the relationship between a patron and service provider is mutually beneficial. This is what encourages both the sides to make continual attempts to maintain the relationship well. In the case of communities associated with different oral tradition of Rajasthan, this can be seen to some extent. Patronage is normally referred to as “jajmani” and the patron is called “jajaman”¹⁶⁴. However, the term used for the performers/service providers differs based upon the community they are from and what they do for the patrons.

Patrons, identified

In order to understand the various aspects of patronage, it is important to identify the patrons associated with each of the traditions. Rajputs are common patrons for most of the traditions. Phad performers, Kamads, and Charans were all patronised by Rajputs¹⁶⁵. Even the patrons of the Langhas are Rajputs but they differ from other patrons because they were originally Hindus and who later converted to Islam. They are now a part of the community known as Sindhi-Sipahi. Sindhi-Sipahis are further divided into various categories (coms) and the Langhas performing for any patron belong to the same com as them. Most of them are involved in agriculture and are located all over the state, especially in the Marwar region (in the districts of Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Barmer and Bikaner)¹⁶⁶.

Some of the traditions also cater to more than one community. One of the main patrons for Pabuji’s Phad are the Rajputs and the Khichis, majority of whom are owners of cattle (since Ramdeoiji is protector of cattle). Devenarayan’s Phad receives patronage from the Gujjar community, to which a few performers also belong¹⁶⁷. In addition to Rajputs, Kamads have also been recorded to cater to people from the lower caste of Meghwals from Nagaur and Udaipur districts¹⁶⁸. Similarly, the Rajput community is only one of the seven

¹⁶⁴Gold, Ann G. "Outspoken Women: Representations of Female Voices in a Rajasthani Folklore Community." *Oral Tradition Journal* 12.1 (119): 103-33. *Oral Tradition Journal*.Web. 17 Feb. 2014. <http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/articles/12i/5_gold.pdf>.

¹⁶⁵Interviews with Phad performers and members of Charan and Kamad community, 6th Jan. 2014, 5th Jan. 2014, 4th Jan. 2014.

¹⁶⁶Mr. Mehruddin Langha and family, Langha Community, Personal interview, 7th Jan. 2014.

¹⁶⁷Interview with Phad performers and patrons, 6th Jan. 2014, 8th Jan. 2014.

¹⁶⁸Khan, Dominique Sila. "The Kamad of Rajasthan: Priests of a Forgotten Tradition." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 3rd ser. 6.1 (1996): 29-56. *Jstor*.Web. 15 Dec. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25183118>>.

communities that Kaavadiya Bhats cater to. These communities are those “jinka pani pee sakte hai” (only those from whom the Kaavadiya Bhats can accept drinking water). The other six communities are Jaat, Suthar, Kumbhar, Sonar, Banya and Darji. One of the Kaavadiya Bhat interviewed for this research caters to jajmans from sixteen different villages and to people from either the Vaishnav or the Mali community. His brother is responsible for maintaining the genealogy of the other communities that his father previously catered to¹⁶⁹.

The “jajmaani” bond

The relationship between patrons and the performers is hereditary in nature. Since, Langhas and Kaavadiya Bhats narrate or sing stories and also keep records of genealogies, this is a preferred option as the performers learn the genealogy of the patron family right from the time when they are young and start observing their fathers perform¹⁷⁰. The Langhas for example, have records of a family genealogy (“shubhraaj”) which can be traced back to common ancestors with the extended family, founders of their communities and the advent of Islam which lead to conversion of their patrons¹⁷¹. However, even in case of Bhopas-Bhopis and Kamads, the hereditary relationships can be noticed despite the lack of genealogical element in their content¹⁷².

Except for the music of the Langhas, all the other traditions permit women to be a part of the audience. The whole family is normally encouraged to watch the performances because the values contained within each of the stories, the history of one’s own family and the religious elements are considered important enough for each to know. Normally, after the death of performer, his son carries on the tradition¹⁷³. In case of Kaavadiya Bhats, the communities whose genealogies are kept by the father, are divided amongst his sons or passed on to his nephews if his own sons are involved with other occupations¹⁷⁴. Unlike the four other communities, Charans did not share a hereditary relationship with their patrons. Instead, they were hired for their services by the kings when the need arose to encourage and praise the royalty (“charan chatuka”). Unlike the other traditions, Charans were never

¹⁶⁹Interview with Kaavadiya Bhat, 5th Jan. 2014, 9th Jan. 2014.

¹⁷⁰Mr. Narsingh Ram, Kaavadiya Bhat, Personal Interview, 9th Jan. 2014.

¹⁷¹Mr. Khan and family, Langha Community, Personal Interview, 7th Jan. 2014.

¹⁷²Interviews with Phad performers and patrons, and Mr. Roop Das and family, 6th Jan. 2014, 8th Jan. 2014, 4th Jan. 2014.

¹⁷³Interview with members of the five communities, 4th Jan. 2014, 5th Jan. 2014, 6th Jan. 2014, 7th Jan. 2014.

¹⁷⁴Mr. Narsingh Ram, Kaavadiya Bhat, Personal Interview, 9th Jan. 2014.

dependent on the kings and were as a result unaffected by the change to the reign of a new king¹⁷⁵.

Joyous occasions at the patron's house such as births and marriages are times when the patrons invite the performers to come and perform. This also adds an element of entertainment for guests who are attending the event. Langhas are sometimes also called by their patrons when relatives or the in-laws of the patron's daughter visit. At other times, the performers take the initiative to go to the patron's house¹⁷⁶. This is essential in case of Langhas and Kaavadiya Bhats as they update the genealogy by staying in constant touch with the patron family to record any marriages, births or deaths that might have taken place. If needed, some of the Kaavadiya Bhats now travel to other states as many of the patrons have migrated out of their original place of residence¹⁷⁷.



Figure 31: Mr. Narsingh Ram, Kaavadiya Bhat, with his Patrons

Langhas visit the house of their patrons at least once a year. They also visit the daughter of a patron after her marriage to keep a record of her husband's family. Even there they are welcomed as a visit from a Langha is considered equal to that from her own father. At the time of a wedding in the Sindhi-Sipahi community, if a Langha does not accompany his patron family for the wedding, the other family has the right to stop the wedding from taking place. Not having a Langha is considered equivalent to not having a family¹⁷⁸. In contrast, members of the Kamad community are now rarely invited. However, earlier, they

¹⁷⁵Mrs. Shilpa, Charan Community, Personal Interview, 10th Jan. 2014.

¹⁷⁶Mr. Khan and family, Langha Community, Personal Interview, 7th Jan. 2014.

¹⁷⁷Interview with Langha performers and patrons of Kaavadiya Bhats, 7th Jan. 2014, 5th Jan. 2014, 9th Jan. 2014.

¹⁷⁸Mr. Mehruddin Langha and family, Langha Community, Personal Interview,

were often called during the month of “Bhadvaa” and for festivals associated with Ramdeoji. Currently though, even when they voluntarily visit the patrons, the respect given to them is out of formality¹⁷⁹.



Figure 32: Langhas at their Patron’s House

Fruits of the bond

Giving rewards in cash and kind is a regular and common practice. Phad performers are given rewards in the form of money as well as clothes and food for their performances and even at other times of the year¹⁸⁰. Langhas on the other hand are rewarded by their patrons whenever they have the required sum or products to do so. Normally items such as gold, horses and camels are given as rewards alongside grains from the patron’s harvest. However, if a period of unfavourable climate causes decreased harvest, either a smaller reward is given or a promise is made by the patron to pay the performers at a later stage. This does not hinder the relationship in anyway and is considered normal. For the performers, the patrons are the most important aspect of their life, even more important than their art of music¹⁸¹. Kaavadiya Bhats receive gifts such as money, clothes, jewellery and animals for the services that they provide¹⁸².

¹⁷⁹Mr. Roop Das and family, Kamad Community, Personal Interview, 4th Jan. 2014.

¹⁸⁰Patrons of Phad performances, Phad Performers, 8th Jan. 2014.

¹⁸¹ Mehruddin Langha and family, Langha Community, Personal Interview, 7th Jan. 2014.

¹⁸²Mr. Bansi Lal, Kaavadiya Bhat, Personal Interview, 5th Jan. 2014.

Close, yet distanced

Despite the positive relationship between patrons and performers associated with most of the traditions, marriages between the two communities are not practiced in any of them. Charans claim that the reason why they did not “allow” marriages with the Rajputs was because no other caste was as morally strong as the Charans. Because of the same reason, Rajputs were not allowed to enter the homes of Charans either¹⁸³. Another reason stated for prohibition of marriages between the two communities was that the Charans were involved in the decision-making process of the royal families. Sometimes they also served as representatives of Rajput in the courts of other kings. So, a treaty was signed to stop Rajputs and Charans from inter-marrying. Nevertheless, their social structure is considered similar to that of their patrons¹⁸⁴. In case of the Phad performers, the distinction can be observed in their place of worship. While the patrons and the performers both worship Pabuji, the temples they visit are separate and are ideally the temple of one group is not supposed to be visited by the other group.

Evolution due to Emulation

According to scholarly research, the original Charans were replaced by people from multiple clans who claim that they are Charans too and practice as poets and genealogists. However, their patronage was linked with the rich land-owning¹⁸⁵. Here, an attempt made by other social groups to emulate the performers can be observed. However, instances have also been noted of emulation of the patron community by the performers. The relationship between Kamads and their patrons, for example, was formed as a result of their common devotion towards Ramdeoiji, a local deity. After India gained independence, many Kamads did not permit the women of their family to perform the Teratali dance¹⁸⁶. A plausible explanation for this decision is the attempt to prove that their attitudes were similar to that of the patrons. Langhas too display some level of similarity with the patron communities. Their overall social structure (division of different types of Langhas into various coms) and the

¹⁸³Mr. Shubhkaran Deval, Charan Community, Personal Interview, 10th Jan. 2014.

¹⁸⁴Mrs. Shilpa, Charan Community, Personal Interview, 10th Jan. 2014.

¹⁸⁵Snodgrass, Jeffrey G. "The Centre Cannot Hold: Tales of Hierarchy and Poetic Composition from Modern Rajasthan." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 10.2 (2004): 261-85. *JSTOR*.Web. 15 Dec. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3804151>>.

¹⁸⁶Khan, Dominique Sila. "The Kamad of Rajasthan: Priests of a Forgotten Tradition." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 3rd ser. 6.1 (1996): 29-56. *Jstor*.Web. 15 Dec. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25183118>>.

practice of both groups of Langhas being endogamous¹⁸⁷ can be thought to have been influenced by those of Sindhi-Sipahis.

From patrons to audience

Over the past few years, with the help of Komal Kothari, an ethnomusicologist, and his colleagues, many of the oral traditions in Rajasthan with musical elements have been taken to the international stage. This has popularised some of the communities greatly, but with the change in the viewers, the content and techniques have also been modified to suit the new spectators. Instead of catering to a patron community, the performers now entertain audiences from around the world. In Europe especially, music of some of the communities has become popular, leading them to frequently perform in international arenas. Within India and in Rajasthan itself, some of them have moved out of their villages and have started performing for people who are not associated to the content at all¹⁸⁸. Despite this, while some communities such as the Langhas and Phad performers continue to prioritise their patrons, others like Kamads consider it to be a favourable opportunity since the tradition patronage system does not serve them well.

¹⁸⁷ Mehruddin Langha and family, Langha Community, Personal Interview, 7th Jan. 2014.

¹⁸⁸ Mr. Anil Sharma, The Arna Jharna Desert Museum, Personal Interview, 5th Jan. 2014.

4.3 FROM SCHOLARS, TO STUDENTS

Oral traditions: Recording the past for the future

One of the main aims of oral traditions is to ensure that certain core values continue to exist within a community for years and generations together. The younger generations imbibe these values by hearing stories depict or are inspired by the past. Hence, they transmit history; not just of the region and community they belong to, but also of individual families (genealogy). This element, which is captured from the Literature Review, identifies them as historical sources¹⁸⁹. Exemplifying the transmission of different types of history are the Charans who composed poetries in praise of the kings¹⁹⁰, the Phad which depicts the life and deeds of local heroes like Pabuji¹⁹¹, and the Langhas who recite the genealogy of their patrons right from their first known generation¹⁹². On the other hand, the Kaavad entails excerpts from epics which offer historical information of partial credibility¹⁹³. Hence, it can be inferred that these mediums of transmitting history orally not only make the younger generation aware but also set examples/lay down guiding paths for social and communal ideologies. It is these ideologies which that maintain a common thought process in the community and trigger manifestation into similar behaviour. Nevertheless, the signs of evolution observed are due to inevitable influences and distortions.

Classified but not bound within margins

The distortions specified above, stem from the characteristic of oral traditions being “soft” sources, i.e. those that only lead to probabilities¹⁹⁴. With the exception of Langhas and Kamads whose songs comprise of Kabir and Mirabai’s “dohas”, tracing the authorship of the contents a venture that offers low reliability. Since most stories classify as Rajasthani folklore strongly ingrained within community, according authorship to an individual or one generation

¹⁸⁹Vansina, Jan. *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*. Trans. H. M. Wright. 2nd ed. New Brunswick: Transaction, 2009. Print.

¹⁹⁰Snodgrass, Jeffrey G. "The Centre Cannot Hold: Tales of Hierarchy and Poetic Composition from Modern Rajasthan." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 10.2 (2004): 261-85. JSTOR.Web. 15 Dec. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3804151>>.

¹⁹¹Neuman, Daniel, Shubha Chaudhuri, and Komal Kothari. "Music Concepts and Musical Instruments." *Bards, Ballads and Boundaries: An Ethnographic Atlas of Music Traditions in West Rajasthan*. N.p.: Seagull, 2006. 75-78. Print.

¹⁹²Mehruddin Langha and family, Langha Community, Personal Interview, 7th Jan. 2014.

¹⁹³Neuman, Daniel, Shubha Chaudhuri, and Komal Kothari. "Music Concepts and Musical Instruments." *Bards, Ballads and Boundaries: An Ethnographic Atlas of Music Traditions in West Rajasthan*. N.p.: Seagull, 2006. 75-78. Print.

¹⁹⁴Vansina, Jan. "1.Oral Tradition and Historical Methodology." *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*. Trans. H. M. Wright. 2nd ed. New Brunswick: Transaction, 2009. 8-14. Print.

of people cannot be substantiated¹⁹⁵. Further, based on the content they transmit, each oral tradition can be classified into the nineteen categories proposed in Jan Vansina's written work (see Literature Review)¹⁹⁶. However, considering the various elements associated with performance of each of the traditions, they cannot be confined to a single category but rather classify into multiple ones. For example, kaavads contain historical tales (concerning general, local and family history) as well as aetiological myths (didactic tales) and lists of place and personal names¹⁹⁷. Songs sung by Langhas and Phad performers on the other hand do not fall under any of the categories since the element of music is avoided Jan Vansina's categorisation¹⁹⁸. However, lists of place and personal names, and exploratory commentaries are usually present in performances by the Langhas¹⁹⁹.

Charans pose a significant discrepancy mainly because, as indicated by primary sources, their poetry and records of genealogy do fall under the category of lists as well as official poems but are present mainly in written records²⁰⁰. Clearly, the degree of credibility varies with each category, i.e., Charans' genealogical list would appear more reliable than that of the tales of kaavads. Nevertheless, when considered as a whole, all the five oral traditions are characterised by a dual aspect of limited reliability yet presence of hidden, subtle truths. Moreover, with the inclusion of mass-preferred folk and film songs in the performances of some communities, the original content is further distorted²⁰¹. Evidently, the influence of demands of the audience has manifested into a higher proportion of entertainment value in the performances such that their content and techniques encompass characteristics of more than just one classification.

Mnemonically facilitated

Some communities which still intend to remain close to the original utilise mnemonic devices to facilitate retention of content and its unhindered expression during the performance. Kaavad and Phad aptly exemplify such devices since the images painted on them serve as visual aids for performance, i.e., the images illustrate the kathas or gathas being

¹⁹⁵ Observation of performances by Langhas and narration by Kaavadiya Bhats, 7th Jan. 2014, 5th Jan. 2014, 9th Jan. 2014.

¹⁹⁶ Vansina, Jan. "6. Historical Knowledge." *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*. Trans. H. M. Wright. 2nd ed. New Brunswick: Transaction, 2009. 141-163. Print.

¹⁹⁷ Observation of narration by Kaavadiya Bhats, 5th Jan. 2014, 9th Jan. 2014.

¹⁹⁸ Observation of performances by Langhas and Phad performers, 7th Jan. 2014, 6th Jan. 2014.

¹⁹⁹ Observation of performances by Langhas, 7th Jan. 2014.

²⁰⁰ Interview with members of the Charan community, 5th Jan. 2014.

²⁰¹ Observation of performances by all communities, 4th Jan. 2014, 5th Jan. 2014, 6th Jan. 2014, 7th Jan. 2014.

orally transmitted by the performers²⁰². In the case of Langhas, Kamads, and Phad, their instruments (sarangi, tambura/majira, ravanhatta) perform the role of mnemonic devices by aiding the memorisation of melodies (i.e., the mode of transmitting oral traditions) and not just the content²⁰³. Charans and genealogist Kaavadiya Bhats are the ones who record the genealogies mainly through written records which can be used as mnemonic devices if needed²⁰⁴. Along with the content, the newer generations of performers value these mnemonic devices as a priceless legacy.

Modified for the masses

Bringing in the aspect of evolution, it has been observed that to supplement the mnemonic devices, the performers have adapted to the changing audience preferences and included more engaging performance elements. The focus has shifted to making the performances (and ritualistic narration) enjoyable, entertaining and aesthetically appealing. The Kamads, Bhopas and Langhas admitted to have reduced the duration of their performances considerably, a common aspect of evolution whose cause can be attributed to be a recent rise to national and international fame²⁰⁵. Specifically in reference to the Kamads, their fading relationship with their patrons has increased their dependency on such international exposures. Their decision to exclude the teratali dancers to emulate the upper classes of the society (because women's performances in public were not perceived socially appropriate)²⁰⁶, has now been modified to the level where it is the dance that enhances the aesthetic appeal demanded by the audience²⁰⁷.

'Her' side of the story

In isolation, each community has its distinct patterns in terms of gender role. While there is a voluntary search for self-identity amongst women from the Charan community²⁰⁸, the women of the Kamad community face repercussions of external triggers²⁰⁹. Similarly, the

²⁰²Interview with and observation of performances/narration Phad performers and Kaavadiya Bhats, 6th Jan. 2014, 5th Jan. 2014, 9th Jan. 2014.

²⁰³Interview with and observation of performances by Langhas, Kamads and Phad performers, 7th Jan. 2014, 4th Jan. 2014, 6th Jan. 2014.

²⁰⁴Mr. Narsingh Ram, Kaavadiya Bhat, Observation of narration, 9th Jan. 2014.

²⁰⁵Interviews with Langhas, Kamads and Phad performers

²⁰⁶Khan, Dominique Sila. "The Kamad of Rajasthan: Priests of a Forgotten Tradition." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 3rd ser. 6.1 (1996): 29-56. *Jstor*.Web. 15 Dec. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25183118>>.

²⁰⁷Mr. Roop Das and family, Kamad Community, Personal Interview, 4th Jan. 2014.

²⁰⁸Mrs. Shilpa, Charan Community, Personal Interview, 10th Jan. 2014.

²⁰⁹Mr. Roop Das and family, Kamad Community, Personal Interview, 4th Jan. 2014.

Bhopis (female Phad performers) form an integral part of the performance but their identity always remains hidden beneath their ghunghat²¹⁰. However, it can be inferred that the success of the Charan women's endeavouring their search for independent identities, is an outcome of the holy status accorded to them by the "shakta-dharma" (goddess worship) rooted in the community²¹¹. In contradiction, the Langhas and the Kaavadiyas exclude any involvement of women in their performances²¹². Therefore, it can be inferred that none of the five communities support the conclusion drawn by most scholars as is evident in the Literature Review; the scholarly claim of oral traditions being the medium or the voice beneath women's overpowering silence (and hence a true indicator of the social system)²¹³, has been defied in this research. Given the patriarchal society of Rajasthan, encountering female-driven oral expression especially in this research is minimal. This reiterates the focus of this study- "From father to son".

Oral traditions: Shaping and modifying communal ideologies

As has been highlighted at the outset of this section, oral traditions play a significant role in shaping the communal ideologies of the people, such that people's perceptions, beliefs, and actions stem from what has been inculcated through the content. By emphasising on the deeds and achievements of the preceding generations (be it deities, local heroes or ancestors), standards are set for the young to live up to the legacy they take after. In addition, the knowledge imparted, moulds an individual's outlook towards all communities, their religious preferences, morality and social behaviour; consequently, more than the truth, it lies down for the future generations, the 'right' thing to do. With many of the traditions being practiced as hereditary professions, it is essential to note that even a factor such as occupation can be an important part of the concept of communal ideology. For example, the interview with the members of the Kamad community revealed a subtle sense of compulsion for the son to take after the father's profession as a Kamad singer²¹⁴. Clearly, this approach classifies as not only a father's attempt in ensuring continuity of the tradition over the generations that follow but also limit the access to the knowledge and the tradition only within the

²¹⁰Mr. Sugna Ram and wife, Phad Performers, Observation of Performance, 6th Jan. 2014.

²¹¹Mrs. Shilpa, Charan Community, Personal Interview, 10th Jan. 2014.

²¹²Interviews with Langhas and Kaavadiya Bhats, 7th Jan. 2014, 5th Jan. 2014, 9th Jan. 2014.

²¹³Raheja, Gloria G. "Introduction - The Paradoxes of Power and Community: Women's Oral Traditions and the Uses of Ethnography." *Oral Tradition Journal* 12.1 (1997): 1-22. *Oral Tradition Journal*. Web. 17 Feb. 2014. <http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/articles/12i/1e_Raheja_Introduction.pdf>.

²¹⁴Mr. Roop Das and family, Kamad Community, Personal Interview, 4th Jan. 2014.

community. In addition to the Kamads, all the other traditions in the scope of this research (Langhas, Charans, Kaavadiya Bhats, Phad) exemplify esoteric traditions, i.e., those that remain exclusive to the performing and patron communities²¹⁵.

Nevertheless, the process of evolution has not left this aspect of oral traditions untouched. Factors like reducing patron support and selection of other profitable professions by young community members, have led all the five traditions under study, to undergo a phase of fading importance. The pride in the art form has relatively diminished; moreover, it has been replaced by the drive to make a decent income. Hence, the exclusivity of most traditions has been lost out of helplessness –the performers have opened up to the idea of teaching the youth of other communities as well, so as to ensure the survival of the tradition in any manner possible. On the other hand, communities like the Langha, Phad performers and Kamads have accepted the same, primarily due to their national and international fame²¹⁶. Clearly, the choice has changed from that of preserving communal pride/legacy, to success and/or subsistence based incentives. This incentive driven attitude is aptly expressed in Mr. Roop Das Kamad's quote "...just last night I returned from my tenth international trip. It is now that we are seeing the world in the literal sense; so much so that my children willingly decide to follow the same profession"²¹⁷.

²¹⁵Vansina, Jan. "2.Tradition As a Chain of Testimonies." *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*. Trans. H. M. Wright. 2nd ed. New Brunswick: Transaction, 2009. 34-36. Print.

²¹⁶Interviews with Kamads, Langhas and Phad performers, 4th Jan. 2014, 7th Jan. 2014, 6th Jan. 2014.

²¹⁷Mr. Roop Das and family, Kamad Community, Personal Interview, 4th Jan. 2014.



Conclusion

Prolonged silence. Raised heart beats. Unvoiced conversations. Twitching muscles. Explosively curious minds. Gazes locked at an image that is much more than just an image. The image of a blue India, magnified by the encompassing circle of infinity, stood out amidst the blend of shades reflecting the national flag through two words: “Discover” and “India”. All senses heightened to grasp the announcement that marked the commencement of ‘just another course.’ And within the blink of an eye, the momentarily paused physical action fused into a sudden influx of stamping feet, excited conversations and gasps of nervousness at the beginning of a journey.

Each mind, amongst the throng, that crossed the threshold of the door, stepped out with the mirage of a box; a box that was empty then, but had to be returned with learnings of six months. The very first contribution to this box was that of multiple pieces, rough-edged and incomplete – the fascination to explore concepts alien in today’s scenario. Following which was the selection of the fascinating art of story-telling and oral traditions. First introduced only through the popular example of the Vedas, the seemingly impossible practice of remembering voluminous content and transmitting it orally (without any written reference) enhanced the germinated level of fascination. Identifying the multi-dimensional and vast expanse of perspectives that oral traditions cover, the rough-edged pieces were transformed into the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. With each piece appearing seemingly connectable, the multiplicity of loops and hinges is reflected through the variety of facets oral traditions possess (in terms of content, purpose, technique and presentation).

Chronological progression led to the formation of an outline or a map of our illusionary jigsaw puzzle. From the diverse choices of locations in India that still possess the treasure of oral traditions, Rajasthan, or more specifically western Rajasthan served as the ideal space for our exploration. The word “diversity” seemed synonymous with the state of Rajasthan, arousing our curiosity towards exploring the existence of oral traditions there. In a striking contrast to the relatively colourless Thar Desert, in the western region, the oral traditions practiced by the communities in proximity of this area had multiple coloured layers that first showcased the ideologies of a community, and then when unwrapped, revealed their significance for not just the performers but also the patron communities. Apart from the documentation of the essence of oral traditions, the aspect that guided our focus was the practice of passing down the tradition over generations; while gifting a child a material object is not unusual, the idea was to bring out the importance of such intangible gifts, passed down as legacy. Eventually, shaping the focus of this research as ‘From father, to son....’ Hence,

more than exploring the pieces that comprise the puzzle, and the image it creates, the highlight remains as that of the importance it holds for the person imparting the knowledge and the recipient of it.

By analysing the research work based upon oral traditions around the world as well as in India, the prominence of some factors in the oral traditions of western Rajasthan were explored. The secondary data focuses on the description of the nature of some of the traditions, which comprises the content, techniques, presentation, and the performers themselves. However, factors such as patronage which could be associated with the purpose of preserving information orally even today were barely studied. By understanding these two basic aspects, the evolution of each tradition could be traced to some extent. Further, a comparison of the selected oral traditions provided a new insight since many themes and performance elements were recurring in more than one of them, as were some aspects of patronage.

While, classifying each of the traditions into a singular category of oral traditions based on the content they transmit (such as tales, genealogy, poetic compositions, myths etc), was restricted by the multiple themes and techniques associated with them; the aspect of absolute categorisation was not applicable to the five traditions studied. Instead, many of the classifications were suitable for one tradition. Nevertheless, this categorisation provided an insight into how each of the traditions contributed to the development of certain thought patterns amongst all members of the community. Use of ancestral stories to encourage the new generation of the family and tales of local heroes to inspire the members of the community to behave in a certain way were present in almost all the traditions. Similarly, the idea of spreading social messages and providing lessons on morality through religious tales was practiced by these traditions. In addition to their role of directing the values of a community, some performance based elements of the oral traditions have now been viewed as means of entertainment too, causing the performing communities to make modifications to the duration of performances, the choice of songs and the venue of performance.

Factors such as gender roles and exclusivity of each of the traditions (i.e. restricted access to the content and technique of that oral tradition) were also briefly studied. While some communities are now popular because of the performance elements and mnemonic devices associated with women, others completely avoid involving women as it is considered as away of livelihood to be followed only by the males of the community. The exclusivity in

this case can be observed within the traditions itself. However, this also existed on a larger scale till a few years ago when only people belonging to certain communities could perform or witness the performance. Now though, some of the communities have started accepting the possibility that the only way to preserve their traditions would be by involving other communities and losing the esoteric nature. If this were to happen, more communities could be associated with a single oral tradition and the ideologies of a larger section of the society than before could be shaped.

An integral element of our observations and inferences is the aspect of ensuring continuity of the oral tradition(s); be it in the form of the content being passed down, the skill, the pride in the art form, or the relationship with patrons. It is this perspective that reveals a desperate attempt at trying to preserve the art form for generations to come, using the approach of perceiving these traditions as a means of livelihood. Catering to a young generation that is highly inspired by the material incentives, the older generations of these communities have to resort to such incentives. Hence the importance of being encouraged by loyal patrons, whose significance is more than just hat of viewers and reward givers, is reiterated. Nevertheless, the striking pattern of each of the five communities being at different stages in the process of fading and being revived, is of heightened significance. With the Charans and Kaavadiya Bhats being loyally grounded to their original tradition (of passionately written scholarly works and narrating tales or genealogies respectively), their distinction from the Langhas', Kamads' and Phad performers' international fame is brought to light. Clearly, the latter three traditions have entered a phase of revival and immense fame and it is these aspects that serve as incentives for the younger generation to take after their fathers' profession. Truly, a transmission "from father, to son" but definitely with modified triggers.

As has been entailed by the intertwined characteristics of five different oral traditions and their transgression over time, oral traditions are exhaustingly diverse. None of the traditions if considered in isolation, provide a complete picture of the image intended to reconstruct through this research. Similarly, none of the individual features such as techniques, content, performers, patrons etc. can fill the variety of shades the multi-colored jigsaw illustrates. Hence this research returns the image of a jigsaw puzzle through the mirage of the empty box received right at the outset of this six month journey; a puzzle that has outlines but acknowledges its limited scope, re-creates an image which is only a glimpse

of the whole picture, is pieced together with just the limited resources at hand and coloured with shades only to the best of our capacity.

With due credits to the characteristics of oral traditions in general, which inspired our research focus to be that of: bringing to light , “much more than what meets the ears”, we conclude in agreement of the lines introduced right at the outset of this research –

We ventured into the vast expanse of the brown ocean,

Explored the majestic rustic cities,

Caught a glimpse of the fortified walls cemented with history,

Encountered colour charged people

And most importantly,

Captured at least the syllables of words that speak louder than words.

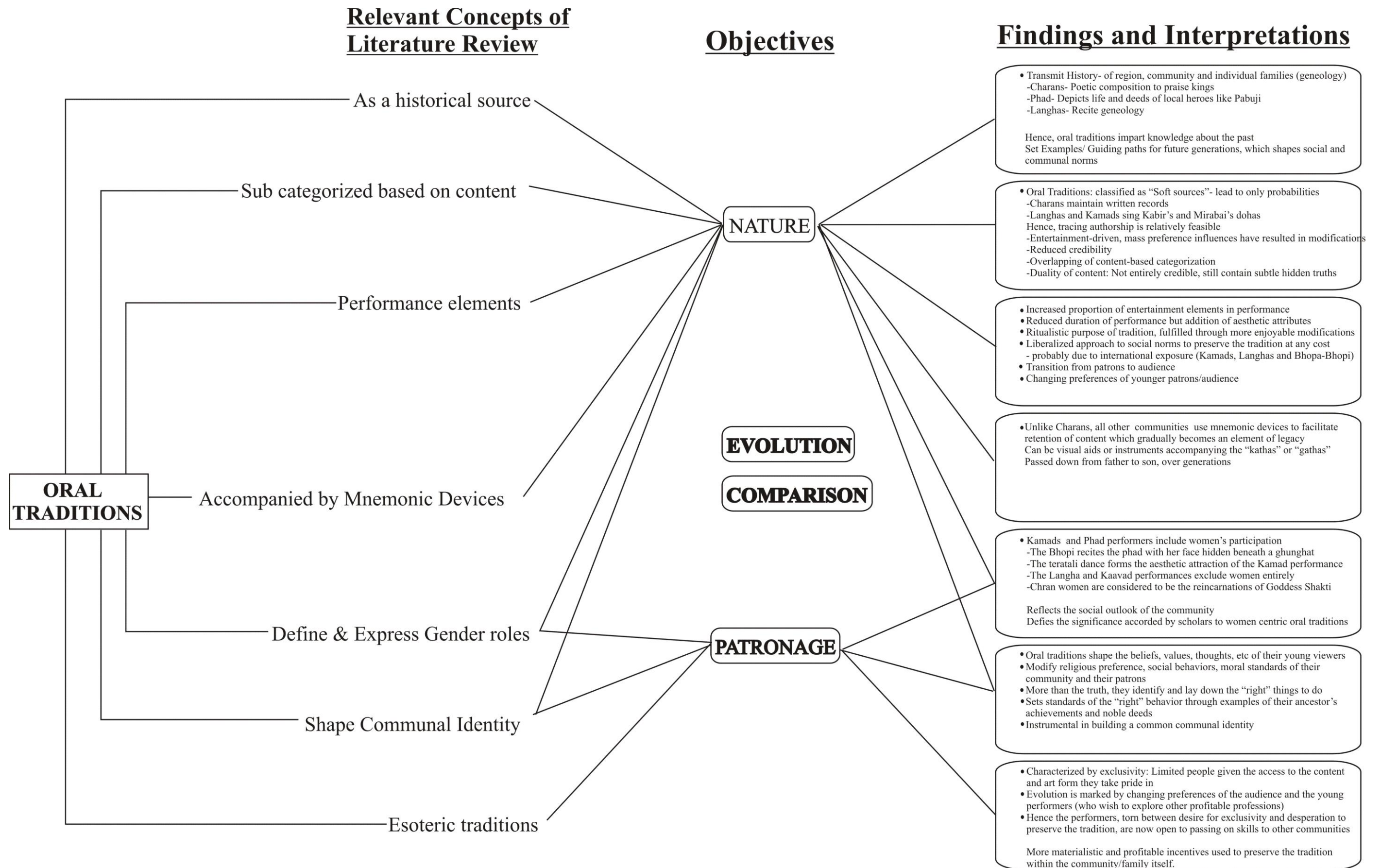
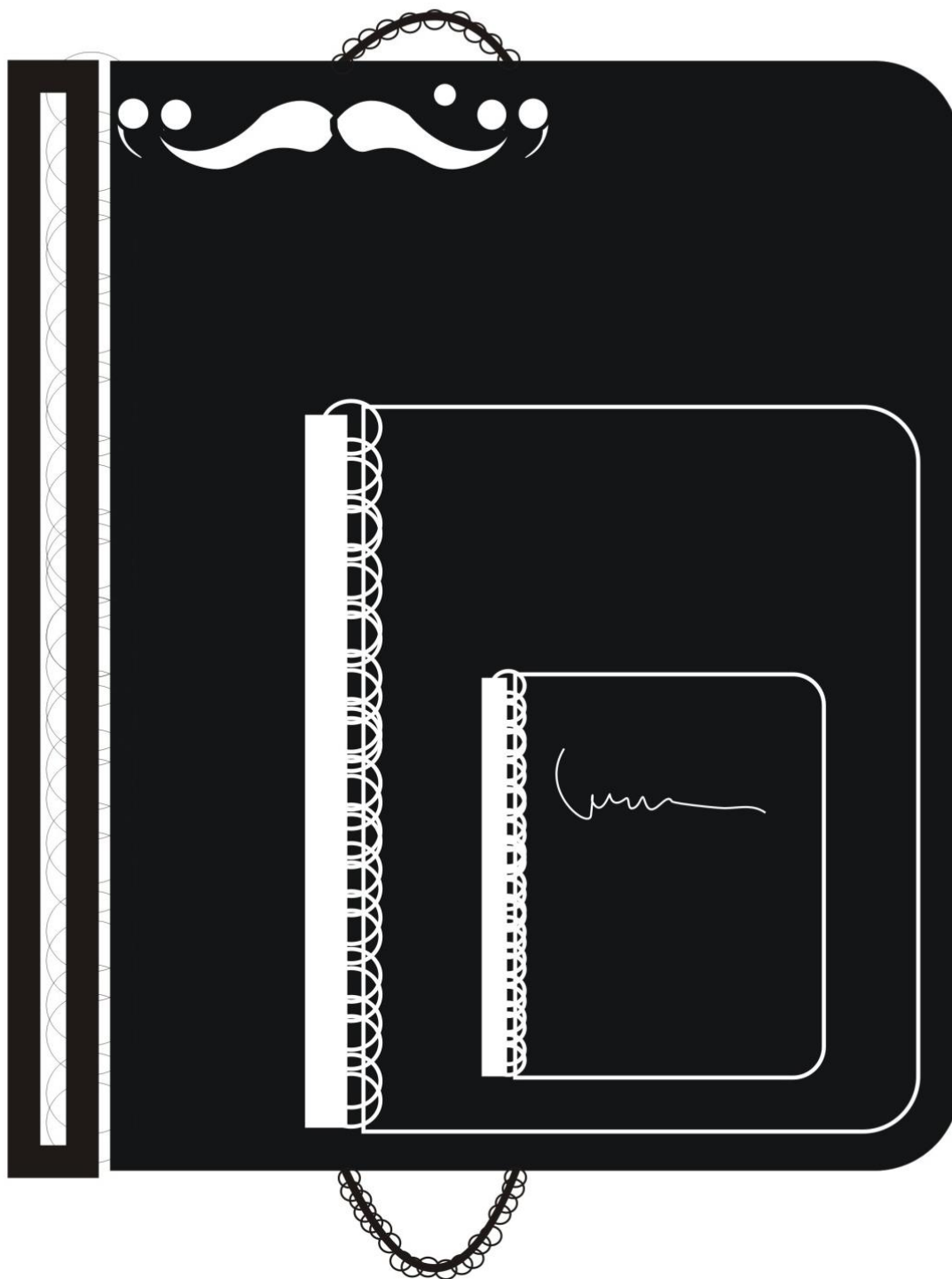


Figure 33: Summary of the Research Report



Bibliography

Oral Traditions in General

- Basu, Helene. "Practices of Praise and Social Constructions of Identity: The Bards of North-West India." *Archives De Sciences Sociales Des Religions* 130 (2005): 81-105. *JSTOR*. Web. 02 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/30116669>>.
- Gold, Ann G. "Outspoken Women: Representations of Female Voices in a Rajasthani Folklore Community." *Oral Tradition Journal* 12.1 (1997): 103-33. *Oral Tradition Journal*. Web. 17 Feb. 2014. <http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/articles/12i/5_gold.pdf>.
- Honko, Lauri. "Epic and Identity: National, Regional, Communal, Individual." *Oral Tradition Journal* 11.1 (1996): 18-36. *Oral Tradition Journal*. Web. 17 Feb. 2014. <http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/articles/11i/6_honko.pdf>.
- Kamphorst, Janet. *In Praise of Death: History and Poetry in Medieval Marwar (South Asia)*. N.p.: Leiden UP, 2008. [Http://dare.uva.nl/document/131478](http://dare.uva.nl/document/131478). Universiteit Van Amsterdam. Web. 02 Sept. 2013. <<http://dare.uva.nl/document/131478>>.
- Koskikallio, Petteri. "From Classical to Postclassical: Changing Ideologies and Changing Epics in India." *Oral Tradition Journal* 11.1 (1996): 144-53. *Oral Tradition Journal*. Web. 17 Feb. 2014. <http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/articles/11i/13_koskikallio.pdf>.
- Lamb, Sarah. "The Beggared Mother: Older Women's Narratives in West Bengal." *Oral Tradition Journal* 12.1 (1997): 54-75. *Oral Tradition Journal*. Web. 17 Feb. 2014. <http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/articles/12i/3_lamb.pdf>.
- Mair, Victor H. "The Buddhist Tradition of Prosimetric Oral Narrative in Chinese Literature." *Oral Tradition Journal* 3.1-2 (1988): 106-21. *Oral Tradition Journal*. Web. 17 Feb. 2014. <http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/articles/3i-ii/6_mair.pdf>.
- Raheja, Gloria G. "Introduction - The Paradoxes of Power and Community: Women's Oral Traditions and the Uses of Ethnography." *Oral Tradition Journal* 12.1 (1997): 1-22. *Oral Tradition Journal*. Web. 17 Feb. 2014. <http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/articles/12i/1e_Raheja_Introduction.pdf>.
- Snodgrass, Jeffrey G. "The Centre Cannot Hold: Tales of Hierarchy and Poetic Composition from Modern Rajasthan." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 10.No.2 (2004): 261-85. *JStor*. Web. 02 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3804151>>.
- Snodgrass, Jeffrey G. "Imitation Is Far More than the Sincerest of Flattery: The Mimetic Power of Spirit Possession in Rajasthan, India." *Cultural Anthropology* 17.1 (2002): 32-64. *JStor*. Web. 02 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/656672>>.

- Vansina, Jan. *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*. Trans. H. M. Wright. 2nd ed. New Brunswick: Transaction, 2009. Print.
- Varadarajan, Lotika. "Oral Testimony as Historical Source Material for Traditional and Modern India." *Economic and Political Weekly* 14.24 (1979): 1009-014. JSTOR. Web. 02 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4367692>>.
- Ziegler, Norman P. "The Seventeenth Century Chronicles of Mārvāra: A Study in the Evolution and Use of Oral Traditions in Western India." *History in Africa* 3 (1976): 127-53. JStor. Web. 02 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3171564>>.

Phad and Kaavad

- Banerji, Utpal Kumar. "The Subtle Art of Story Telling." *Indian Literature* 52.4 (2008): 147-52. JSTOR. Web. 02 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/23347960>>.
- Bhandari, Vandana. "Wandering Minstrels – The Tale of the Phad." *Textile Society of America Symposium Proceedings* 351 (2006): 433-37. [Http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1350&context=tsaconf](http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1350&context=tsaconf). Textile Society of America, 01 Jan. 2006. Web. 03 Sept. 2013. <<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1350&context=tsaconfhttp://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1350&context=tsaconf>>.
- Jensen, Jan, and Henk W.J Maier, eds. *Epic Adventures: Heroic Narrative in the Oral Performance Traditions of Four Continents*. N.p.: Transaction, 2004. Google Books. Web. 02 Sept. 2013. <<http://books.google.co.in/books?id=UJEyHSUy8GMC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>>.
- "Phad Paintings." *Arts & Crafts | Central Board of Secondary Education*. Central Board of Secondary Education, 16 July 2012. Web. 02 Sept. 2013. <<http://heritage.cbseacademic.in/blog/index.php/arts-and-crafts-2/>>.
- Wickett, Elizabeth. "The Epic of Pabuji Ki Par in Performance." World Oral Literature Project (University of Cambridge), 19 Oct. 2010. Web. 03 Sept. 2013. <https://www.repository.cam.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1810/226673/WOLP_OP_03_lores.pdf;jsessionid=242AF5C092A31E61138D8258C0FC901C?sequence=2>.

Langha

- Anand, Uma. "Mansions of the Sun: The Indian Thar Desert." *Google Books*. N.p., n.d. Web. 03 Sept. 2013. <<http://books.google.co.in/books?id=S5UtAAAAMAAJ>>.
- Crump, Vivienne, and Irene Toh. "Rajasthan." *Google Books*. N.p., n.d. Web. 03 Sept. 2013. <http://books.google.co.in/books?id=P_BuAAAAMAAJ>.
- Folk musical instruments of Rajasthan: a folio. Rajasthan Institute of Folklore, 1977. <http://books.google.co.in/books/about/Folk_Musical_Instruments_of_Rajasthan.html?id=VaFjXwAACAAJ&redir_esc=y>.
- Kamphorst, Janet. "In Praise of Death:History and Poetry in Medieval Marwar (South Asia)." *Google Books*. N.p., n.d. Web. 03 Sept. 2013. <http://books.google.co.in/books?id=z6eR2CX_zbsC>.
- Schomer, Karine. "Idea of Rajasthan: Constructions." *Google Books*. N.p., n.d. Web. 30 Aug. 2013. <<http://books.google.co.in/books?id=eFJuAAAAMAAJ>>.
- Trust, Vivek. "Indian Book Chronicle." *Google Books*. N.p., n.d. Web. 03 Sept. 2013. <<http://books.google.co.in/books?id=A1lXAAAAMAAJ>>.

Kamad and Teratali

- Barucha, Rustom, and Komal Kothari. *Rajasthan, an Oral History: Conversation with Komal Kothari*. N.p.: Penguin India, 2003. *Google Books*. Web. 02 Sept. 2013. <<http://books.google.co.in/books?id=41duAAAAMAAJ&q=Kamad,+Rajasthan&dq=Kamad,+Rajasthan&hl=en&sa=X&ei=2JAKUpasAcfHrQegzYHIDQ&ved=0CFIQ6AEwBw>>.
- Daftary, Farhad. *A Short History of the Ismailis: Traditions of a Muslim Community*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1998. *Google Books*. Web. 02 Sept. 2013. <<http://books.google.co.in/books?id=pDRaCPVdlAkC&pg=PA184&dq=Kamad,+Rajasthan&hl=en&sa=X&ei=2JAKUpasAcfHrQegzYHIDQ&ved=0CEwQ6AEwBg#v=onepage&q=Kamad%2C%20Rajasthan&f=false>>.
- Dalals, K. C. *Global Encyclopaedia of the West Indian Dalit's Ethnography*. 1st ed. New Delhi: Global Vision House, 2008. *Google Books*. Web. 02 Sept. 2013. <<http://books.google.co.in/books?id=uRDOOYwhCl8C&pg=PA168&dq=Kamad,+Rajasthan&hl=en&sa=X&ei=2JAKUpasAcfHrQegzYHIDQ&ved=0CDQQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=Kamad%2C%20Rajasthan&f=false>>. "People of India:." *Google Books*. Ed. K. S. Singh. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 Sept. 2013. <http://books.google.co.in/books?id=vm_KCE4XXPMC>.

- Hildebeitel, Alf. *Rethinking India's Oral and Classical Epics: Draupadi among Rajputs, Muslims and Dalits*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1999. *Google Books*. Web. 02 Sept. 2013.
<<http://books.google.co.in/books?id=MMFdosx0PokC&pg=PA530&dq=Kamad,+Rajasthan&hl=en&sa=X&ei=2JAKUpasAcfHrQegzYHIDQ&ved=0CEEQ6AEwBA#v=onepage&q=Kamad%2C%20Rajasthan&f=false>>. Daftary, Farhad. "A Short History of the Ismailis:." *Google Books*. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 Sept. 2013.
<<http://books.google.co.in/books?id=pDRaCPVdlAkC>>.
- Khan, Dominique Sila. "The Kamad of Rajasthan: Priests of a Forgotten Tradition." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 3rd 6.1 (1996): 29-56. *Jstor*. Web. 02 Sept. 2013.
<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25183118>>.
- Singh, K. S., ed. *People of India: Rajasthan*. Vol. 38. Mumbai: Popular Prakashan Pvt., 1998. *Google Books*. Web. 02 Sept. 1998.
<http://books.google.co.in/books?id=vm_KCE4XXPMC&pg=PA487&dq=Kamad,+Rajasthan&hl=en&sa=X&ei=2JAKUpasAcfHrQegzYHIDQ&ved=0CDgQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=Kamad%2C%20Rajasthan&f=false>.
- Singh, Kumar Suresh. *India's Communities*. Vol. 1. N.p.: Oxford UP, 1998. *Google Books*. Web. 02 Sept. 2013.
<<http://books.google.co.in/books?id=g9MVAQAAMAAJ&q=Kamad,+Rajasthan&dq=Kamad,+Rajasthan&hl=en&sa=X&ei=2JAKUpasAcfHrQegzYHIDQ&ved=0CFcQ6AEwCA>>.

Charan

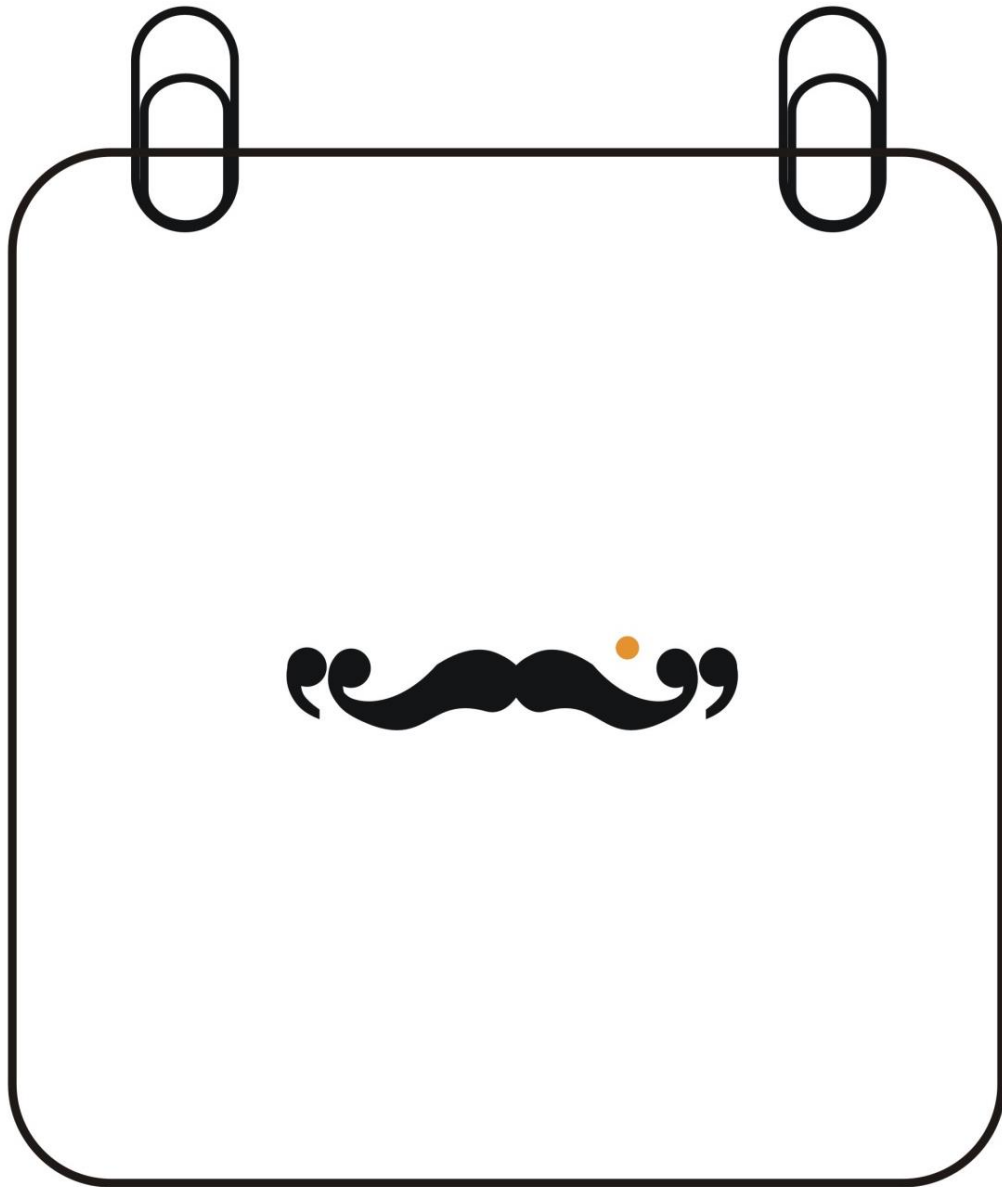
- Basu, Helene. "Practices of Praise and Social Constructions of Identity: The Bards of North-West India." *Archives De Sciences Sociales Des Religions* 130 (2005): 81-105. *JSTOR*. Web. 02 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/30116669>>.
- Kamphorst, Janet. *In Praise of Death: History and Poetry in Medieval Marwar (South Asia)*. N.p.: Leiden UP, 2008. [Http://dare.uva.nl/document/131478](http://dare.uva.nl/document/131478). Universiteit Van Amsterdam. Web. 02 Sept. 2013. <<http://dare.uva.nl/document/131478>>.
- Singh, K. S., ed. *Rajasthan, Part 1*. Vol. 38. N.p.: Popular Prakashan, 1998. *People of India*. *Google Books*. Web. 02 Sept. 2013.
<<http://books.google.co.in/books?id=iKsqzB4P1ioC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>>.
- Snodgrass, Jeffrey G. "The Centre Cannot Hold: Tales of Hierarchy and Poetic Composition from Modern Rajasthan." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological*

Institute 10.2 (2004): 261-85. *JSTOR*. Web. 02 Sept. 2013.

<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3804151>>.

- Ziegler, Norman P. "The Seventeenth Century Chronicles of Mārvāṛa: A Study in the Evolution and Use of Oral Traditions in Western India." *History in Africa* 3 (1976): 127-53. *JStor*. Web. 02 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3171564>>.

Primary Data (See Appendix 2)



Appendices

Appendix 1: Objectives and Research Questions

1. To document the nature of the selected oral traditions of western Rajasthan

- What group of people constitute the performers of these oral traditions?
- What are the characteristic techniques of each of these oral traditions?
- What themes constitute the content that is passed on orally?
- What role do these oral traditions play in the lives of the performers and the patrons?
- What role, if any, does the location play in influencing the presentation attributes (costumes, staging, instruments) and up to some extent, the content and techniques used?
- How is the nature of the oral traditions impacted by the setting (time of the day, time of the year – seasons, festivals, etc.)?

2. To identify the patrons/audience associated with each of the traditions

- Who are the patrons/audience?
- What type of a relationship do they share with the performers?
- Do the demographic factors (such as age, gender, profession, social status) of the patrons play a role in the origin or preservation of the tradition over the years?

3. To trace the evolution of these traditions

- How did these communities and their traditions originate?
- How do members of these communities perceive themselves as a community, their profession, their patrons and the traditions, and the changes that have occurred in each of them over time?
- Which are the earliest available academic/research work in context of the members of the communities and their traditions?
- To what extent does a discrepancy exist between the subjective outlook of the community members and the scholarly written records?
- Does this type of social mobility play a noticeable role in the evolution of these traditions?
- Is there a striking change in the content that is orally passed down the generations?
- Do the techniques used for each of the traditions remain the same since their inception?
- How far have the people of the performing communities attempted to emulate their

patrons/upper classes of the society? Have these attempts influenced the existing social hierarchy?

4. To compare the selected oral traditions

→ What are the similarities and differences in the nature (performers, patrons, techniques, content/themes, purpose, location of performance, presentation attributes) of these traditions?

→ To what extent do geographical factors (such as climate, topography, vegetation) impact the specific attributes that characterise these traditions?

→ Do any of the selected communities show signs of co-existence and mutual influence?

Appendix 2: List of questions used for Semi-structured Interviews

1. Which village do you stay in?
2. Which are the other areas where the same tradition is prevalent?
3. Is there a difference between the tradition in different areas?
4. Where are your ancestors from?
5. Did they also practice the same occupation?
6. How did the tradition start?
7. How did you learn it? Was it out of compulsion?
8. At what time of the day and during the year do you perform?
9. Who are your patrons?
10. Where do they live?
11. Do you perform for them all year round? Are there specific occasions for which you are called?
12. Why do the patrons find it important to still call you for performances?
13. Do you also practice any other occupation except for performing what you do?
14. Have there been any changes in what you perform or the way in which you perform?
15. Do your children also take on the same profession?
16. What instruments do you use for accompaniment?
17. What are they made up of?
18. Where do you get them from?
19. Is there a specific costume that each performer has to wear?
20. Is any part of the content available in written records?

Appendix 3: List of People Interviewed

	Name of the Interviewee(s)	Description	Date of Interview/ Interaction	Place of Interview
1.	Mr. Kuldeep Kothari	Secretary and Spokesperson, Rupayan Sansthan and Arna Jharna Desert Museum	10 th January 2014	Rupayan Sansthan.
2.	Mr. Anil Sharma	Employee at Rupayan Sansthan and Arna Jharna Desert Museum	4 th January 2014- 7 th January 2014	The Arna Jharna Desert Museum
3.	Mr. Ravindra Rathore	Employee at Rupayan Sansthan and Arna Jharna Desert Museum	4 th January 2014- 7 th January 2014	The Arna Jharna Desert Museum
4.	Prof. Sukhdev Rao	Professor and Author	5 th January 2014	The Arna Jharna Desert Museum
5.	Mr. Detha	Member of the Charan community, IPS Officer, and son of Mr. Vijay Dan Detha, Co-founder of Rupayan Sanstha	6 th January 2014	The Arna Jharna Desert Museum
6.	Mrs. Shilpa	Member of the Charan community and employee at Rupayan Sansthan	10 th January 2014	Rupayan Sansthan.
7.	Mr. Shubhkaran Deval	Poet from the Charan community	10 th January 2014	Jodhpur City
8.	Mr. Arjun Dev	Historian and Member of the Charan community	10 th January 2014	Jodhpur City
9.	Mr. Mehruddin Langha and family	Langha performers	7 th January 2014	The Arna Jharna Desert Museum
10.	Mr. Sugna Ram and family	Phad performers	6 th January 2014	The Arna Jharna Desert Museum
11.	Mr. Roop Das and family	Kamad performers	4 th January 2014	The Arna Jharna Desert Museum
12.	Mr. Bansi Lal	Kaavad narrator	5 th January 2014	The Arna Jharna Desert Museum
13.	Mr. Narsingh Ram	Kaavad narrator	9 th January 2014	Phalodi Village, Jaisalmer District
14.	Mr. Khan and family	Langha patrons	8 th January 2014	Barmer Village, Jodhpur District

15.	Phad – Patron family 1 (Confidentiality requested)	Phad patrons	8 th January 2014	Bhakrani Village, Jodhpur District
16.	Phad – Patron family 2 (Confidentiality requested)	Phad patrons	8 th January 2014	Bhakrani Village, Jodhpur District
17.	Kaavad Patrons (Confidentiality requested)	Kaavad patrons	9 th January 2014	Phalodi Village, Jaisalmer District