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Chapter 11
Repetition and Cultural Replication: Three Examples from Shokleng*

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The concept of *culture* as that which is socially shared or transmitted, is intrinsically linked to the problematic of *replication*, which, in the case of discourse, means the reproduction of a communicatively significant unit—a myth, story, speech style, song, etc.—over time and across space. We can compare the replicated discourse—the retelling of a story, for example, or the subsequent performance of a song—with the original on which it is based. It is possible to learn, by this means, something about the nature of culture. What is it about that original discourse that is replicated? Precisely what is it that is transmitted?

But we can also learn something about replication by studying, on the local level, *repetition* phenomena, wherein a given syllable or

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clause or intonation contour is produced more than once. Repetitions occur within the unit of communication—within a myth or a song or a speech style—simultaneously, as that unit may itself be replicated over time. Repetition is internal to the communicative unit, replication external, involving the reproduction of the unit over time. But the former is linked to the latter. If something can be repeated internally, it can be replicated externally. By studying the nature of internal repetition, it is possible to learn something about external replication, and thereby about the nature of culture.

The present chapter is designed to explore three examples of repetition—in song, ceremonial dialogue, and myth telling among the Shokleng Indians of southern Brazil—from this point of view. I look at the relationship between the *model* (the discourse that is to be repeated) and the *copy* (the repetition of the model), asking what is held constant and what is allowed to vary. Repetition is used, thereby, to explore the nature of replication and hence of culture. And it is used in particular as an entrée point into the view of culture as shared meaning. Is what is held constant the semantic meaning? We would expect the answer, under such a model, to be yes. In fact, as I hope to show, the issue is considerably more complex. Semantic meaning is only one aspect of the discourse that can be repeated, and, hence, it is only one of the bases for sharing that grows out of the social circulation of discourse. It is not the only aspect and may not even be the principal one. Correspondingly, culture itself may consist only partially of shared semantic meaning, and that part may be smaller than we think.

But if the study of repetition leads us to criticize the shared meaning version of culture, it also undermines at least the extreme version of the postmodern conception of culture understood in terms of difference and linearity. For repetition reflects the force that counteracts pure difference or linearity, bringing into the foreground sameness and constancy. Even where we are most aware of the linear quality of discourse, as in the unfolding of a story, repetition enters in, and that repetition is crucially linked to the reproducibility of the story. We can see in it the limitations placed on linearity, which are simultaneously limitations on the broader possibility of culture understood in terms of difference.

The study of repetition would remain only a means for indirectly studying the nature of culture were it not for one additional empirical fact: many of the phenomena that are self-consciously important to people in the definition of their own culture—myths, special speech styles, singing, and so forth—are themselves built upon the foundation of repetition. Repetition is not only a way of studying

replication, it is a structural foundation for the replication process. Its function, in this regard, appears to be as part of the native representational scheme used in understanding replication, and, hence, also in bringing it about. It is a metadiscursive device that has simultaneously a practical efficacy in enabling discourse to socially circulate and, hence, to reproduce. It is, in short, a crucial component of culture.[1]

SEMANTIC MEANING AND SEGMENTABLE FORM

We know that semantic meaning can be conserved in the absence of conservation of the segmentable form through which words are articulated. This is the basis of two phenomena that are crucial in Western societies to cultural replication, especially in the form of classroom teaching and scholarly writing. These are *paraphrase* and *glossing*. What is essential to these types of repetition is the preservation of meaning across differences in the segmentable surface forms. In a gloss ("man is a featherless biped"), for example, the semantic meaning is presumably repeated on both sides of the copula, despite the difference in linguistic form (the difference between "man" and "featherless biped"). Similarly, the essence of the paraphrase is to be "in other words."

We may use the paraphrase and gloss as the demarcators of one extreme in the realm of repetition. Meaning circulates or is communicated despite the difference in surface form. From a social point of view, we might more properly say that meaning circulates because of the difference in surface form. The paraphrase or gloss links what for the hearer/reader is semantically undecipherable or ill understood to forms that are semantically more intelligible.

SONG

The example of Shokleng singing is of special interest because it drives home the opposite possibility: that form may be repeated and

[1] It is my purpose, it may be noted as well, to give a specifically *cultural account* of repetition phenomena, avoiding the aculturalism of either the biological anchoring of the phenomenon in natural bodily rhythms, as in some treatments of dance, or its information theoretic reduction to the universal notion of redundancy, which links repetition to noise and interference. The argument here is that, even in the absence of noise, certain types of repetition would be crucial because they play a crucial cultural role; namely, they pick out what it is about the discourse that can be and should be replicated.

hence replicated in the absence of semantic meanings, at least in the full propositional sense. The interest is not just in the repetition of semantic meaning, or even in the repetition of semantic meaning together with other aspects of linguistic and nonlinguistic form. In the Shokleng case, the linguistic forms are repeated and made to socially circulate despite the fact that they carry no full propositional meaning. What is shared and hence culture, in this case, is the segmentable linguistic form as opposed to semantic meaning. While this is true of all Shokleng songs investigated thus far, the focus here is on a specific example, in order to get some sense of what features are actually replicated.

This song, like other Shokleng songs, consists in a single stanza, which is repeated over and over again. In the Western ballad tradition, which many modern popular songs continue in some measure, only a portion of the linguistic material (the refrain) is actually repeated from one stanza to the next. The other linguistic material in the stanza varies, the succession of stanzas involving the narration of a story. The repetition here is found in the melodic contours and metrics, and also in the rhyme schemes and, often, syntactic frames. It is true that some ballads involve only minimal changes from verse to verse, but the norm is a linear progression in the narrative line.

In the Shokleng song, however, the segmentable linguistic material along with the nonsegmentable material (pitch contour and metrics) is held constant, the song taking on, thereby, a cyclical rather than a linear character. The cyclical character, achieved through repetition, is simultaneously what allows the internal repetition within the song to produce its peculiar form of replicability, which is lateral and co-participatory. Anyone can join in at any point once they have learned the basic internal structure of the repeated unit. In joining in, moreover, they can achieve a quasiunison form of participation and sociability.

The internal structure of the repeated unit (the stanza, for want of a better term) is mapped out in the following transcription:

	1	2		
	3	4		
	5	6		
	1		2	
I	goy		màg	
	3		4	
II	ta	tañ		yè le

		5		6	
III			wā		hā
				7	
IV				ē ko yò	
		8		9	
V		ā	mēn	no	
		10	11	12	13
VI	tē	ye			.e
		14	15	16	17
VII		wā	hā		

		18		19	20
VIII	ka	ko	yò	hà.....	
		21		22	23
IX	ya	hò	yò	hà.....	
		24		25	26
X	a	yè		vèn	mà
		27		28	29
XI		vèn		mà	
		30		31	
XII	a	yè	yè		
		32		33	34
XIII	a ye				
		35		36	37
XIV			wā hā		

		38		39	40
XV				yè	yè
		41		42	43
XVI	a	ye		wā	hā

I have indicated lines by means of Roman numerals at the left. The Arabic numerals above indicate the beats of a rattle, shaken by the singer. The first six numbers represent rattle beats occurring before the singing actually started. Each beat is about 0.58 seconds in length, for an overall length of approximately 25 seconds for this stanza. The length is nearly identical for each of the three subsequent repetitions. Analysis of another recorded version by the same singer on a different occasion produced nearly identical results as far as overall length is concerned.

The stanza is made up of three parts (I–VII, VIII–XIV, and XV–XVI), indicated visually by the short lines separating them. The existence of these breaks is suggested by distributional evidence. The last section is a transitional one, which leads directly into the first copy of this model. The same happens in the case of the second copy, but in the third copy, which is the last stanza in this particular performance—the number of repetitions is variable between performances—it is omitted. The syllable *he*, articulated with a gradually falling intonation and tapering volume, takes its place, marking the end of the song. The separability of the first and second sections is indicated by the fact that at least two other performances I have recorded actually begin with the second section. The order is maintained, however, with the first section being inserted after the third. The division evidently represents a natural breaking point. The boundaries are also marked by the syllable combination *ye wā hā*, which occurs at the end of the last line in each case.

The internal line structure proposed here is most readily argued for in the case of the second section, where lines VIII–XI all end in the same vowel, the last syllable in VIII and IX, as in X and XI, being actually identical. This yields a three-beat-per-line structure that is carried through in lines XII–XIV. The structure is accentuated by the pitch, which is roughly level on all syllables except those indicated by double underscore, which are unstressed and sung a fourth lower. All lines except for XI and XIV in this section thus begin on a lower pitch.

The lower initial pitch becomes part of the basis for the proposed line structure of the first section, which can be felt more readily than it can be represented graphically. The lower pitch sets off lines II, IV, V, and VI. The internal structure here is also based on the syllable metrics, with lines III–V sounding parallel in their compactness relative to I and II, as well to VI and VII. The rhyme scheme here is II with VI (*le* with *ye*) and IV with V (*ko* with *no*). The remarkable characteristic of this section is the way in which the lines play with the possible combinations among syllables and beats, from one

syllable per beat with the syllable occurring on the beat, to two syllables with the unstressed (low tone) syllable occurring on the beat, to two syllables occurring off two beats, to two syllables occurring off three beats, to three syllables with one beat, to one syllable with four beats.

Looking across repetitions within this performance, the linguistically segmentable forms are repeated with precision, as is the intonation contour. This is true across two different performances by different singers that I studied, as well as across the repetitions within this performance. What is repeatable internally here is also replicable externally.

The overall beat structure is also nearly identical within the various repetitions. The first repetition is precisely identical, but in the second and third repetitions line VII receives one additional rattle beat. It is noteworthy, however, that there is internal variation between repetitions in regard to the placement of the syllables with respect to the rattle beats. The tendency a Westerner has is to match up syllables with rattle beats in a simple fashion, but this would give the song a monotonous effect that it does not in fact have. Its art, indeed, consists in keeping syllables and beats somewhat out of line, a phenomenon resonating with Keil's (1987) formulation of "participatory discrepancy" and Feld's (1988) "in synch and out of phase." This is confirmed by the fact that multiple singer performances do not show a tight unison formation, but rather a cacophonous effect in keeping with the type of sociability associated with Shokleng singing more generally.

Properly speaking, one could not say that the semantic content is not repeated, since what content there is, is repeated. Some syllables and syllable sequences can be understood as sensical, but native informants who could readily transcribe and translate myths, stories, and other semantically meaningful discourse could do no more in this case than transcribe the syllables, claiming that they were unable to give translations of them. This was so despite repeated promptings regarding the sensical syllables, which they readily understood to be sensical, but which they nevertheless felt unable to translate.

Despite this fact, various individuals offered interpretations of what the song might be about, and, indeed, the fabrication of such metadiscursive interpretations seems a genuine part of Shokleng culture. It had been observed 40 years earlier by Henry (1964). In the case of the present song, for example, I was told that "they [the elders from whom the song had been learned] must have been singing about the ocean." The interpretation evidently derives from the

opening phrase, which I translate interlinearly as follows, the untranslated syllable being nonsensical:

goy màg ta tañ yè le
water big palm?? purpose descend
"Big water, descend for palm."

The translation makes no completed sense, since *big water* is not tied grammatically into the remainder of the phrase. Moreover, even the phrase does not work grammatically, since one would normally expect a verb inserted after *palm* such as *get*, so that the overall phrase would be "descend to get palm."

The remainder of the song makes even less sense, though there are several more or less interpretable phrases. The rest of the interlinear, again done by me and not by the Shokleng with whom I worked, is as follows:

wā hā
now
"now"

ē ko yò
his eat place
"where he ate"

āmēn no
path arrow?
"path, arrow"

tē ye
the
[no translation]

wā hā
now
"now"

ka ko yò hà
eat place well
"ate well"

ya hò yò hà
place well
"well"

a yè vèn mà
ceremonial mother
"ceremonial mother"

vèn mà
ceremonial mother
"ceremonial mother"

a yè yè
[no translation]

a ye
[no translation]

wā hā
now
"now"

yè yè
[no translation]

a ye wā hā
now
"now"

The conclusion pressed on us is that the repetition here is *not* first and foremost repetition of semantic meanings. Correspondingly, what is replicated when the entire song circulates throughout the community is not semantic meaning. Yet the repetition of the linguistically segmentable forms is crucial, as is the repetition of nonsegmentable forms such as overall intonation contour. The social circulation of discourse in this case is the circulation of segmentable forms and prosodic features that do not carry semantic meaning. Correspondingly, what is culture, in the sense of what is shared, in this case is form without meaning.

CEREMONIAL DIALOGUE

Among the most striking differences between the singing just described and ceremonial dialogue is the length of the repeated unit. Whereas in the song the unit consists of 43 syllables and takes 25 seconds to produce, in ceremonial dialogue the unit is the single syllable itself, which takes on average 0.30 seconds to articulate. Correspondingly, where singing promotes the replication of intonation contours and stress patterns—the nonsegmentable aspects of linguistic form-—ceremonial dialogue focuses attention on the replication of segmentable linguistic form without phrase- or clause-level intonation contours and stress.

Ceremonial dialogue among the Shokleng is a dyadic performance, in which two speakers alternate, as has been described elsewhere (Urban 1985, 1986a,b, 1991). Speaker A utters one syllable, which is then repeated by speaker B. Speaker A then utters the second syllable, and so forth, the repetition of syllables proceeding in a rapid-fire back-and-forth manner. The overall discourse that is repeated in this way is semantically meaningful. In fact, it is the myth of origin of the tribe and involves the most complex grammatical constructions of any speech style in the language. But the units of repetition are syllables, which are often smaller than the minimal meaningful unit, the polysyllabic word, for instance. The following is a transcription of a fragment of this ceremonial dialogic origin myth telling in which the letters A and B above the syllable represent the two speakers:

A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
ũ	ũ	yè	yè	kõñ	kõñ	gàg	gàg	ũ	ũ
A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
yè	yè	a	a	tõ	tõ	ne	ne	wèg	wèg
A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
tẽ	tẽ	tòg	tòg	nã	nã	we	we	yè	yè
A	B	A	B	A	B				
ka	ka	ku	ku	tã	tã				

In interlinear form, eliminating the repetitions, this is:

ũ	yè	kõñgàg	ũ	yè	a	tõ	ne
who	future	man	who	future	you	ergative	something
wèg	tẽ		tòg	nã	we	yè	kakutã
see	incompletive		this		see	purpose	go out

"Who (what man) will go out to see what you have seen."

It is important that, in this variety of repetition, each syllable receives roughly the same stress and pitch, and it is uttered with the same voice quality—a pharyngeally and laryngeally constricted shout, reminiscent of the calls uttered by quarterbacks at the beginning of each play in football. As a consequence, there is no differential intonation contour or stress pattern at the phrase, clause, or sentence level. Because these qualities are fixed at the level of the syllable, the effect is to focus attention on the repetition of the segmentable form.

This is of some significance in understanding the nature of repetition and replication, and, ultimately, of culture. We have already seen that repetition can focus on segmentable linguistic form as opposed to semantic meaning. The present example highlights the possibility of repeating/replicating segmentable linguistic form as opposed to nonsegemental form. So there are at least three possible and semiindependent objects of repetition, which are in turn semiindependent aspects of culture and foci of discourse circulation: semantic meaning, phonemically segmentable linguistic form, and nonsegmentable paralinguistic form.

We can appreciate in some measure the significance of this. Segmentable linguistic form can receive different interpretations depending on the intonation and stress patterns in accord with which it is uttered. Those patterns supply an additional basis of interpretation, and are thus, in a restricted sense, metadiscursive. Singing makes those potentially metadiscursive sign vehicles the focus of repetition. Ceremonial dialogue, in contrast, eliminates them, requiring the segmentable forms to stand on their own.

Of course, singing too in some measure eliminates stress and intonation as well by virtue of making them the focus of repetition. They can be rendered less subject to individual manipulation, brought more under the control of culture. Their foregrounded repetition partially detaches them from the linguistic form and semantic meaning, making them the focus of awareness, just as paraphrase and glossing bring semantic meaning into awareness while backgrounding linguistic form. We are familiar with this discursive possibility in American culture through those speech interactions, typically associated with children, wherein an individual imitates in a mocking manner another's intonation and stress without imitating the accompanying segmentable linguistic form or while slurring the latter.

From the point of view of culture as shared meaning, it is easy to understand why there should be a focus on semantic content, as in paraphrase and glossing. But why should segmentable and even nonsegmentable form be made the focus of awareness through repetition? One could argue that segmentable form carries semantic meaning; to replicate that form is to replicate semantic meaning. But that argument is undermined by the case of Shokleng singing, where the form is replicated in the absence of semantic meaning. And, indeed, we are familiar with the problem as well from other cases of rote memorization—Jewish boys learning to recite passages in Hebrew without knowing what they mean, Americans repeating Burns's "gang aft aglee" without being able to interpret the forms

grammatically, and so forth. Replication of this sort involves the transmission of culture as form rather than as meaning. There is circulation and sharing, to be sure, but that circulation and sharing in these cases is first and foremost of material shapes, not of immaterial meanings.

But we don't want to say either that this repetition/replication has nothing to do with meaning. In the case of intonation and stress contours, we are very often dealing with *pragmatic* as opposed to *semantic* meanings, and the repetition/replication of those forms may be linked to the repetition/replication of pragmatic meanings in a way that is analogous to the linkage between segmentable forms and semantic meanings. Repetition and cultural replication can stress either form or meaning but the other is always in the background. Furthermore, in either case more emphasis can be placed on the semantic–segmentable side or the pragmatic–nonsegmentable side.

We are forced to conclude finally, however, that, while form (whether segmentable or nonsegmentable) and meaning (whether semantic or pragmatic) are not wholly independent, it is nevertheless possible to repeat and replicate form in some measure independently of meaning, and that culture consists of both, in such a way, moreover, that we cannot read directly from one to the other. So we are left with the question: why repeat/replicate form?

PARTICIPANT ROLES

The answer to this question begins to take shape through a further consideration of the relationship between singing and ceremonial dialogue. The interesting fact is that they are both types of social interaction or sociability, simultaneously as they are based on the repetition of form. And they involve social coordinations. Singing can be done by a single individual, but it can also be done by two or more individuals. Ceremonial dialogue always involves two individuals.

In contrast, meaning, whether semantic or pragmatic, can provide no basis for social coordination. Meaning can be held constant, as in paraphrase or glossing, while allowing the form to vary, but the conservation of meaning without the conservation of form provides nothing external that the participants can pick up on and use as the basis for mutually oriented action. It is the very materiality of form that allows it to play this role.

Singing and ceremonial dialogue, in fact, show two distinct forms

of coordination—alternation and simultaneous production (quasi-unison). The repetition is crucial in each case. In ceremonial dialogue, it is the timing of the syllables and their repetition that provides the basis for the alternating productions of the two speakers. In collective singing, it is the beat structure and intonation contour—repeated over and over again—that supply the basis for coordination.

From this point of view, it is interesting that singing and ceremonial dialogue are not wholly opposed. Singing can be shifted in the direction of alternation, as in fact occurs in what the Shokleng regard as an "ancient form" in the case of the song analyzed earlier. In the one recording I was able to make of this ancient singing, there are two singers. The first begins and the second chimes in a beat or two later, in a pitch that harmonizes with that of the first singer. The separation is maintained throughout the stanza, and is picked up again in the next repetition.

But if the repetition of form is essential to social coordination, is social coordination in turn essential to the circulation of discourse and hence to culture? This is a variant of the question asked within social anthropology: Is ritual essential to society? It may be true, empirically, that every society has its rituals, and it remains to be seen whether in every society there is ritualized discourse involving repetition—can a society and culture exist in which all discourse is purely linear, without repetition?—but a reasoned guess at the answer can be put forth based on the observations made thus far. The guess is that social coordination through repetition of form is a necessary condition for the public certification of the replication of discourse. Hence, while not strictly speaking essential to discourse circulation, and so also culture, it is nevertheless linked to the public standardization of culture.

Internal repetition is, of course, linked to linguistic intelligibility. Individuals must be exposed to the sound inventory over and over again, and similarly to the lexical items, idioms, and other nonrecursive aspects of language. These are facets of the discourse that they cannot generate spontaneously. Correspondingly, their repeated exposure to forms is a sine qua non of mutual interpretability. They must be able to pick out the sameness—repetition indicating the significance of the facet—across the stream of discourse whose meaningful segmentation would otherwise be impossible. Repetition is, in this sense, the ground of intelligibility.

In the more restricted sense used here, repetition of formal elements internal to a unit of discourse achieves greater salience, forming a detectable structure that is apparent to listeners. Yet in a

manner analogous to the broader sense, such repetition is instructional. It tells the listener what qualities or aspects of the infinitely rich sound material are to be replicated. If specific communicative units (such as songs, myths, or speech styles) are to become part of culture, an internal repetitive structure facilitates the process. One can know that replication has taken place if the internal repetitive structure of the discourse has itself been replicated.

The social coordination of action through repetition is just the final stage, the pinnacle, of this replicative endeavor. Such coordination is a public manifestation of the fact that replication has occurred. Replication is apparent to participants and onlookers alike through overt coordination with respect to a repetitive structure, which makes public the shared character of the analyses of the discourse in question.

MYTH NARRATION

It is a striking fact that, as recent ethnopoetic research has shown (Fox, 1988; Hymes, 1981; Sherzer, 1982; Tedlock, 1983; Woodbury, 1985), narration involves so much repetition, in this case in the form of parallelism, despite the seemingly linear character of the story. Repetition can be taken all the way up to social coordination through repetitive structures, as in the dialogic performances of the origin myth just discussed. Basso's (1985) "what-sayer," who prompts and encourages the main narrator, among the Kalapalo, and whose presence is essential for a successful narration, is an only somewhat looser manifestation of the same coordination phenomenon. But narration need not involve such public social coordination, at least not in so obvious a manner. And yet it is of interest to see that, even in these cases, overt forms of repetition occur.

The example I have chosen here is from the narration of a myth about the origin of honey among the Shokleng, which involves instances of repetition with variation, parallelism. In this particular instance, there was no audience interaction during the telling, so this is a maximally asymmetrical form of the transmission of culture.

The question in this case, however, is again: what is repeated? The following excerpt makes it apparent that the repetition is at least in part a repetition of segmentable linguistic form. The story concerns the discovery of honey by the birds. In this fragment, they have just located the hive, but it is encased in stone. They try to pierce the stone by pecking at it with their beaks:

glŭ wŭ pètï ti ya tẽ to mloñ	the toucan pierced it his beak broke against it
kŭ wŭ culag wŭ ti pèzïn man ti ya tẽ to moloñ	and the *culag* pierced it again his beak broke against it
kagñẽ wŭ wèl pèzïn man ti ya tẽ to mloñ	the *kagñẽ* really pierced it again his beak broke against it
caklẽguy ti pèzïn man ti ya tẽ to mloñ	the woodpecker pierced it his beak broke against it
kinkïm pèzïn ti ya tẽ to mloñ	(another) woodpecker pierced it his beak broke against it

The repetition brings out the significance of piercing by showing how various birds try but fail to pierce the hive, setting the scene for the actual piercing and for the eating of the honey.

The basic unit of repetition consists in two clauses, the first describing the piercing, the second the beak's breaking. The model and its four copies are shown here. In the first clause in each case, in addition to the overall structure, the verb *to pierce* is repeated (*pètï* and *pèzïn* are two of its forms). The second clause in each case is actually identical in its segmentable form.

There is thus repetition of segmentable form, as in the earlier examples, but, intriguingly, also repetition of nonsegmentable form, in this case especially intonation, as in the singing example described earlier. Indeed, I have segmented out each of the second clauses and juxtaposed them on tape. The result is decidedly musical, with barely a detectable difference among them.

In the case of the first clauses, the situation is even more intriguing. While each clause has a simlar intonation contour, the absolute pitch of each succeeding clause is slightly higher. This gives rise to the phenomenon of microtonal rising, so often correlated with emotional intensification. There is a linear structure at the sonic level superimposed on the repetitive structure, and the linear structure occurs in the same clause in which the variation in segmentable form is found.

While it is not the case that the exact same structure of repetition is replicated in all tellings of this myth, the repetition effectively highlights the semantic material—the initial failure of the birds to pierce the hive—which is in turn invariably replicated. Analogously to the other forms of repetition studied here, repetition in this case is part of the mechanism for picking out the features of the discourse that are significant and hence the best candidates for replication. It thus again serves as instructional with respect to the replica-

tion process, in this instance, however, highlighting semantic content through segmentable and nonsegmentable form.

CONCLUSION

The general point may be summed up as follows: for something to be replicable and hence capable of forming part of socially circulating discourse, and, therefore, also part of cultrure, it is helpful and perhaps essential that it be built around a structure of internal repetition, which is first and foremost repetition of form, whether segmentable or nonsegmentable.

The repetition picks out what it is about the discourse that is replicable. Truly linearly unfolding discourse—really a constant stream of difference without similarity—is, from this perspective, unreplicable. What is it about the discourse that should be replicated? Is it the semantic meaning, the segmentable form, the nonsegmentable form, or even the pragmatic meaning? Insofar as we are talking about discourse, therefore, the present analysis suggests that a culture based on pure difference is impossible, and, indeed, a contradiction in terms. It is really no culture at all, but an entropic dispersion of subjectivity. The study of repeitition phenomena is therefore simultaneously an implicit critique of an extreme form of the postmodern understanding of culture. Of course, probably no one would reasonably go so far as to propose this extreme variant, its true character being exposed, but it is important, nevertheless, that we begin to circumscribe the limits of possibility in this regard. A cultural account that looks at difference needs to acknowledge sameness; one that understands discourse as linearity needs to accede to cyclicity and repetitiveness.

At the same time, the study of repetition also involves a critique of the shared meaning model. This is so because discursive form is capable of circulating in some measure independently of semantic meaning, as, for example, in Shokleng singing. This is true also in some measure of the dialogic form of myth telling. The key focus of repetition in this case is the segmentable surface form. But the replication of surface form in a communicative unit, such as a myth, can lead to separation of form from meaning as the archaic forms become less and less intelligible. Culture is as much the sharing of form as of meaning, and the two do not always directly align. This is, indeed, what allows for interpretive difference within a community.

The key to the circulation is, finally, probably for most discursive communities, the use of repetitive structures to socially coordinate discursive productions. It is these ritualized discursive interactions,

built around repetition, that provide the public evidence that a given analysis of discourse (whether as segmentable or as nonsegmentable form) is shared. Coordination through internally repetitive discourse is thus the best evidence of, and means for maintaining, the sharing of culture, which is, however, first and foremost, the sharing of form.

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