



DN15. The 15th DiscourseNet Conference: Discourses of Culture - Cultures of Discourse

March 19-21, 2015, University Library "Svetozar Marković", Belgrade

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Panel II:

Oral poetic discourse and the construction of culture:

Cognitive, literary, and linguistic approaches

The variety of cultural traditions around the world magnificently reflects human diversity. Since research and academia are the products of literacy, their focus is, almost exclusively, on literate materials. But, obviously, oral traditions came first, a long, very long time before writing was invented and disseminated. Oral performances have been the only vehicles of art and knowledge – including plastic arts, inseparably linked to myth and performance in their origins – and the only ways to forge public discourse and cultural identity, for over 90% of the fifty thousand or so years that cognitively-modern human beings have been around. Even today, barely half of the world's population masters reading and writing beyond the basics. Extremely rich and complex oral traditions still develop and flourish, sometimes interacting with literacy, sometimes not. Therefore, oral poetic discourse is crucial for understanding the aesthetic phenomenon, the discourse-culture interaction, and the human mind in general. As invaluable as written or other forms of mediated communication are for us, they are not "the original"; they were not around in the beginnings of human cognition, culture, and communication.

This panel seeks to connect oral poetics with the general study of discourse, culture, and the human mind. For this, we ask how oral poetic discourse uses general capacities of the human mind and of human communication to construct particular cultural traditions. Comparisons of oral poetic performance with other types of discourse are particularly welcome. For almost all human history, oral traditions, through ritual and performance, performed the functions that mass media, the Internet, and literacy-based arts have in literate societies. What can the "natural", non-mediated discourse of oral traditions teach us about modern genres of mediated discourse, and particularly about how they forge culture by means of writing or other technologies?

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The deadline for paper proposals (with name, title, a half-page abstract and a short cv) is the 20th of January 2015. Please contact the organizers via discoursenet15@ubsm.rs and dn15@ubsm.rs or visit the conference webpage at dn15.unilib.rs or dn15.ubsm.rs for further details. DN15 is organized by Jan Krasni (Belgrade) and receives support from the ERC DISCONEX project led by Johannes Angermuller (Warwick).

