

## Prehistoric Foundations of Verse Prosody and Musical Instrumentation

Most people assume that literary genres are personal inventions of ingenious authors and fail to see the process of their lawful evolution from ancient ritual customs of folk masses. Their present appearance is just a jutting top of a large floe, whose body is submerged almost completely in the vast ocean of remote prehistory. The formation of **literary genres** is a short-time process that lasted only a few millennia but continued a longstanding germination phase of **oral genres** that lasted as long as two hundred thousand years. Whoever considers literary genres without their prehistoric oral origins cultivates poetics as a rootless genealogic tree.

The evolution of literary genres proceeded in accord with the growth of human society along a few axes. One axis was formed by their temporal succession and progress from primitive to civilised societies. The other axes were plotted by spatial, ethnic, social and racial diversity due to various human stocks. Ancient tribes did not pursue only one line of genesis but marched along different roads. The early varieties of *Homo sapiens* were divided into dolichocephalous Negrids speaking prefixing languages with classifiers and prenasalised stops <sup>m</sup>b-, <sup>n</sup>d-, <sup>ng</sup>g-, the short-sized brachycephalous Annamite race speaking isolating languages with reduplicative morphology and palatal stops and Asiatic Mongolids with agglutinating morphology and vowel harmony. European inflectional languages and Basco-Abkhaz ergative structures arose by mixing these three prototypes. Formerly all ethnic studies insisted on **human monogenesis** and counted with single-origin accounts of man but after discovering *Homo floresiensis* they return to **polygenic theories** advanced by diffusionists before WWI. Their adherents H. Klaatsch<sup>1</sup>, M. Sera, G. Sergi, A. Mendes-Correa and L'Arldt traced cultural typology in several lines.

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<sup>1</sup> Hermann Klaatsch - Adolf Heilborn: *Der Werdegang der Menschheit und die Entstehung der Kultur*. Berlin: Bong & Co., 1920.

<b>Negrids Europids</b>	<b>Mongolids Scythoids</b>	<b>Tungids Turcoids</b>	<b>Pygmids Lapponoids</b>
<b>subsistence</b>			
gatherer, farmer, serf, bondsman, peasant	hunter, herdsman, pastoralist, warrior, nobility	fisherman, sailor, merchant, usurer, patriciate	strandloper, slave, pauper, artisan, worker
<b>religion</b>			
<b>polytheism:</b> ancestral cult <b>naturism:</b> gods of earth/sun/air	<b>monotheism:</b> belief in one god <b>dualism:</b> good god vs. evil satan	<b>petrotheism:</b> cults of rocks, souls of the dead transmigrate into predator fish	<b>nanotheism:</b> cults of elfin deities and tutelary spirits
<b>mythology</b>			
chthonic cults, mysteries, Mother Earth, martyr corn god	World Tree, World Egg, fall of bad angels, heaven vs. hell	creation myths, myths on deluge, twin brothers, cultural demiurges	<i>trickster tales</i> , animal heroes, elfin tricksters vs. silly giants
<b>art</b>			
<b>idolatry:</b> cult of ancestor idols	<b>ovoglyphs</b> painted eggs	<b>petroglyphs</b> cave-painting	<b>matrolatry</b> idols of Venus
<b>language</b>			
prenasalisation, prefixing classifiers, <sup>(m)</sup> b-plurals	strong initial stress, <i>k/t</i> -plural, vowel harmony, agglutination	strong penultimate accent, agglutination, vowel harmony, <i>l</i> -plurals, <i>r</i> -plurals	melodic verse with 5 tones, palatalisation, <i>i/e</i> -plurals

<b>music</b>			
choral chants drum, tambourine percussion instruments	epic recitatives bow, lyre, string instruments, cither, lute	elegiac monody horn, reed flute, trumpet, tuba, Pan's pipe	yodelling, blowpipes, nasal flutes, cane flute, xylophone keyboard
<b>versification</b>			
quantitative temporal prosody	consonance, initial alliteration, end rhyme	accentual prosody, final end rhyme	melodic prosody, regulated verse
<b>genres</b>			
hymns, processionals, chants, legends, mysteries, tragedies	heroic epic, encomium, paean, evil-eye magic, shamanic prayers, poetic duels	elegiac monodies, funeral elegy, heroic epic, encomium, paean, incantation	<i>trickster tale</i> , fable, satire, <i>fabliaux</i> , picaresque novel, comedy

Table 1. *The evolution of tribal genre forms*

Ethnic diversity is studied by methods of comparative typology but contemporary ethnology cannot draft out a systematic taxonomy of ethnic stocks because it clings to the present-day secondary diversity of nations and does not deduce original tribal ethnicity by their analytic decomposition. The ethnic occurrence of literary genres is not fixed by present-day frontiers between nations but mirrors prehistoric migrations. Their recent spatial distribution still exhibits residual survivals of Neolithic settlements. Literary ethnology should turn from modern mixed nationalities to the study of prehistoric diasporas (*διασπορά* 'dissemination') of ancient tribes.

Table 25 offers a systematic taxonomy of cultural customs conditioning various types of oral genres and classifies them in four independent genetic lines. It counts with four major racial stocks that form irreducible elements of anthropogenesis. It

<sup>1</sup> The Apachi fiddle *tsii'' edo'a'tl* from horse hair is probably a European loan.

integrates them into a consistent typology of cultural forms assorted according to the criteria of religion, mythology, language and art. These features function in structural unity although their historical growth involved a certain degree of relative independence. Close interrelations have operated between oral genres, religious rites, festivals, cults and plastic arts. Another complex syndrome of mutual conditioning worked between phonetic languages structures, their prosodic qualities and prosodic versification or between weapons, tools and musical instruments. Literary evolution pursued a relatively autonomous development in several independent series and its progress wended its way through the following transitions (Table 26):

<b>hunters' folklore</b>	<b>→ herdsman's folklore</b>
heroic legends	→ heroic sagas
heroic fairy-tales	→ heroic epic
bows and arrows	→ string instruments
consonant prosody	→ alliterative and rhymed consonance
<b>gatherers' folklore</b>	<b>→ agriculturalists' folklore</b>
religious liturgy in dances	→ dramatic performances in processions
tribal festivals	→ mysteries at a church and market-place
choral hymnody	→ choral chants and odes
hymnic processions	→ dithyrambs, sacral hymnology
cults of ancestors' skulls	→ idolatry of wooden statues of saints
vocalism with long vowels	→ quantitative temporal verse prosody
<b>trickster folklore</b>	<b>→ popular plebeian folklore</b>
animal trickster tales	→ modern fables
yodelling mocking dances	→ All Fools, farce, <i>Schwank</i> , <i>fabliaux</i>
comic mocking scenes	→ farces, comedy of humours
mock-heroic fables	→ mock-heroic epic, humorous novellas
mock-heroic narratives	→ joyful novellas, picaresque novels
laudatory mock-hymns	

mendicant chants	→ humorous satire
feasts of welcoming spring	→ mendicant carols
	→ birds' carols

Table 2. *Evolutionary transitions in literary genres*

Dramatic genres in world literatures have grown out of liturgy applied in religious cults. They stage dramatic performances of myths told by religious mythology, popular fair-tales and heroic epic. However, there is no close connection between myths and musical instruments because the latter came into existence as a derivation and a secondary by-product of weapons. Dwarfish races in Southeast Asia (Negrito) and South America (Arawaks) used blowing pipes with poisoned arrows and as a result they developed flutes but their occurrence has not been evidenced among African Pygmies. All Eurasian and African pastoralists play stringed instruments but there is hardly any convincing evidence for stringed instrument<sup>1</sup> among American Indians as their development occurred after their departure through the Bering Strait.

Independent chapters deal with plastic arts and versification owing to its root in linguistic prosody. Quantitative prosody could make appearance only in languages with rich vocalic quantity while accentual prosody required languages with a strong dynamic accent. Plastic arts necessarily depicted motifs of religious mythology but their wood-working and stone-working technology was derived from patterns of Palaeolithic industries. Their techniques reflected the earliest conventions of cave painting, terracotta statuettes and clay models or ornamentation peculiar to textiles and weapons.

Genres of oral and literary tradition formed a firm part of spiritual superstructure vaulting over the economic substructure of daily work. Myths, legends, chants, incantations, paintings and sculptures represented a magic reification of economic values elevated to the heavens of supernatural beings. The culture of savages was condensed in **mimetic** and **anagogic magic**, barbarians promoted its lore to **cultic rites** and ecclesiastic **temple liturgy** gave shape to the rising feudal hierarchy in the

earliest civilisations. In all stages of social development it was **religion** that reigned as a queen over all varieties of human lore, aesthetic arts and theoretical thought. Friedrich Schiller considered art as a non-committal play, Friedrich Schlegel praised its beauties as a sort of *Weltspiel* and Kant interpreted its charms as a pleasure for its own sake. But more sophisticated views refuse to dismiss art as infantile pastime and nursery revels and emphasise its serious role as supernatural, religious or ideological roofage over the common man's daily toil. Irrespective of whether the early appearance of culture took shape of religious cults or its modern look has disguised it as moral ideology, in all cases mentioned arts remain a discourse about priorities of daily life and working-day existence.

### **Musical Instrumentation and Accompaniment**

The poetic character of literary genres is influenced to a great extent by music that was traditionally played as its accompaniment. Nowadays most nations of the world apply a wide variety of musical instruments because their original culture was exposed to external influences and distorted by secondary imports. Historical genology may take this modern syncretism into account but its primary duty is to abstract from secondary additions and reconstruct original patterns inherited from prehistory.

Most musical instruments arose as secondary by-products of weapons. Prehistoric plant-gatherers and hunters organised daily labours by means of imitative or anagogic magic. They brandished real weapons and mimicked hunting techniques so as to explain animist spirits their wishes and instruct young hunters in the art of hunting. The rationale for a systematic typology of musical instruments is clear only in its general outlines. The following are the most probable roads of evolution in the origin of stringed, wind and percussion instruments (chordaphones, aerophones, membranophones, idiophones):

bow and string technology of weapons	→ chordaphones: string instruments
blowing-pipes from bamboo and reeds	→ oral and nasal flutes
horns used a warrior's rhyton to drinks	→ horns as wind instruments
hand-axes for digging and cutting wood	→ drum as a percussion instrument

The Negrids tended to use various drums and their music relied on dynamic rhythm defined by heavy beats of drums and other percussion instruments. The musical tradition depended upon various form of **idiophones** and generally indulged in percussion instruments. Their economic industry was based on choppers and hand-axes for digging roots. Having few throwing weapons (spears) and stabbing weapons (lances, daggers), their armament consisted of striking and beating weapons (battle-axes, bolas) and their derivations (slings with bullets). Their original drums were made of hollow stumps of trees and were played by hands, pestles or pebblestone chopping tools.

There are many instances of heroic epic in Asia, Europe and Africa but most of its historical variations presuppose a musical form of individual recitatives with accompaniment of a stringed instrument, lyre or lute. All pastoralist cultures in Eurasia and Africa exhibited a definite tendency to play **chordaphones**, stringed instruments derived from different types of bows, and their folk musical tradition followed the wake of chordaphony. There was hardly any heroic epic among Indians in America and there was no evidence of stringed instruments in their dance music. The only possible explanation can be sought in the fact that stringed instruments evolved in Eurasia after the departure of the Algonquian and Quechuan tribes to America.

Negrito tribes in Southeast Asia made blowing-pipes with poisoned arrows and this instrument for hunting gave also rise to the nose flute, made of reed or bamboo wood. In Central Malaysia the nose flute is popular among nomadic Negrito tribes, who call it *pensol*. It is common also among the highland tribes of New Guinea, Micronesia and Polynesia. However, its most common derivations are mouth flutes with several side-holes. Flutes and other high-pitched instruments are popular among American

Indians, especially in accompaniment of women’s singing. Most Pygmoid cultures show a strong general tendency to apply **high-pitched aerophones**. They indulge in polyphonic and polytonic chants that gave rise to yodelling and the melodic regulated verse in tonal languages.

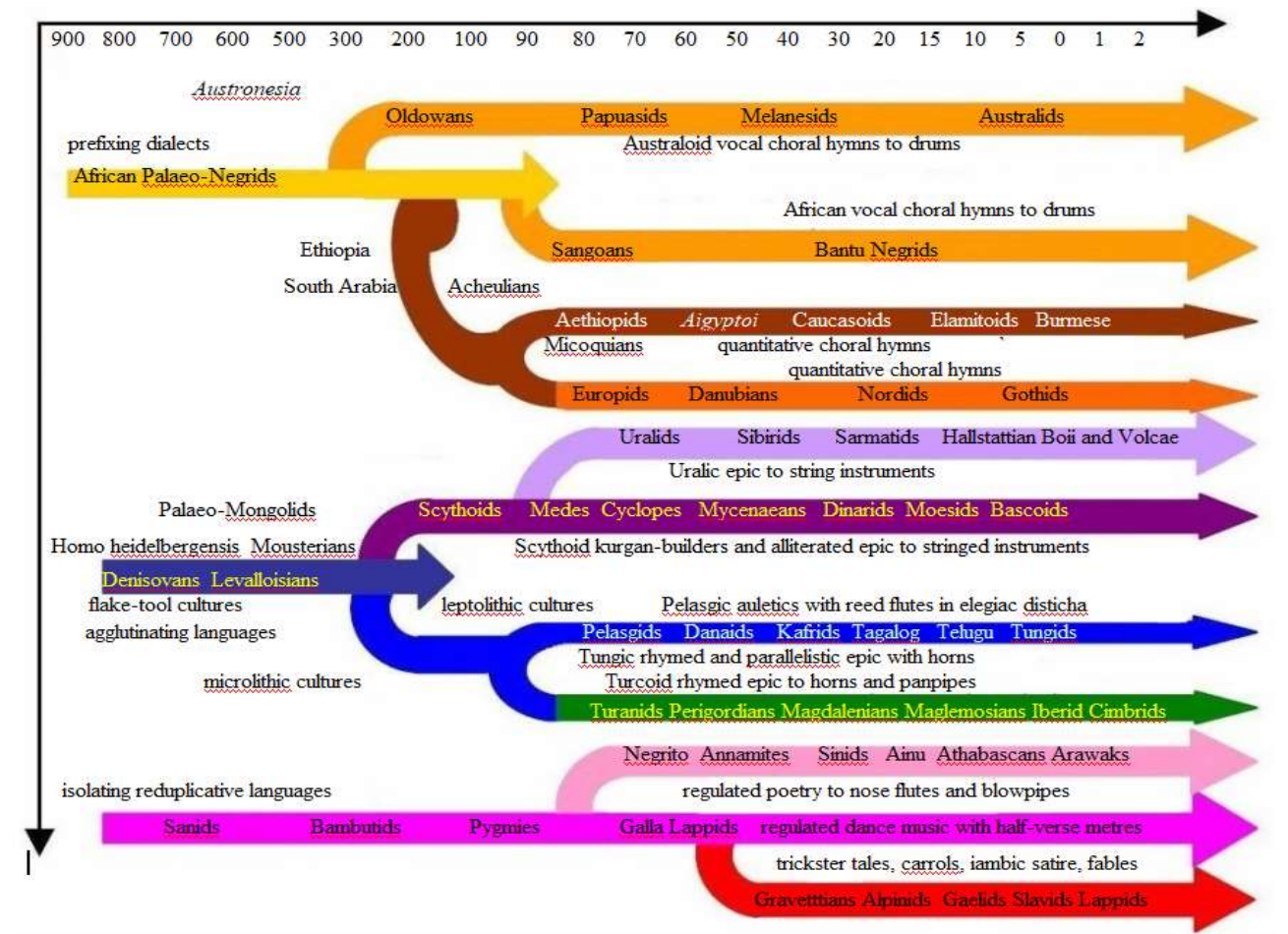


Table 3. *Human prosodogenesis, verse patterns and musical instrumentation*



Dwarfish populations in Eurasia and Africa speak tonal languages with several melodic tones and their singing is remarkable for yodelling. The custom of yodelling is not common only to the Tyrolese Alpine race but also to Lapplanders and Pygmy tribes of Africa. The old folk in the Tyrol accompany yodels with the Alpine horn. In northern Europe yodelling is widespread among Lapps, who call it *yoik* singing. The Google catchword 'Yodelling' mentions yodelling chants also among the Mbuti Pygmies of the Congo. The Shona people in Zimbabwe are reported to 'use yodels within their elaborate polyphonic singing ... while playing the *mbira*'. The latter is a xylophone-type of keyboard instruments composed of little wooden sticks of different length and characteristic tone. This suggests an unverified conjecture that they may have played a role in the invention of modern pianos.

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