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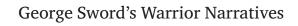University of Nebraska Press

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George Sword's Warrior Narratives

Delphine Red Shirt

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George Sword's
Warrior Narratives

*Compositional Processes
in Lakota Oral Tradition*

DELPHINE RED SHIRT

♾

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PREFACE

This research is the result of a long-standing interest in the work of one individual, George Sword, who composed 245 pages of text in the Lakota language using the English alphabet in the period 1896 through 1910. In the past scholars have studied Lakota narratives and songs, and with each study new insights have been gained. However, the focus generally in oral literary research has been on the study of *content* and not *process* in Lakota oral traditions. In order to better understand the characteristics of Lakota oral style this study shows how it is composed and structured in the work of George Sword. The research focus is from a qualitative perspective concerned with exploring, describing, and explaining a culturally specific Lakota oral narrative, a perspective more commonly found in history and ethnographic disciplines, where it is a special type of case study research. The primary method used is an analysis of historic documents and original text in Lakota to address the issues raised in the general research problem: how do you define Lakota literature? In the end this study shows the way in which Lakota oral narrative is composed and how its practice has produced a distinct form. During the course of this study, what became apparent in George Sword's Lakota narratives were the formulaic patterns inherent in the Lakota language used to tell the narratives as well as the recurring themes and story patterns. The primary conclusion is that these patterns originate from a Lakota oral tradition. This method of analysis can be used to determine whether any given written narrative derives from Lakota oral tradition or not, and it leads the way for further research.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to use the written work of George Sword to demonstrate the way in which oral narrative is composed by the Lakota people, to show how their practice produced a form distinct from narratives composed in the period after contact with Europeans, when writing was introduced. Thus the initial challenge has been to prove that these narratives in the Lakota dialect are oral in character; in this study, formulaic structure has proven to be the best indicator of oral composition. What became apparent in George Sword's narratives during the course of this study was the importance of the formulaic patterns inherent in the language he used as well as the recurring scenes or themes and the recurrent story patterns. This raised a key question: did these patterns originate from a tradition of Lakota oral narrative?

Historically scholars have had difficulty in conceptualizing oral composition in American Indian oral tradition. The failure to comprehend its oral character has contributed to misunderstandings of what *oral literature* is for American Indians. Thus the findings in this study, which are based on an analysis of a body of oral narratives written in the Lakota language, will help in determining methods of composition for Lakota oral narratives; potentially these findings may apply to related Siouan languages, including texts written in the Dakota and Nakota dialects. The study is based on my translation and analysis of texts written in the Lakota language by an American Indian individual, George Sword, who was born in 1847 and died of tuberculosis in 1910 (although the Lakota winter counts show him as having died in the winter of 1911–12). What Sword expressed in these narratives is best under-

stood in terms of what he meant to say to those he wrote for, his contemporaries. It is to them that he articulated his thoughts; thus, to fully appreciate his narratives, it is important for the reader to have a sense of how these thoughts may have formed in his mind through the careful selection of words to express Lakota ideas and concepts. George Sword shared a distinctly Lakota world with those for whom he wrote. This is captured in the language of the original texts, and it is this which serves as the focus of this study.[1]

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

At the present time processes in American Indian oral tradition are not clearly understood; generally scholars still lack any clear concept of what an oral tradition is like. Yet Lakota narratives are part of Native American oral tradition in North America, and as such, this study asserts, they belong on the shelf with oral traditions from around the world.[2] Thus it is important to begin by understanding how oral tradition is generally perceived in early European literature and, as an analog, to see how American Indian oral tradition is viewed.

In a review of the work done at the Center for the Study of Oral Literature at Harvard University, where oral literature based on oral tradition has been studied since 1856, David Bynum notes, "Poetry and storytelling began so long ago in prehistoric time that no one can scientifically guess how or when they originated. But one thing is certain. Our biological ancestors did not cease to be a mere species of animal and become *mankind* until the capacity for rhythmic language and narration had evolved in them. In myth the world over, these mental powers are said to be god-given and divine. They are at the very least indispensable to any practical definition of humanity" (1).

In Homeric studies many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century scholars believed that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* originated from an original text or texts. In contrast to this view, Friedrich August Wolf (1759–1824) held that Homer may have lived at a time when the alphabet was not yet used. Thus Homer's works may not have been read by his audience; that is, he would have had no reason to write works the length of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (Parry, *Making* xvi). Early scholars like Wolf and his successors had not developed a clear concept of what an oral tradition was like (Parry, *Making* xvi). Milman Parry (1902–35), in contrast, began his studies in oral tradition with a focus on the telling of a narrative (*Making* 421).[3] Once Parry gained the understanding of the key role that oral tradition had in early European literature, "[he] knew how radical his procedure had to be if he was to break through the charmed circle of scholarly ignorance about the mechanisms of oral tradition that had persisted for centuries in Europe and America" (Bynum 27–28).[4] Through his work, Parry altered perceptions of oral tradition and helped change the focus in oral literary research from content to process in oral tradition.

Parry's theoretical work has affected the study of many world cultures, including American Indian oral traditions. Originally, Parry's theory was based on a close analysis of the text of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. His primary interest was in the language of the texts and the style in which they were written.[5] He focused his work on one aspect of Homer's diction: the use of the noun-epithet. Parry's studies helped bring traditions that were previously isolated into the realm of literary study.

Parry sought a solution to the problem of how the author of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* composed these poems, formulating the hypothesis that they were not originally literary but

the products of an archaic Greek oral tradition (Bynum 28). Parry based his work on the problem of literacy; the assertion in this study is that a limited use of writing for literary purposes during the period that George Sword wrote his narratives led him to produce a text that is very different from current concepts of literature.[6]

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In his early work, Parry studied Homer's language and diction closely.[7] Initially Parry realized that it was not enough to know that the style of the Homeric poems was traditional. Thus he developed a method whereby words and expressions could be closely analyzed to determine, more or less, how traditional the style of these texts was (*Making* 1). While the text of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* inspired Parry, what encouraged him was his own intuition that the structure of Homeric verse is formulaic (*Making* xxiii).

George Sword's choice of words and phrases was the catalyst for this study, as was a notion, early on, that formulaic structure was present in his work and thus that Parry's oral theory could be applicable.[8] Parry's hypothesis that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were products of an archaic Greek oral tradition provided the groundwork for what is now called the Parry-Lord theory, oral formulaic theory, or, as used here, oral theory (Bynum 28). Parry initially formulated the theory in his doctoral dissertation, wherein he developed a method to determine which words and expression in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were traditional.[9] This study follows Parry's method by working within the limits of the original texts of George Sword's narratives to address the question, can oral theory be applied to George Sword's narratives to determine how they were composed?[10] The application of oral theory to

American Indian texts, by Indigenous scholars who are fluent in the original languages of the texts being analyzed, is uncommon.[11] Thus a systematic application of oral theory as a first step toward defining a specific American Indian literature could be valuable, since most American Indian literature is said to originate in oral tradition.

PROFESSIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STUDY

In recent times, scholars have noted that Indigenous peoples have composed long passages of poetry and song without the aid of writing (Tedlock, *2000 Years* 2).[12] The production of longer works in oral literature is a problem that eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Homeric and literary scholars had struggled unsuccessfully to explain. Parry and Albert Lord later researched the issue by analyzing the construction of the larger poems in Homer and in Serbo-Croatian epic poetry (Parry, Making 445; Lord, *Singer* 13; for further discussion, see chapter 2).[13] At this point, it is important to know that scholars have generally believed that American Indian oral tradition relied primarily on *extraordinary* memory and not any singular process of composition (Densmore 61).[14] The prevalent myth among scholars is that a primary reliance on *astonishing* memory is responsible for the continuance of Native American oral tradition narrative and song. To refute that myth, this study draws on the work of Parry and Lord to explore how an American Indian narrator may construct formulas to help in composition and, following a particular tradition, might use recurrent phrases and recurring themes and story patterns in his or her narrative.

An example of how some scholars write about oral tradition appears in Kimberly M. Blaeser's analysis of Ofelia Zepeda's poetry collection *Ocean Power*. Blaeser writes,

> In acts of decolonization, Zepeda, . . . incorporates Native
> language and also invokes and symbolically reenacts tra-
> ditional rituals. The book gathers part of its context from
> the *recollection* of the tribe's ritual journey to the ocean
> for salt, and even from its relationship to the account of
> that journey in Ruth Underhill's book, *Singing for Power*. It
> sets itself a task of "*remembering*" and learning from those
> older ones who kept the rituals and language alive. . . .
> And so the text itself begins a kind of recovery, under-
> takes a *re-membering* or putting back together of the old
> ways and beliefs, and perhaps itself offers a ritualistic
> preparation for sacred encounter or continuance . . . rit-
> ualistically *recalling* the older people and traditions, the
> way those people lived that was a journey into readiness.
> Zepeda's text achieves this symbolic movement partly
> through the inclusion of the Tohono O'odham language,
> the repetitive chantlike style . . . and the *retelling* of older
> songs and ways. (252; emphasis added)

I have italicized Blaeser's words that refer to Zepeda's use of
language in oral tradition, words that seem to indicate a close
association between "extraordinary memory" and oral tradi-
tion: *recollection*, *remembering*, *re-membering*, *recalling*, and
retelling. Nowhere in this analysis is there evidence of a clear
concept or explanation of the process of Tohono O'odham
oral tradition. Blaeser overlooks language and repetitive,
chant-like styles. Similarly, Ruth Finnegan states, "Theo-
ries of transmission usually implicitly assume some theory
of memory" (*Oral Traditions* 114).

Thus, as our knowledge and appreciation of poetry and
prose by Indigenous peoples in narrative and song has grown,
"the time has come to take a further step and proclaim that
literature existed in the Americas before Europeans got

here—not only oral literatures but visible literature" (Ted-lock, *2000 Years* 1). With this notion in mind, the time is right to consider and address issues like this, where clearer concepts of what constitutes American Indian oral tradition in literary studies are needed; these may be tribally specific techniques of oral composition in oral tradition, as well as the larger issue of recognizing American Indian oral litera-tures and inscription as literature, as Dennis Tedlock calls for.

This study was conducted to analyze the oral tradition–based literature of the Lakota people using methods that have not been widely used in American Indian Studies; in addition, this work has been carried out by a scholar whose primary or heritage language is that of the text being stud-ied. The methodological findings will be useful for studies that focus on a specific tribal literature; for this study, spe-cifically Lakota oral tradition–based literature.

In order to determine the focus of this study, the fol-lowing steps were taken. First, a selection of narratives in George Sword's manuscript were identified for analysis. I have selected his first three narratives and, after determining that a longer text was needed, also selected his Sun Dance narrative.[15] Second, I reviewed these narratives to deter-mine whether they were "literary" and thus fit the topic of this study. Third, I needed to determine what is known about these narratives in order to make a case for how this analysis will address the research question initially raised in this study: how do you define American Indian literature?[16]

The thesis for this study came after an intensive assess-ment of what is included under the topic American Indian literature or Native American literature. The problem with these categories is a lack of a clear definition of what con-stitutes this type of literature. A general definition seemed impossible to establish given what is currently known. Thus

I decided to focus on a specific American Indian tribe or nation.[17] The context for this study is postcolonial literary and cultural thought and theory, which emerged as a distinct category in literary studies in the 1990s. American Indian literature is currently excluded from postcolonial criticism precisely because of the lack of a clear definition of that literature. This is contradictory, since postcolonial thought and theory originally gained influence because it presented a critique of the way that literature was defined to exclude or marginalize certain peoples.[18] The effect of postcolonial thought is a questioning of practices that disregard cultural, social, regional, and national differences in experience and outlook (Barry 192).

I commenced research with a notion that a compilation of narratives in a specific tribal or tribally national literature could be used to build a case for a general definition of American Indian literature. The scope of such a study would be enormous, however. I revised my goal and narrowed the scope of the study to apply a theory of oral composition to analyze the narratives of a tribally specific individual, George Sword, an Oglala Sioux. I also narrowed the research question to: how do you define Lakota literature? I sought a tentative answer through oral tradition, where the unit of analysis is the literary text written by George Sword in the Lakota language, which provide proof of texts with origins in oral tradition.

OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY

The collection of oral narratives by George Sword, now held in the James R. Walker Collection at the Colorado Historical Society, is exceptional in that it represents original texts written in the Lakota language by a Lakota individual, one

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who consciously bypassed the usual method of providing cultural information through an informant-translator relationship; instead, Sword chose to construct these narratives by "writing as he spoke" (Walker Collection, folder 108:1).[19] The narratives selected for this study consist of 2,240 lines of text and include both songs and narratives. I prepared word-for-word and literary translations of these narratives from their original language into English.[20] The appendixes provide the original Lakota texts and the literary translations.[21] This reflects one aspect of this study: to analyze the content of George Sword's narratives. What sets this research apart from other works is the examination of the style and techniques used by George Sword, where an important initial question is, how were these narratives composed?[22]

In the 1930s Milman Parry gathered examples of oral epic poetry in the Serbo-Croatian language in Yugoslavia, with the objective of using as a framework his earlier work examining the formal structure of the Homeric poems, in order to show the way in which practice determined form (Lord, *Singer* 1). In previous work Parry had developed what is called oral theory, a method of analysis to determine which words and expressions used in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were traditional. He applied this methodology to the traditional epithet in Homer, demonstrating that words and phrases were selected for metrical convenience (Parry, *Making* 1, xxv).[23] Throughout his earliest work Parry emphasized that Homeric poetry was oral, although he never explicitly stated nor demonstrated that Homer himself was an oral poet (lx–lxi). Parry sought to validate his theories through his work in Yugoslavia by observing and describing a process in which poets composed by oral improvisation (lxi).

In Yugoslavia, Parry performed fieldwork in order to gather material on the practice of oral epic poetry in song

in the Serbo-Croatian language and analyzed the form that emerged from the needs of the practice. An important aspect of Parry's work was that the singers themselves were "unlettered." According to Parry's student, Albert Lord, "Unlettered man is not encumbered with the idea of fixity of form, a concept which comes only with the development of writing. The form of his song is determined by the fact that he must compose rapidly without the aid of writing or of memorizing a fixed text" (Lord, *Singer* 2).

Although he could read and write in Lakota, George Sword's frame of mind might be said to be similar to that of these "unlettered men," in that he had a similar attitude toward form.[24] This is evident in the progression of his narratives from the shorter to the longer examples. In the longer narrative, on the Sun Dance, he is able to deal effectively with traditional themes and expand and lengthen them according to Lakota tradition.[25] He demonstrates skill in using the older language, stating his disdain for newer forms of expression after writing was introduced to the Lakota people (Walker Collection, folder 108:1).

George Sword learned from a trusted individual, Dr. James Riley Walker (1849–1925), the agency physician at Pine Ridge, that Lakota knowledge could be saved through the medium of writing. Walker convinced Sword beginning in September 1896 that Oglala Lakota oral tradition alone could not save important songs and narratives, which were essentially poetry and prose or literature for the Lakota people (Walker, *Lakota Belief* 18).[26] At first Sword utilized an interpreter to convey cultural information to Walker, but later he began his own writing to record narrative and song in the Lakota language. At the age of forty-nine, when he was convinced of the need for a systematic recording of these narratives and songs through writing, George Sword had already lived

a life among the Oglala Sioux and was well versed in the practice of Lakota oral tradition. As this study describes, he demonstrates his skill by choosing his words the old way; his disdain for the new forms of expression in Lakota further demonstrates how his writing reflects a tradition that is old and conservative (Walker Collection, folder 108:1).[27]

Knowing how a singer or narrator learned his art is important for understanding the compositional process. Parry and Lord analyzed the way in which practice determines form by observing Yugoslav singers in three stages of learning the art of oral epic poetry: first, learning common ideas in songs; second, learning recurrent formulas and patterns; and third, performing for an audience. Throughout the process rhythms of thought and expression are evident (Lord, *Singer* 21). Eventually the singer becomes proficient as he learns to compose rapidly, without the aid of a written text, through the use of formulas and can recite them at will with ease (Lord, *Singer* 2). In a similar manner, George Sword may have developed his technique by learning songs and narratives that he heard from Lakota men during his childhood, adolescence, and through the time he was initiated into the life of a Lakota *wicasa*. In time he learned the art of oral narration that he practiced throughout his life.[28] Chapter 3 will provide material on George Sword's life as context for understanding Lakota practice; as previously stated, the aim of this study is to illustrate how oral narrative is composed by the Lakota people in order to show how their practice produced a distinctive form.[29]

The following demonstrates how this occurs: in stanza 81 of George Sword's Sun Dance narrative, the underlying formulaic structure of the narrative becomes apparent, distinguishing its method of composition.[30] Stanzas were determined by George Sword, and each is a group of words that

express a complete thought. This particular stanza is a seven-line song; I have divided it into lines here, as I did for stanzas that stood out as poetic in George Swords' narratives.[31] A similar claim was made for Native American narratives by Dell Hymes in *"In Vain I Tried to Tell You"*:

> In short, one can accept a minimal definition of poetry as discourse organized in lines. . . . One does not fully face the issue posed by the claim that a body of oral narrative is poetic, in the sense of organization into lines, until one goes beyond the existence of line to principles governing lines and relates such principles to the organization of texts in other respects as well. . . . Older texts make us face the issue directly. If they are manifestations of a tradition of organization into lines, that organization can be discovered only in the lines themselves, and in their relations to one another, for that is the evidence available (341).[32]

Thus this initial example shows the importance of the organization of George Sword's narratives into lines, in particular in Lakota song, which this study recognizes as poetry. Underlying each phrase that is regularly used to express a given idea is a rhythmic and syntactic pattern (Lord, *Singer* 3).[33]

Stanza 81 in George Sword's Sun Dance narrative is forty-four syllables long, concluding with seven ending syllables that are formulaic:[34]

> Tka anpetu wanji
> to wanjica ca
> okatakin wanica
> iyolilita ca
> he ognaya om ite

wayecila kin
kta ce eyapi ce[35]

Principles that govern lines that are poetic in George Sword's narratives are initial and closing or final elements and associated discourse features that may include statements regarding the passage of time as well as the use of recurring or rhythmic verbs. The syllable structure is 7-5-7-6-7-5-7, with the last group of seven syllables serving as a final or closing element that shows a pattern of 2-1 and 3-1 in the phrases *kta ce* and *eyapi ce*, which are narrative devices or formulas.[36] The rhythmic pattern is demonstrated by how the stanza begins with *tka anpetu wanji*, a phrase that is an initial element indicating time, followed by a slight pause and continuing *to wanjica ca*; again a pause, continuing with *okata kin wanica*; again a pause, continuing with *iyolilita ca*; the pause continues with an older phrase, *he ognaya om ite*, and ends with *wayecila kin*, where *wayecila* is a verb, *wanyanka*, meaning "to see." The first four lines lead to the two important ones, which are *he ognaya om ite* and *wayecila kin*.[37] In the fifth line or group of syllables, the use of *om* as opposed to *ob* reflects the older Dakota dialect. In Lakota the preferred or spoken word in everyday usage is *ob*, meaning "with."[38] The fifth and sixth lines indicate whom or what the stanza is about: those whose faces appear on a clear blue sky day. What follows are patterns initially identified as narrative devices and later as formulas: *eyapi ce kta ce* is common formula indicting that this is "told by the people," as distinct from "as told by George Sword." Together these features accompany the division into lines and stanzas in George Sword's narratives.[39]

Throughout, rapid composition is made possible by the recurrent ideas in the narrative, including themes that are

common across narratives; these themes are used in different ways, in different narratives, by George Sword.[40] In both narrative 3, stanza 23, and the Sun Dance narrative, stanza 124, for example, a warrior scout returns and reports to all the warriors what he saw; the two stanzas in the separate narratives are strikingly similar in construction, so that in both *sungmanitu oskiciye* is used to express the idea of enemy movement.[41] In everyday speech *sungmanitu* is translated as "wolf" and *oskiciye* as "movement." The reference to an animal is significant in Lakota cultural terms, as the Lakota believe that in war they are no longer human but animal-like. A comprehensive study of all the material collected by Walker, might make even more evident how a given theme is used in different narratives by different narrators, particularly since George Sword convinced other holy men at Pine Ridge to cooperate with Walker in the recording of Lakota oral tradition.

In 1896 Walker was transferred from the U.S. Indian School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, which was for the Oglala Sioux who spoke the Lakota language. Within ten years after he arrived, a series of events encouraged Walker to take on the role of field researcher among the Oglala Sioux. First, in 1902 Clark Wissler from the American Museum of Natural History in New York visited Pine Ridge, met Walker, and encouraged him to collect information. Then, in 1905, George Sword and other men, including Little Wound, American Horse, and Gray Goose, began systematically teaching Lakota culture to Walker (Walker Collection). A close comparison of these men's separate narratives might show the necessary elements of the narrative, which a narrator then retells with the formulaic and thematic material he knows (Lord, *Singer* 3). This is one phase of composition, where different versions of any telling vary

both in thematic content and in the way in which the narrator handles the theme. In this way, the length of the narrative is determined by the narrator, by what he chooses to elaborate on and what he tells concisely. It can be shown that some narrators are able to elaborate more than others, providing full cultural descriptions, while others tell only the necessary details of the story.[42]

The methods chosen for this study have not been widely used to analyze Lakota oral narration and song. These methods include, for example, determining the principles that govern lines, including the analysis of syllable structure in words and phrases, Lakota grammar, and syntax, as well as key narrative devices, including initial and closing elements that appear consistently at the ends of stanzas, phrases that indicate the passage of time, and the prevalence of recurring and rhythmic verbs, whose function in the narrative is to convey important cultural information to the listener (see chapter 6 for a discussion of Lakota themes). The overall aim of this study is to yield useful methods for such an evaluation.

DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The scope of this study and its aim are limited to the compositional elements of Lakota oral narrative tradition in George Sword's text. The findings are limited to the original text examined and the language therein. Conversely, other aspects of this study are potentially unlimited, such as the analysis of the cultural implications of the language of the original text, which is covered in chapter 7.

George Sword was a skilled narrator who was able to demonstrate the best of Lakota oral narrative tradition. His skill is shown in the first narrative, stanzas 24–26, which ends in a song (see appendix 1). Other scholars, not fluent in the

Lakota language, have recognized his special ability as a narrator, including Elaine Jahner, editor of *Lakota Myth.* In her discussion of Ella Deloria's critique of George Sword's work, Jahner suggests that his work be viewed in relation to that of the other Lakota informants who worked with James Walker.[43] Such a comparison would show, according to Jahner, how creative and literary George Sword was as a narrator (Walker, *Lakota Myth* ix). One of the compelling reasons why his narratives are not recognized today as literary is the quality of existing translations (see chapter 7). According to Tedlock, this was a major obstacle to the advancement and acceptance of the view that literature existed in the Americas before the arrival of Europeans; the problem in translation occurs because it is often guided by linguistic rather than literary goals. He notes, "After labeling the signs that compose a . . . text and giving them a rough translation, specialists whose interests lie elsewhere than in literature extract fragments of information and reorganize them to fit forms of discourse that originated in Europe" (*2000 Years* 1). A consequence is a marginalization of American Indian oral tradition as primitive in character, thereby negating its status as literature; because of poor translation, its poetic nature is often completely overlooked.[44]

Thus, in order to apply the knowledge gained from Parry's and Lord's work on the processes of composition of oral narrative poetry, it is important to understand what their initial challenge was: to prove that the narratives they studied in the Greek, Germanic, or Serbo-Croatian languages were oral in character. As Parry and Lord articulated in oral theory, formulaic structure is the best criterion of oral composition. As this study shows with George Sword's narratives written in the Lakota language, oral theory is applicable to Lakota oral narrative and the generalities that Parry first

identified in his work are relevant.[45] The recurring phrases, themes, and story patterns vary, but it can be shown that they are consistent within each of George Sword's narratives and within the tradition as a whole. It can also be shown that a common type of structure emerges from the analysis of these narratives, which is analogous to Parry and Lord's work with oral narrative poetry.

In the end, through this type of analysis it may be concluded that these Lakota narratives are the products of oral composition; such analysis may be used to determine whether any given narrative in Lakota tradition is oral or not, clearing the way for further research in the application of oral theory to these Lakota narratives and further analyzing their formulaic construction and thematic structure.

DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

Key terms in this study are *formula* and *theme*. The terms *formula* and *formulaic* are defined as Parry defined them and are more fully discussed in the sections on Parry's work, as well as where they are used in the analyses. In Parry's Homeric studies *formula* is defined as "a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea" (*Making* 272). The term *formulaic* is that which demonstrates qualities that can be determined to be formula-like. The term *theme*, as used in this study, is derived from Parry's definition of *formula*; Lord, following Parry, defines groups of essential ideas in Parry's definition as "themes" of the poetry (Lord, *Singer* 68). Both formulas and themes aid a singer or narrator in rapid composition as he or she proceeds in song or narrative, moving quickly from idea to idea or theme to theme (Lord, *Singer* 124). Formulas in Lakota oral narratives will be discussed in chapter

4, the topic of themes in Lakota oral narration will be covered in chapter 6.

CONCLUSION

Chapter 1 presents the plan of study. Chapter 2 will cover practice and form. Chapter 3 describes George Sword's life. Chapters 4–6 present the results of my analysis of the texts. Chapter 7 provides a summary and discussion with regard to the cultural implications. The purpose of this study is to show the way in which oral narratives are composed among the Lakota people and to show the way in which their practice of oral narration determined the form that distinguishes it from other Native American narratives.