



BLACK LIGHTNING ANNOUNCEMENT

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LECTURE

Annotation. After you have collected your folklore, find seven of your items somewhere in print (not the archives). This means you have to go to the library – Main/Doe library, your own personal library, or bookstores. Find the proverb, riddle, or game *one time* in print. At the bottom of one of the pages, you say, “For another version of this Korean proverb, see . . .,” and then you put the name, John Lee, *Korean Proverbs I Have Always Enjoyed* (Seoul: Publisher, 1932, p. so and so. If you really want to be precise, you would give the version of the proverb on that page, so I can see if it is really a cognate. That is all there is to annotation. I would prefer not to receive all seven from Brunvand.

The Festival. We are now dealing with **festivals**, the most complex genre. Festivals happen all over the world. They express identity, costume, foodways, customs, legends, rites of passage, and many other elements. Many genres of folklore are captured in festivals, and each festival is associated with a particular region. I do not expect you to do festivals yourselves, because it is just too much to do. The festival runs the spectrum of folklore genres, from folk speech to folk tales and folk music.

Il Palio, Siense Festival. *Il Palio* in Siena, Italy, is the festival we will study, one I have worked on with a former student, Alessandro Falassi, who is now a professor in Siena. We have written a book together, *La Terra in Piazza*. Siena is a relatively small city of about 60,000 people about one hour from Florence. Next time I will show you a film made by the people of Siena about their festival.

Dynamics of the Race. For a detailed description, see

http://www.slowtrav.com/italy/notes/central/cristina_Palio.htm

Il Palio is a horse race in honor of the Virgin Mary in Siena held twice during the summer, July 2nd and August 16th. It takes about 90 seconds for ten horses to race clockwise three times around the *Piazza del Campo* (square). The horses are ridden bareback by jockeys wearing costumes representing the colors of their *contrada* (district or ward). They run three times around the track and the first one to cross the finish line is the winner.

Though thousands of dollars change hands, there is no betting. The winner receives a silk banner as a *Palio* (prize), and must spend a small fortune to pay for the victory. The losers receive the money, but they are sad and disgraced at having lost. The horse that comes in second is the horse that loses. The traditional enemy of the winner is the loser, even if he did not participate in the race.

Before each race, the horse is taken into the church to be blessed. During the days before the race, the jockeys are guarded night and day. They are not permitted to speak to anyone but their guards. During the race, the jockeys beat each other with whips made from calf phalluses. After the race, winners suck pacifiers, while losers take a purge or laxative.

A slide show of the festival and horse race is shown.

Siense Social Structure and Worldview **Centered on Totemic Animal Identification of the** **Contrada.**

The Priority of Center. Note the importance of “the middle” as a structural principle in the city, and descriptive of the Siense worldview. When three people are walking, the important and privileged person is in the middle. The race is in the middle of the city, and the best place to view the race is from the middle.

Contrada is a Small Country. The 17 *contrade* all have entrances, but no exits. You can only enter; if you are born into the *contrada*, you have an extended family for life. You are born into the *contrada* of your parents, baptized in your *contrada*'s baptismal font, taught your *contrada*'s allies and enemies at an early age, go to church in your *contrada*'s oratory, almost always marry within your *contrada*, and even your funeral is sponsored by the *contrada*, which mourns your passing as family.

You also have built-in enemies for life, and babies learn who their enemies are. The territory of each of the 17 *contrade* is delineated, and the only neutral space is the *Campo*, where the race is held. Each *contrada* has its own animal identity – Goose, Snail, Caterpillar, and so forth – which takes priority over their Sieneese identity. Each *contrada* also has its own costume, flag-throwing ritual, and patron saint. Only Owl bears the title *priora*, because it hosted the first meeting of the *contrada* heads (*priore*).

There are different relationships between the *contrade*: you have allies, friends, neutral, and enemies. On the saint's day, they will only march to their friends and allies, and they will exchange flags and so on.

Symbols of Contrada Unity. The flag is very important. When a baby is born, the *contrada* flag is put out and a little blue or pink emblem denotes boy or girl. Sieneese identity is only with their *contrada*, not with Siena.

Each *contrada* has its own fountain where you officially baptized into the *contrada*, even if you are born in the hospital.

The *Palio* banner has an image of the Virgin Mary and a representation of the 10 *contrade* (since only 10 run in any one race). At the top of the *Palio* banner is a plate with a sort of nub in the middle of it. Each *contrada* has a museum filled with costumes and *Palio* banners won in years past, where the Sieneese gather and socialize.

Rules of the Race: Limited Goods, Zero Sum Game.

Contrade on Banner. I expect you to know this: in any given race, there are ten *contrade* that run, all depicted on the *Palio* banner. The other seven who

did not run are guaranteed to run in the next year's race. They then draw lots from the ten to make up the other three, but they are not known until shortly before the race. They are separate cycles, in other words: the July 2nd cycle is separate from the August 16th cycle.

Flags and Fate. The flags of the ones that are picked are put in the middle of city hall where there is only one winner – in other words, the ten become one. A combination of fate and what humans can control is at work here. One of the things you cannot control is who the other three in the race will be, and another thing you cannot control is what horse you will get. Owners of horses will present their horses for consideration to the ten captains (*capitanos*).

What is Victory? The ideal victory is for you to come in first, obviously, and for your enemy to come in second, because if you win, your enemy automatically loses. It is kind of limited goods, zero sum game. If they come in second, it is also considered a loss, because they almost won but did not win. Therefore, if your enemy is in the game and he comes in second, it is a double loss: they lose because you won, and because they came in second.

I asked if you want your enemy to be one of the three that are drawn, and they said, "Absolutely not, because if the enemy is in the race, they ought to win, and then you take the laxative." They draw the other three, which makes up the ten. The first and the seventh just missed being in, and their enemies cheered. I asked why, and they said, "The first and the seventh just missed being in;" in other words, the three that are drawn are in, and the fourth one came in second -- that is why the enemy of that *contrada* cheered.

The horses are kept under guard to prevent people from drugging them.

The Horse in the Church. On the day of the *Palio*, the horse is taken into the church to be blessed, and it is considered good luck if the horse defecates in the church. They have their own theory that any horse brave enough to defecate in church should be a winner. Another theory is that it makes them lighter. My theory, of course (based on the symbolic equivalence of feces and money), is the horse defecating is a sign the *contrada* will spend money (the winners pay the losers), meaning they will win.

The *mangino* (lieutenant) steps in to emphasize that the horse has given a sign of victory.

“To go off San Marco” (the track) is a folk metaphor for *to go crazy*, and there are two dangerous curves that are padded. Before the race, there is a huge four-hour parade. Each *contrada* has its own flag twirler team.

Historic Aspects. At one time, Siena was a republic and their rival was Florence. In 1260, in the famous battle of Monte Perdi, they beat the Florentines. This date is still remembered. In 1555 the republic of Siena fell, and the people who helped the Sienese escape in 1555 are honored at the front of the parade each year.

Each *contrada* has its own costumes [*slides show an array of all male participants costumed à la harlequins or court jesters in elaborate short skirts (or shorts) and tights, in keeping with their historical reference*]. They each have their own drummer, who is also the choreographer for the flag throwers. The flag throwers’ routine is like ballet and acrobatics all at once.

The crowd roars as the *carrocio* (carriage) passes, representing the carriage, the great triumph in 1260 of Siena over Florence.

The whips (*nerbos*) used by the jockeys are made from the stretched phalluses of unweaned calves. I will have more to say about this later.

Partiti: Bribes to Influence the Race. There is a special machine that determines, by marbles falling into holes, the order of the horses. The jockeys are not friendly with one another; they are mercenaries. There is a thing called *partiti* (singular = *partito*) that I expect you to know. These are agreements. Before the race, the *mangini* make agreements one-on-one about possible arrangements for the *Palio*. For example, if you can block my enemy, 50,000 lira for you. If you use your *nerbo* on my enemy, I will give you 50,000 lira for every blow of the whip. You do not make *partiti* with your enemy. You also give your jockey discretionary money to use as he wishes.

The jockeys, who are not from Siena, must keep track of intra-*contrade* relations. They like to ride bareback so they can fall cleanly. Occasionally, a horse will win without a jockey. As soon as they

cross the finish line (which is also the starting line), the winners come out to carry their banner to the *contrada* clubhouse/museum. The *contrada* is reborn and the winning jockey is finished with his task.

Victory Dinner and Loser’s Hat. In September, you have a victory dinner in the *contrada*. The winners drink, and the losers take the purge. The *contrada* that has not won for the longest time wears the *cupia* (loser’s hat), which is a real disgrace. There is much unbelievably complex deal-making. The horse attends the victory dinner. [*We see slides of all-male participants feasting around a table; the horse stands in a festooned box behind the table*]. This event took place right near where Saint Catherine, a goose, was born.

Roulette Metaphor and the Balance between Fate and Human Control. On each of the saint’s days, you acknowledge your *contrada* (“this is for *Giraffa*”). They have a roulette wheel with marbles on which they place bets. This is an interesting metaphor, because the *Palio* race itself is like a roulette wheel. One of the *contradas* will own the city, and it only lasts for a year.

It shows the balance between fate, which determines which horse you get, the position in which your horse runs, and what you can control (the *partiti*). You can try to control the outcome of the race, and an individual jockey also can try to control the outcome of the race.

During the saint’s days, they have a *Palio de ragazzi* (*palio* of little boys) in which little kids run around the block. They know the rules, and they make little *partiti* – “some bubble gum for you if you. . .”

Phallogocentric Symbols in *Il Palio*. The symbolism here is obviously male. In the film the girls are clapping, but the boys are doing the running.

Adolescent Boys Hold Drums between Their Legs. These are adolescent boys who are practicing the drums by holding them between their legs. They practice this drumming a lot. Even the locations where they hold these practices are interesting, symbolically or architecturally.

The Pacifier and Rebirth. The winners are reborn and become babies. I was stunned when I saw these huge pacifiers: you are sucking the breast of the

mother. The *Palio* is in honor of the Virgin Mary. It is the virgin that you win. It is strange to see these guys beating drums and sucking pacifiers, running down the street.

She-Wolf With Twins: Symbol of Limited Goods.

All through Siena are pre-Christian statues of she-wolves with twins, one suckling, one not. They refused to be compared to Romulus and Remus in Rome. It is a symbol of limited goods. In terms of symbolism, we can also link this image with the motif of the *Madonna del latte*, which started in Siena. They were trying to humanize the Madonna and show her in the act of suckling.

Winning Madonna's Scarf. The scarf the Madonna wears on her head is called a *palio*, and you get the scarf of the virgin when you win. Remember the breastplate atop the *Palio*? I would say that is the breast. The city is masculine; the city has the *Mangia Tower*. They keep the *Palio* banner in their museum.

You Cannot Hold the Breast Forever. In their September victory dinner, they serve rice (symbol of fertility) on that plate, but the plate must go back to the city. In other words, you do not get to keep the breast forever.

The Phallic Whip. Remember that the whips are made from the stretched phalluses of unweaned (still nursing) calves. The symbolism, it seems to me, is explicit, though largely unconscious. It is either nursing with the pacifier or grabbing the headcovering of the Virgin Mary.

The Priest's Tale. The priest of the goose wears the colors of the goose under his priest garb. The *contrada* identity takes precedence over everything else. There is a story of the priest officiating at a funeral and entreating the deceased to beg God, "Please do not let Tower win."

*End of lecture. Notes prepared by Donna S. Jordan.
Edited by Lilia Gutnik.*