

jewellery, magic numbers, names of animals and so forth, call for the preparation of a detailed index. In the reviewer's opinion, such an index would certainly have made the book more easily accessible to those wishing to make specific use of it.

Throughout, we recognise the author's precise approach to the presentation of the text, a balance between the different versions, his explanations for each group and for the principal poetic structure, as well as a short but essential interpretation of names and customs. His remarks about parallel material in the Moslem culture are useful and testify to an often surprising cultural interaction. Lamentation no. 80 in particular, which the informant claims that she heard from a Moslem mourner, proves to what extent this factor should be taken into account.

The addition of musical notes to the songs and the correction of printing errors, together with a graphic improvement of the printed layout, would give an additional attractive quality to the next edition, which is certain to be forthcoming.

Issachar BEN-AMI
The Hebrew University
Jerusalem

JASON, HEDA. *Folktales of the Jews of Iraq. Tale-Types and Genres.* With a contribution on the folktale in written sources by Yitzhak Avishur. Studies in the History and Culture of Iraqi Jewry, no. 5. Or Yehuda/Israel: Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center, 1988. 145+37 pages. Bibliography, Hebrew section.

On the surface Jason's book seems to be another regional index of folktales, but in fact it is much more than that. The book is centered around two main sections, the first of which is an index of the tale-types of Jewish-Iraqi folktales collected in Israel between 1957 and 1983, and stored in the *Israel Folktale Archives* (IFA). This follows well-established paths of the study of folklore—the tale-type classification. The second section is the "Index of Ethnopoetic Genres," which includes definition and classification of the folktale genres developed by the author and which is new and of considerable theoretical interest.

Before approaching the main section of the book, we have to consider two introductions to it. The first, by the author, attempts to describe the history of the folk literature of Iraqi Jews as an outcome of their history and culture. This introduction hardly adds anything to our knowledge of the Jewish-Iraqi community beyond that which could be obtained from a survey in any good encyclopedia. There are also some errors: "As to Iraq, not even a single work of entertainment literature is known with certainty to have been compiled by Jews in Iraq proper until the 19th century. Whatever Jewish entertainment literature was read in Iraq, was composed in other countries" (13-14). This assumption contradicts all we know about the beginning of Hebrew narrative in the Middle Ages, and the central place occupied by Babylon (Iraq) in this process. In this context, one need only mention such early folktale compilations as the *Midrash of the Ten Commandments* and the *Alphabet of Ben-Sira* (DAN 1974, 1-32; YASSIF 1986). And it is hardly correct to say, "The [Babylonian] Talmud . . . carries some *belles lettres*, in which some folktales of various genres . . ." (14). The hundreds of tales included in the Babylonian Talmud and Midrashic literature make up one of the largest and most important corpus of folktales in late antiquity. The variety of its genres, themes and contexts do not deserve the description of "some

folktales of various genres.”

The second introduction is by Y. Avishur, the editor of the series of publications about Iraqi Jewry. It deals with “folk literature in early modern manuscripts and chapbook literature.” This is mainly a comprehensive bibliographical survey of the translation of folktales from the oral to the written medium. This process took place among Iraqi Jewry during the 19th century, and was conducted in three languages: Hebrew, Arabic and Aramaic. Of special importance is the full list of the folk-books of Iraqi Jews since the beginning of Jewish printing there. This list can be considered a cornerstone for any future study of the folk literature of the Jews of Iraq and of the complex relationship between oral and written texts. It is to be regretted, however, that no reference has been made to the vast literature on the folk-book in general, and the Jewish folk-book in particular (ZFATMAN 1983; YASSIF 1987a).

The main section of the book—the tale-type index of the oral folktale of the Iraqi Jews—is a real contribution to the study of Jewish folklore. Prior to this work, general indices have been published (by Jason herself and by others) to the Israel Folktale Archives collections, but there has never before been a full and comprehensive index of one Jewish community. Only such an index can provide reliable tools for the study of the themes, forms and meaning of the folktale repertoire of any single community and to conduct a comparative study with others.

Of basic importance in this classification are the “new” tale-types; e.g., those that did not appear in the regular Aarne-Thompson (AT) classification, or in other regional indices. Jason’s book gives a full description of each type. Unlike other works which only refer to the regular AT, these tale-types are important because they might, in certain conditions, represent the tales which were created originally within the Hebrew community of Iraq and could, therefore, reflect the history of its social problems and creativity. The “List of New Tale-Types” on pages 92 to 95 present this important material in full. It is to be regretted, however, that no attempt has been made to analyze the data of this list; e.g., the special themes that are reflected throughout this list, or the fact that most of the “new tale-types” belong to the genre of the folk-novella. The percentage of the novella among the other genres is 30.6 and it is, surprisingly enough, in accord with the percentage of the novella in the medieval Hebrew collections of tales (YASSIF 1984, 413–424).

There is only one serious omission in the index: the absence of a list of studies on each of the different tale-types. One of the most important contributions of the AT classification is the bibliography attached to each tale-type. The tale-types AT 503 (HASAN-ROKEM 1982, 69–95), AT 670*B (NOY 1971), AT 613 (ZFATMAN 1983, 160–167), AT 676*A (JASON 1981), AT 827 (NOY 1961), AT 873*A (SHENHAR 1982, 105–120) AT 938 (YASSIF 1987b), AT 980*A (NOY 1962) and many others also deal directly with Iraqi variants. Such a bibliography could have added considerably to the efficiency of the index.

In the center of the second section of the book stands the “Index of Ethnopoetic Genres” (90–190). This is the author’s original classification, previously presented in earlier publications (listed in the bibliography). The classification system is based on a division of the ethnopoetic genres into three categories: the fabulous mode, the realistic mode, and the symbolic mode. To the first category belong the genres of myth, legend, and fairy tale; to the “realistic” category, the novella, epics, rumor; and to the “symbolic,” numbskull tales, tall-tales, parables, jokes. I will not discuss the theoretical foundation of the system at any length, because it is not explained in the present book (it has appeared in earlier publications by the author). It should only be said here that, although it was published more than twenty years ago, the system

has not been accepted by students of folk-literature. The main reason is its exaggerated detailing. Any attempt to categorize a narrative text as, for example, "carnivalesque animal demonic legend" can only be done after a complicated analysis. The question is if the result, the bare, detailed generic definition, is worth such an effort. There is no question that this system is the outcome of a great intellectual effort based on strong theoretical foundations. It seems, however, that Jason did not pay sufficient attention to the usefulness or availability of the system for the student of folk-literature.

In Table 2.5 (131-140), the "Index of Tale-Types Numbers," the author presents the AT numbers as they are defined generically according to the system. This is one of the serious attempts I know of to look at the Aarne-Thompson tale-types classification from a generic point of view. Prior to this, the tendency has been to consider this system as the basis of generic classification (animal, magic tale, novella, joke—DÉGH 1972). In this index, Jason proves definitely that the Aarne-Thompson system is not based on sound generic foundations and cannot be used as a criterion of such a classification.

In the last part of her generic classification, the author collects under the title "Varia" all texts that have no place in the regular categories. Such categories as "non-narrative folk exegesis," "arithmetical puzzles," etc., are acceptable, but why have categories such as "texts from Arabic classical literature" or "tales recorded from a child" in a generic classification? These are *sources* and not generic categories. Most puzzling, however, is the category "Midrashic tales." It is not clear why the author decided to add this category. She gives thirteen texts (one percent of the whole corpus) that are of Talmudic-Midrashic origin. In fact, there are many more texts that originate in Rabbinic literature, but which are not included in her list; e.g., AT 910*M (Do not Believe a Gentile), AT 928 (Planting for the Next Generation), AT 930*H (Who Pairs People), AT 934*F (Charity Rescues from Death), and others. On the other hand, some texts listed here (Solomon demonstrates the wickedness of women, God demonstrates to David what a spider is good for) are not from Talmud-Midrashic sources, but are medieval. And why only a list of "Midrashic tales" and not one of "Medieval tales," too? A quick survey of the texts shows that there is a high percentage of Jewish tales with medieval origins among the contemporary folktales of the Jews of Iraq.

In spite of these few weaknesses, however, there can be no question that this book is a considerable contribution to the study of Jewish folklore. This is the first serious attempt to study the whole corpus of tales of any single Jewish community. I cannot but add my hope to that of the author that the present book will encourage similar works on other Jewish communities contained within Israel.

REFERENCES CITED:

DAN, Joseph

1974 *The Hebrew story in the Middle Ages*. Jerusalem: Keter Publishing (In Hebrew).

DÉGH, Linda

1972 Folk narrative. In *Folklore and Folklife*, ed. Richard M. Dorson. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 53-84.

HASAN-ROKEM, Galit

1982 *Proverbs in Israeli folk narratives: A structural semantic analysis*. Helsinki: FF Communications No. 232.

JASON, Heda

1981 The story of the sun mountain. *Studies on the history of Iraqi Jewry and their*

culture 1: 169–185 (In Hebrew).

NOY, DOV

- 1961 Simpleton's prayer brings down rain. *Mahanyim* 51: 34–45 (In Hebrew).
 1962 The architect Maimonides and the evil painter. *Mahanyim* 68: 100–110 (In Hebrew).
 1971 The Jewish versions of the 'Animal Languages' folktale (AT 670)—A typological-structural study. *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 22: 171–208.

SHENHAR, ALIZA

- 1982 *The folktale of the communities of Israel*. Tel-Aviv: Cherikover Publishing (In Hebrew).

YASSIF, ELI

- 1984 Sepher ha-Ma'asim: Character, origins and influence of a collection of tales from the time of the Tosaphists. *Tarbiz* 53: 409–429 (In Hebrew).
 1986 The beginning of Hebrew narrative in the East and its transition from the Middle Ages to modern times. *Pa'amim* 26: 53–70 (In Hebrew).
 1987a What is a folk-book? *International Folklore Review* 5: 20–27.
 1987b The man who never swore an oath: From Jewish to Israeli oicotype. *Fabula* 27: 216–236.

ZFATMAN, SARA

- 1983 *Yiddish narrative prose from its beginning to 'Shivhei Habesht' (1504–1814)*. Jerusalem: Doctoral Dissertation submitted to the Hebrew University (In Hebrew).

Eli YASSIF

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
 Beer-Sheva, Israel

OCEANIA

STEINEN, KARL VON DEN. *Marquesan Myths*. Edited by Jennifer Terrell. Translated by Marta Langridge. Canberra: Target Oceania/*The Journal of Pacific History*, 1988. xxii+222 pages. Maps, illustrations, index. Paper, no price given; ISBN 0-9595477-5-4.

Target Oceania, a research group at Australian National University, and *The Journal of Pacific History* are to be commended for their support for the reprinting of this important work on early Marquesan culture. Originally published in separate issues in *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* (VON DEN STEINEN, 1933–1934, 1934–1935), it is one of those elusive publications that shows its importance by its appearance, in whole or in part, in the works of scholars attempting an encyclopedic review of oceanic mythology (BECKWITH 1940; KIRTLEY 1971; LESSA 1961; LUOMALA 1949).

The importance of Von den Steinen's *Marquesan Myths* is best evaluated by considering the man and his times; and this importance is highlighted in a concise and able fashion by the editor of this particular volume (ix–xxii). In addition to *Marquesan Myths*, Von den Steinen also produced a shorter account of his Marquesan field work (VON DEN STEINEN 1898), and his masterpiece on Marquesan art and culture in three volumes (VON DEN STEINEN 1925–1928). Theoretically, Von den Steinen was a man of his times, especially as evidenced in his interpretation of his collected myths as the metaphorical treatment of such natural phenomena as the sun and the moon. As to be expected, when forcing a culture's myths into a preconceived pattern, there