

alternatively, "sets of parallel streams" (159). Traditions may also vary as to their position in society: central vs. peripheral (chapter 6. See also Shils 1975). Traditions of a society can also be considered in the context of their confrontation with the traditions of other societies (chapter 6). Every cultural and social unit, from the basic family cell and village community, to a whole state, will have its own assemblage of traditions and sub-traditions. Whether and how far these form a system and of what kind and complexity is a question which awaits further inquiry. (Example: To what extent are written and oral literary traditions in a village at a given time in contact? In what ways do they interact? With which larger frameworks do they interact? How do they do this and to what degree? How does this interaction work in the various genres which folk literature manifests itself in? What are the interrelations of the written and oral literary activities with folk literature (note: a sermon would be "oral" but not "folk")? How does folk literature "die" (283-286)—i.e., what are the processes that lead to the impoverishment and the transformation of a folk literary tradition?

These are just a few hints of the many potentialities that Shils' book offers. He has given us a general framework. Shils, being a theoretical sociologist, talks on the macro-level, on what R. Redfield called "great tradition." It is up to the sciences of tradition to put this framework to use and apply it to analyses of tradition on the level of the small social and cultural unit, the "small tradition," which is our field of inquiry.

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Heda Jason

Jerusalem / Israel

TAYLOR, ARCHER. *The Proverb and An Index to "The Proverb"*. Introduction and Bibliography by Wolfgang Mieder. Sprichwörterforschung Bd. 6. General Editor Wolfgang Mieder. 1931; reprint. Bern: Peter Lang, 1985. 223+105 pages. Paper, SFr. 66.—, ISBN 3-261-04049-1.

This second facsimile edition of *The Proverb* is one of the Peter Lang series of books on proverbs, several of them either written or edited by Wolfgang Mieder. In a labor of tribute to the widely respected teacher, scholar, and administrator Archer Taylor, Mieder provides a biographical sketch and a bibliography of Taylor's works. In the introduction Mieder hails *The Proverb* as a "classic study which even today represents the most comprehensive introduction to the various aspects of proverb studies" (v). The claim and the title of the book, however, may be misleading to readers of *Asian Folklore Studies* because the author has purposely excluded Oriental, African, Malay, Japanese, or Chinese proverbs on the grounds that they "involve such widely differing cultural spheres and have in general so little connection with European proverbs . . ."

(Preface). The title should have been something like: "The English Proverb with its Classical and European Backgrounds." Probably the original publishers preferred the simpler title.

Once the range of the proverbs studied has been accepted, one can indeed enjoy this journey with a scholar's mind as he roams over the origins, content and style of proverbs and continues with another section on proverbial phrases, Wellerisms, and Proverbial Comparisons. When the journey is over, he simply stops with one of his typical observations, in which he often first states, then qualifies or retracts: "The colloquial comparison *as brown as a berry* is as old as the twelfth century, and although some berries are brown, its appropriateness seems rather doubtful" (223).

The following quotations show Taylor's characteristic method much better: "The rhetorical device of connecting two abstract ideas in terms of a family relationship appears to spring originally from Greek personifications of abstract qualities" (145), but he concludes: "The actual contribution made by the formula to the traditional proverbial stock is slight: *Necessity is the mother of invention*, which is actually one of the earliest recorded instances of the type, stands almost alone except for *The thought is father to the deed*" (148). Another example of Taylor's style is: "Although the principle involved in this explanation is correct, the absence of a direct connection between the two phrases and the readiness with which the second could have developed independently (as in English) make the explanation improbable" (155).

Such a genial, common sense approach colors Taylor's discussions throughout the book, beginning with the definition of a proverb as "a saying current among folk" and maintaining that "an incommunicable quality tells us this sentence is proverbial and that one is not" (3). Such statements seem less than scholarly, but the point is that Taylor does not go further than evidence will allow. He does not try to furnish an explanation or theory out of his imagination where the facts do not support it. This is a refreshing approach and one that opens up discussion instead of closing it or narrowing it to small, contested private opinions.

Throughout the book Taylor reveals new areas of study by presenting what he has found and what remains to be settled. In this regard the book is indeed not only an introduction to various aspects of the proverbs, but is also a guide to the frame of mind one should have in approaching this discipline. After long study one is tempted to propose a theory in order to have something to publish or in even less stressing circumstances, to have an answer for inquiring students. Caught by a kind of occupational hazard, English teachers in Japan tend to look for tidy explanations of proverbs and proverbial phrases, not to mention word phrases. For example, one textbook explanation of a "Hercules fence" (strong, wide-mesh wire fence) said it was a fence made of stones (heavy, therefore presumably lifted by a Hercules?). In these situations the imagination is quick to supply what research cannot. To have such a respected scholar refrain from making dazzling conclusions and being content with the plain facts is something to make one's practice and pass on to Graduate students.

There are conclusions, however. Taylor makes judgments and observations in the course of his discussions. Gradually they gather a cumulative force, bringing about a recognition of his full thought. For example after his brief definition of a proverb, he provides another way of recognizing one. "A passage, when it varies grammatically or syntactically from ordinary usage or from the usage of the context, can be safely declared to be proverbial" (7). And in the following quotation we can see how he goes from his conclusions to call for further study: "Many have sought to identify national or local traits in proverbs and to use them in describing and defining national or racial temperament. Perhaps no side of proverbial study has been prosecuted so

long and so vigorously, but the results are insignificant. / All the endeavors are fruitless and unavailing. Before they are likely to attain useful results we must have exhaustive studies of the history and distribution of individual proverbs" (164-165).

The Index provides not only a listing of where the proverbs might be found in the book but also references to studies of that particular proverb. (Unfortunately this list has not been brought up to date. New references would have added to the usefulness of this book.) The alphabetical listing of the proverbs devotes pp. 11-69 to English proverbs, pp. 73-87 to German proverbs, and pp. 89-100 to Latin proverbs. Other languages listed are: Bohemian, Danish, Dutch, French, Greek, Icelandic, Italian, Norwegian, Polish, Spanish, and Swedish. Since the emphasis is on the English proverb, the proportion is not unbalanced. In Taylor's methodology Latin and German proverb studies are important for conclusions regarding origin or meaning or style of the English proverbs. (For example Taylor shows that *The exception proves the rule* should mean "the exception tests the rule" since the Latin reads *Exceptio probat regulam* (78).) One of the virtues of the book is the importance it gives to the use of several languages in research. In fact one gets the impression that a study of English proverbs is liable to be fraught with inaccuracies unless one knows Latin and German and some other European languages.

Although Taylor presents an overview of English proverb studies, a point made repeatedly is the need for detailed studies of individual proverbs. A bibliography of Taylor's works, provided by Mieder, shows what Taylor himself has done in this line after *The Proverb* was written, but otherwise the book is a reprinting of the original 1931 edition with the addition of the Index. Since fifty-four years have passed, at least an article, if not a short book, on what has transpired since then would have been welcome. I am thinking of Schocken's reprint of E. Franklin Frazier's *The Negro Church in America* to which was added *The Black Church Since Frazier* by C. Eric Lincoln. Lincoln's work enhanced the value of Frazier's study.

At first the fact of mere facsimile reprinting disappointed me and it took me a while to appreciate the virtues of Archer Taylor's work. But the book grows on you and you begin to enjoy the personality of the author and the way he works. This book would be fun to use in a Graduate Methodology class both for assignments and for evaluating proffered research. In fact anyone in the field or anyone interested in language might well profit from Taylor's conclusions and caveats.

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David R. Mayer
Nanzan University
Nagoya / Japan

JAPAN

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