

on certain aspects of the ritual, as e.g. the role of fire. These purely technical shortcomings, however, do not essentially detract from the value of Koubi's work. The book has much to offer even to readers who might not expect to find material for their work in Sulawesi.

Peter Knecht

#### ISRAEL

SCHWARZBAUM, HAIM. *The Mishle Shu'alim (Fox Fables) of Rabbi Berechiah Ha-Nakdan: A Study in Comparative Folklore and Fable Lore*. Kiron, Israel: Institute for Jewish and Arab Folklore Research, 1979. Lv+658 pp. Bibliography, tables of narrative types and narrative motifs, general index.

With the death of Haim Schwarzbaum, international folklore lost one of its most erudite scholars. This volume, despite its somewhat limited title, is a *tour de force* on the fable and fable scholarship in Europe, the Middle East, and South Asia, with reference to scholarship and distributional data elsewhere as well. The core of the volume consists of a detailed analysis of (with voluminous annotations on) a single Medieval Hebrew collection of Fables, titled the *Mishle Shu'alim* (Fox Fables). Rabbi Berechiah Ha-Nakdan, sometime in the twelfth or thirteenth century, assembled an anthology of fables which were current in the European tradition. These fables, which he gathered from a wide variety of sources, were "judaicised" by being purged of their mythological and "pagan" elements and other non-Jewish patterns and rewritten in an elegant Hebrew rhymed prose. The book has been widely cited by subsequent scholars and also has been translated into a number of other languages, including an elegant translation into English by Moses Hadas (1967). The work provides the most extensive corpus of Medieval Hebrew fables available for analysis. The term "fox fables" in the title is artificially limiting, as the term had become a designation for fables in general by the time of R. Berechiah. While many of the fables in the collection do, indeed, have the fox as a character, many do not include him, and a number have no animals at all involved.

Each of the 118 chapters in the main text takes a single fable from this collection for analysis. Many of these chapters would serve as major articles in their own right. Each consists of an extended annotation of the fable tracing its history through the extant literature and discussing its geographical distribution. The geographic references (although especially strong on the Arabic tradition) range from Spain to Korea and Burma, and from Sweden and Siberia to sub-Saharan Africa, with a few references on the spread to the New World of European versions. The historical analysis takes the fable from R. Berechiah and his *Mishle Shu'alim* and other Medieval European versions through Latin versions to the Aesopic tradition, and ultimately, to the ancient Near East, where analogs for many are found in Sumerian and other early texts. The line of reasoning is impressive and convincing. The ties between the various fable traditions which are demonstrated in this book are fascinating, and would, alone, make this work a valuable contribution to the literature on the fable.

The fifty five pages of the introduction set the collection in its cultural and historical context and also provide a general theory of the fable. The analysis of the Medieval fable tradition is especially well done, demonstrating the many lines of interaction between the various European traditions and their great influence on each

other. The book concludes with a bibliography of over 400 items on the fable and indexes of the book by Tale Types and Motif, as well as a voluminous general index.

Reading this book is a tour through the mind of a dedicated and truly gifted folklorist. While Schwarzbaum never completed formal university training and never held an academic position, but rather conducted his writing and research as an act of love beyond his full-time employment in totally unrelated work, he was one of the greatest comparative folklorists of our time. He worked as an amateur in the best sense of the word. This work will long serve as a reference point for future scholarship on the fable and as a landmark in comparative folklore studies. The tremendous breadth and depth of knowledge which Schwarzbaum displayed in *The Mishle Shu'alim* is of a scope which has seldom been attained in folklore studies, or in any other discipline.

REFERENCE CITED:

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1967 *Fables of a Jewish Aesop* (translated from the Fox Fables of Berechiah Ha-Nakdan). New York: Columbia University Press.

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