

REFERENCES CITED

AARNE, Antti and Stith THOMPSON

1961 *The types of the folktale: A classification and bibliography*. FF Communications 184. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia.

EL-SHAMY, Hasan

1976 Behaviorism and the text. In *Folklore today: A festschrift for Richard M. Dorson*, Linda Dégh et al., eds., 145–60. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

1980 *Folktales of Egypt: Collected, translated and edited with Middle Eastern and African parallels*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

THOMPSON, Stith

1955-58 *Motif index of folk-literature*. 6 vols. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Hasan EL-SHAMY
Indiana University
Bloomington, Indiana

AMERICAS

REICHEL-DOLMATOFF, GERARDO. *Yuruparí: Studies of an Amazonian Foundation Myth*. Cambridge, Mass.: Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard University, 1995. xxxviii + 300 pages. Photographs, summary, bibliography, index. Cloth US\$24.95; ISBN 0-945454-08-2

This book consists of four parts: a foreword by Lawrence E. Sullivan; an introduction that reflects on the author's research among the Tukanoan in the Vaupés territory in southeastern Colombia; and two chapters that present and analyze ethnographic data about the Yuruparí. The book is undoubtedly a product of indefatigable field research.

What makes a distinguished artisan distinguished are his established techniques for manufacturing products that will remain valuable over time. Such manufacturing techniques are normally supported by industrial secrets. As is commonly known, Edmund Leach once compared anthropology to art. An anthropologist's work bears a close parallel to that of an artisan. Leach also points out, in a different context, that because a first-rate monograph written by an anthropologist of the first order is normally published only as a finished product, the book by itself seldom reveals the secrets of the author's mastery with words.

We cannot, of course, ignore the recent influence of the anthropological critique in writing monographs, but it is unlikely that the privileged position of the ethnographer will quickly change even if his or her ethnographic data and descriptions are exposed to many persistent and critical checks. In view of this situation, *Yuruparí* is an exceptional book about the analysis of myths and methods for studying them. The book is written by a first-class anthropologist, the late Dr. Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff, and demonstrates the author's "artisan-ship," from collecting oral traditions to translating and analyzing them.

As soon as we set foot in Reichel-Dolmatoff's atelier for myth analysis by reading this book, we are overwhelmed by the items in our master's toolbox; this includes Tukanoan dictionaries, countless recorded tapes, exceptional linguistic ability, and a profound knowledge of the fauna and flora of the Amazonian rain forest. The author summarized the foundations for his own studies as follows:

The only sound basis for an acceptable analysis of oral tradition referring to the Yuruparí complex is to be found in texts that have been tape recorded in the field and commented on in detail by the Indian themselves. These texts must be recorded in their original languages.... I myself have [collected] more than four hundred texts without any difficulties.... The difficult part, of course, is the acquisition of the necessary linguistic competence. (xxx)

The Tukanoans, needless to say, practice a "linguistic exogamy" that results in several languages being used even within the family. So it is not enough to acquire knowledge of only one language if an anthropologist wants to study the Tukanoan oral tradition. Moreover, as the oral tradition consists of a series of verbal expressions, the painstaking work of compiling thorough dictionaries to consult is also necessary. Since Reichel-Dolmatoff had to learn each of the Tukanoan languages and make dictionaries for them it is not hard to imagine how much effort the author must have put into preparing this book.

The tales of Yuruparí seem very simple if we read them superficially, but a closer look shows that they contain a great deal of data with ethnographic value. The problem therefore is how to read this oral tradition. The Yuruparí complex, as the author himself notes, is related to "a wide range of aboriginal customs and beliefs" (xxv). In other words, it is concerned with almost every aspect of their daily life. Although the Yuruparí story does not seem complicated, every word in it has profound meaning. For example, a simple phrase in the Yuruparí, "All the girls went to eat ants" must be understood, according to Reichel-Dolmatoff, in the following way: "Menstruating women are socially expected to 'eat ants' because the odor and flavor of toasted ants are thought to be sexually stimulating.... Since the girls in the text had already reached puberty.... this also explains why dry-toasted ant would be an important item in ritual food exchanges between exogamous units" (18). This interpretation, of course, is completely different from what the phrase means literally. This kind of commentary about almost every sentence—sometimes about a word—will show readers the richness of Tukanoan imagery that supports their deeply symbolic world with metaphors and metonymies and, conversely, at the same time is supported by it.

How did the author translate and interpret the Yuruparí? The author reveals his unique methods and skills in this book. His immutable law is to stick to the original words because he is convinced that "these are not 'stories' but important expressions of Tukanoan thought" (xxxiv). It is not enough, therefore, to offer a simple translation of the Tukanoan oral tradition to grasp their way of thinking. As the author indicates, "literal translation often leads to apparently incoherent results, which only begin to make sense after one has become aware of the multitude of associations involved" (xxxv). The most important part of Reichel-Dolmatoff's work, therefore, is how to put the original text into English without distorting its rich symbolic expressions.

The author clearly distinguishes the symbolism used by his informants and their comments about it. He remarks that the informant's "multilingualism supplied the lexical basis, but the task of identifying the metaphors and of tracing semantic fields fell to me" (xxxii). He intends to draw the main theme of the Yuruparí by compiling the meanings of the words and commentaries about the metaphors and metonymies provided by his informants as if he were interpreting a medieval poem. He finally declares in a decisive tone that "the analysis of the texts is based upon my own conclusions" (xxxii). This, certainly, means the following: Reichel-Dolmatoff joined together the informants' commentaries according to lexical and semantic links. This does not mean, however, that the symbolism and the system of meanings expressed by the author are isolated from the Tukanoans who made commentaries. Viewed from another angle, the author separates the commentaries of the Tukanoans from

his own interpretations, and by this procedure he was able to revise superficial interpretations (without adhering exclusively to one) by consulting their commentaries as ethnographic data.

So it is not surprising when he confesses that “my readings of these myths would be different now, not only because of my advanced linguistic proficiency but also because of my greater knowledge of the cultural context” (xxv). In other words, he believes that the interpretation should be modified according to the refinement of the tools and skills available to analyze the oral tradition. We can appreciate the author’s confidence in his work as the characteristic of an artisan, and the result of more than fifty years’ residence in Colombia carrying out anthropological research. Such self-assurance is expressed in several epigrams about Tukanoan studies that are recorded in the book, especially in the Introduction; it appears as if he were leaving his last testament to the next generation.

The author compares the Tukanoan oral tradition to a “treasure house” (xix). If this is the case, the problem is how to get the treasure out of it. Reichel-Dolmatoff’s contribution may be illustrated by pursuing his analogy of the worldwide motif of the treasure house, which in most versions is protected by a man-eating monster that turns out to be killed by a clever hero after the deaths of other challengers. Using this well-known motif as an analogy, we can identify what Reichel-Dolmatoff’s great achievements were: he clarified the structure of the treasure house; he gave us a general understanding of the man-eating monster’s characteristics that can be used to destroy it; and he led us to the entrance of the house so that we can find the treasure. Reichel-Dolmatoff was not, of course, eaten by the monster; he died leaving us an unrivaled treasure like this book, the result of his long and patient devotion to Tukanoan studies. We must thank our great anthropologist and devise ways to use his rich legacy for future study.

KATO Takahiro
 Mie University
 Tsu, Mie Prefecture, Japan

TEIWES, HELGA. *Hopi Basket Weaving: Artistry in Natural Fibers*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1996. xxvi + 200 pages. Figures and color plates, glossary, bibliography, index. Cloth US\$45.00; ISBN 0-8165-1613-8. Paper US\$19.95; ISBN 0-8165-1615-4.

The author of *Hopi Basket Weaving: Artistry in Natural Fibers* is a German-born professional photographer who has worked for the Arizona State Museum since 1966. Both as part of her work and as a personal pursuit, she has been documenting the life of the southwestern Indians. She dedicated the book to Professor Emil W. Haurly, with whom she once worked at the Hohokam site in Snaketown, south of Phoenix, and whose financial support of the museum allowed the author to document Hopi basketmaking and write this book.

The book consists of excellent photographs taken by the author. Many of the photos are portraits of Hopi basketmakers that not only accurately illustrate the contents of the accompanying text about technical facts (e.g., how to split yucca leaves and coil a bundle of the galacta grass with them) but also convey abstract ideas such as the respect for plants and the closeness to nature that the basketmakers and the author “cherish.” Teiwes carefully records with pen and camera Hopi basket weaving to show and interpret for us what she has witnessed among the Hopi.

The pages about basketmaking on Second and Third Mesa will be of interest to readers. Besides technical matters, the author also tells us about the basketmakers’ daily lives, personal