RESPONSES

A Response to Jason's Review

Hasan El-Shamy's *Folk traditions of the Arab World: A guide to motif classification,* 2 vols. Indiana University Press, 1995, (henceforth: *GMC-A*) was reviewed in *Asian Folklore Studies* (1996, vol. 55: 184–86). The reviewer, Professor Heda Jason, raised a number of issues and expressed opinions on a variety of matters dealing mostly with editorial aspects of the work; many of these are impressionistic and require clarification. First, a few general facts need to be presented.

To start, *GMC-A,* as its title specifies, is designated as a *guide* that offers primarily relevant themes and concepts to be applied toward generating a full fledged motif-index, and secondarily "*samples* of references" (1, xiii—emphasis appears in the original). Producing a complete motif-index for intricate and diverse social and cultural systems, as is the case with the Arab World, requires intensive work on the part of many trained researchers and indexers—a condition beyond what has been available to the present writer. Scholars from folklore and related disciplines are expected to apply these motifs to data under investigation, and then make their findings available to other users. These findings would be integrated in new editions of the *GMC-A* (or made accessible to users through other means). Thompson's Motif Index, first published between 1932 and 1936, was refined and augmented in this manner (THOMPSON 1955–1958, 1, 26). As of today, some additional 10,000 motifs have been generated and designated for the forthcoming revision of *GMC-A.*

Second, *GMC-A* is computer generated and meant to be made available to users on floppy disks and CD-ROM. In its present format, it represents the outcome of innumerable trial and error attempts by the author to address certain printing demands, within the limitations imposed by computer technology available to him at various stages between 1986 and 1994; these limitations apply to the computer itself (memory, speed, size of hard disk, etc.), and word processing programs (or databases), in conjunction with the varying capabilities of printers for personal computers in generating foreign language characters (e.g., under-dotted letters, long vowels, glottal stops). The goal was to produce a *single* computer file for the entire work, which would allow users to electronically "search" for words or characters, and easily find them. During the 1980s, this goal was not easily attainable (e.g., a file that was about 15–20 pages long proved to be beyond the capacity of the personal computer used, and had to be shortened); today, especially with CD-ROM technology, it is a much easier undertaking (p. 1, xvii n. 27).

Third, *GMC-A* was submitted as a "camera ready copy" to Indiana University Press: the manuscript was typed, typeset with printing font selected and applied, formatted, and printed as it currently stands by El-Shamy (at a considerable financial cost incurred by him personally). The size of the print and the length of a page were determined by the production department at the publisher, which is also responsible for other features of the printed work (jacket design, paper quality, etc.). Certain financial conditions (including the fact that publishing reference works is not a profit-making undertaking) were considered. An attempt to have the work published jointly with a certain Arab folklore center was not successful.

With reference to "errors," it is the author's view that one error in an academic work is one too many; regrettably, there are some in *GMC-A.* However, even with more personnel

and greater care than El-Shamy could ever muster, such mistakes do occur. Thompson's Motif Index contains hundreds; some of these are stylistic: "A142.... Archiv f. d. Studium d. neueren Sprachen..."; "B81.2.... Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen..."; "H331.1.5.... Archiv *fur* das Studium der neueren Sprachen...." Others are grammatical oversights: "R153, Parents rescue*s* child" (Thompson 1955–1958, 5, 283—emphasis added). In spite of half a century of scrutiny, similar oversights are found in the Type Index (e.g., "2014, Chains Involving *Contraditions* [it should read *Contradictions*] or Extremes" (emphasis added, AARNE and THOMPSON 1961). The present writer appreciates the corrections provided by the reviewer. Yet, it may be pointed out that her lead example where she writes *afrit* for `afrit; page xxi, l .32" (JASON 1996, 185) demonstrates the degree of difficulty in dealing with this sort of intricate materials, especially when done on a larger scale. Her quote is incorrect and should be: "(ogre, ogress, giant, afrit, etc.)" (EL-SHAMY 1995, 1, xxi). The word "*afrit*"—as cited by the reviewer—is not a wrong spelling of "`afrit"; the word "afrit"—unitalicized—is English (see *Webster's new world dictionary*, 1970), and is used here and elsewhere in *GMC-A* for economy (as will be explained below); had it been Arabic, it would have been italicized and given as: "*ćafrît* (classical: *ćifrît*)." The error in the reviewer's quote also exemplifies the confusion caused by the use of single quotation marks (`, and ') in lieu of Arabic letters, (see my discussion of "ć" below).

   With these facts in mind, the validity of some of the issues raised by Jason may be addressed. These will be grouped into two categories: (I) general issues on formal, stylistic, and procedural matters, and (II) the risks associated with dealing with "religion" and quasi religious beliefs within the context of folklore.

I. GENERAL ISSUES
Issue one
"The reviewer found it somewhat disturbing that the list of motifs does not describe a specific body of texts, but *draws only from the Arabic folktale*" (JASON 1996, 185, [emphasis added]).

   This finding by the reviewer is incorrect in two aspects: language and genre. The impression that *GMC-A* draws "*only from the Arabic*" sources, should be judged in light of the fact that the inclusion of social groups speaking languages other than Arabic is pointed out in the work's introduction (EL-SHAMY 1995, 1, xv); it is also a matter of research orientation required by the demographic composition of the "Arab World." Thus, under the heading "Demographic Inclusiveness," it was stated:

> [I]t is vital to include the traditions of "ethnic" groups who speak languages other than Arabic but who share with their neighbors and/or compatriots religion, world view, family structure, aesthetic values, etc. Therefore, to exclude, for example, Nubian-speaking groups in Egypt and the Sudan, while including Malki Arabs who have lived in their midst for centuries, would seriously limit the understanding of the culture of the area as a whole." (EL-SHAMY 1988a, 155; 1988d)

The non-Arabic sources treated include Berber (Kabyle, Siwi, etc.), Nubian (Fâdidchi, Kunûzi), Neo-Aramaic, Somali, S̲h̲awri, and Swahili. Thus, the assertion that only Arabic groups are drawn from is inaccurate.

   Similarly, the assertion that the work drew from *only folktales,* should be evaluated with reference to the following sources cited in the Bibliography: "ćAbd-al-Quddûs, Iḥsân: "[Forty-one short stories]"; ćIdwî (al-) al-Ḥamzâwî, Ḥasan: [of death and dying]; Amîn, Aḥmad: "(Dictionary of Egyptian Customs, Traditions and Expressions)"; Azraqî (al-), Ibrâhîm: "[...] Medicine and Wisdom"; Badawî, Aḥmad, (ed.), "Herodotus Speaks of Egypt"; Ibn-Kathîr, Ismâ ćîl Ibn-ćUmar: [History and beliefs]; Haykal, Muḥammd Ḥusayn:

"[Autobiographical novel]"; Ḥusayn, Ṭâhâ: (Tree of Misery), "[Novel]"; Khalîfah, Muḥammad ¿Abd-al-Ẓâhir: "(The Book of Isthmian-life: from Death to Resurrection)"; Maḥfûẓ, Nagîb: "[Autobiographical novel]"; Shamy (el-), Hasan: "*Belief Characters* as Anthropomorphic Psychosocial Realities"; Taymûr, Aḥmad: "(Vernacular Proverbs)"; Walker, John and ¿Abd-al-Raḥmân Ismâ¿îl: "Old Wives Medicine." None of these primary data sources—clearly labeled and identified—is a folktale collection. Additionally, this assertion by the reviewer should be considered in light of her own observation:

> From the titles of the works listed in the bibliography... it is *not always clear whether or not a work is a tale collection,* and thus the number of collections examined is unclear. Nor are we informed how many texts a collection contains...." (JASON 1996, 185; emphasis added)

Yet, contradicting her own remark, she emphatically presents her impression that the work "draws only from the [...] folktale", and that this presumed quality is "disturbing" to her. Also based on this inaccurate impression of El-Shamy's dealing only with tale collections is the reviewer's view that he does not inform readers of the exact "number of collections examined" and "how many texts a collection contains." The problem with this expectation is that archival materials—especially when idiosyncratically "classified" by nonspecialists (EL-SHAMY 1980, xlii; 1997, 238–40) and kept away from the general public, field reports, novels, and similar depositories of data do not lend themselves readily to this kind of numerical count of their contents. Besides, this type of information, though it may be significant in other contexts, is of little relevance for a "Guide to Motif Classification" (also compare "mathematical fallacy" below). One situation where such data is relevant (and *may* have provided a pattern for the reviewer) is El-Shamy's evaluation of the data for Ursula Nowak's tale-type system where he wrote:

> Recurrence is a key criterion according to which a narrative is to be considered a part of tradition and therefore deserving of a type number. A large number of Nowak's types are based on a single occurrence of a text. Of the first 50 tale types, 29 cite no variants. The entire work has an average of 1.8 cited renditions per tale-type. Such a relatively limited number of texts leads to problems, particularly in granting the status of traditionality and representativeness to tales which might in fact be atypical. (EL-SHAMY 1988a, 157)

Clearly, this limitation in Nowak's work is inapplicable to data in *GMC-A*. Attention was paid to more practical matters such as comparing the contents of published collections against the unpublished academic manuscripts (e.g., "Sâ¿î 1970" and "Sâ¿î 1974," al-Sârîs 1972 and al-Sârîs 1984, etc.), or noting numbering/pagination errors so as to spare the reader some trouble (e.g., A1411.1... "SYRIA:- Sâ¿î 243–55 No. 54[+1]").

Issue Two
"One also wishes for more information of substance: approximately 43% of the entries carry no reference to an Arabic text. Some of such "empty" entries are headings and others are not" (JASON 1996, 185).

I am not clear as to what the reviewer means by "substance." Every motif, especially the newly developed, constitutes a substantial contribution to the processes of identifying with some specificity the diverse aspects of traditions; this is also true of new motifs that may seem to duplicate already existing ones. For example, new Motif P529.4§, "*muḥallil*-marriage: legal

device for reinstating thrice-divorced wife" is a subdivision of new Motif P529§, "Legal aspects of marriage and divorce." Thompson's Motif: T156, "Marriage for a night to evade law" (to which El-Shamy added: "[(*muḥallil*)]"), is a subdivision of Motif T150, "Happenings at weddings." The reference provided by Thompson: "Chauvin V 45 No. 18 n. 1," refers to the story of "`Alâ' al-Dîn Abou al-shâmât" in which the theme of the motif does NOT occur as a happening at a wedding, but as a purely "legal aspect" of planning for marriage and divorce; in this instance, a father of a young woman thrice divorced by her paternal-cousin husband, engages the hero for "marriage for a night" to his daughter (ANONYMOUS n.d., 147–81). The new subdivision also includes a companion motif necessary for understanding the first (T156): P0529.3§, "Third divorce between man and same wife irrevocable." Thus, compared to Thompson's T156, El-Shamy's new motif is more accurate, more systemic, and more substantial as well. Similarly, Thompson's Motif J2212.2, "Burial in old grave to deceive angel," is further clarified and placed within a broader system through the new Motifs: A679§, "Interrogative angels (Nâkir and Nakîr, Munkir and Nakrân, etc.) question the dead at time of burial"; and E751.0.3§, "Tomb-judgment: by interrogative angels. It precedes resurrection"; the latter motif is given as a subdivision of Thompson's "empty" entry—without a reference: E751, "Souls at Judgment Day." Another such "empty" motif is E545.19, "Addressing the dead" (see EL-SHAMY 1980, 162, 281–82, no. 36); it is however linked to the wider belief system by comparing it to the new Motif V66.0.1§, "Instructing the dead before burial as to how to answer interrogative angels (*talqîn*, 'prompting')" (EL-SHAMY 1995). These contributions constitute more than mere compiling of preexisting data by a "compiler."

The reviewer's finding that about 43% of the entries are "empty," may be interpreted to mean that 57% of the entries are *full* (not a low rate for mere "*samples*"). Yet, her application of the percentile argument here tends to constitute an illusion of precision, or what may be labeled a "mathematical fallacy." Although the present writer used percentages to argue against abandoning the Aarne-Thompson tale-type indexing *system* as a means for identifying Arab tales, the argument was applied to a different situation. It was, thus, stated:

> Tales which correspond to AaTh typology…represent more than 78% of [Ursula] Nowak's 495 types. (The ratio would be still greater if belief legends—which are not part of the AaTh typology—were excluded). The need for an independent classificatory schema, such as the one Nowak adopts, is thereby diminished considerably. (EL-SHAMY 1988a, 158)

The validity of the reviewer's figures may be assessed with reference to the following sequence from Thompson's Motif-Index:
F230. Appearance of fairies.
F231. Fairy's limbs.
F231.1. Fairy's arms.
F231.1.1. Fairy's iron arms. Breton: Sébillot…." (THOMPSON 1955–1958).

In this cluster of motifs from Thompson's work, only the fourth item is referenced: the percentage of referenced entries is only 25%, the unreferenced (or "empty") is 75%. Filling those "empty" reference-spaces would not have been a difficult task: consider the following sequence from El-Shamy's *GMC-A:*
A131.3, Deity with animal's head.
A131.3.1, Deity with cat's head.
A131.3.1.1§, Bast: goddess with cat's head. □ *NLV,* EGYPT:-Ions 45 94 103…."
(EL-SHAMY 1995)
The percentage of referenced entries is only 33%; yet, listing "Ions 45…" as a reference

for the second item (Motif A131.3.1) would have been both logical and correct; it also would have doubled the percentile value to 66%. This increment would have been also achieved by copying the reference given by Thompson for that motif: "Irish myth: Cross." However, such an addition (applied to hundreds of motifs) would have further taxed the computer's capacity, and—more importantly—inflated the size of the manuscript with redundant data, and lowered its chances for publication. Sometimes the presence or absence of a single "pixel" (e.g., the letter "t" made into "T" or vice versa) can result in an expansion (or a reduction) of a computer-file by *several pages* ("domino-effect"); furthermore, it can cause radical alterations in a manuscript's format (page and chapter sizes, pagination, etc.). Also, additions of key words to a "motif title" require additions to the alphabetical index (Volume 2); i.e., adding a phrase containing three major words requires adding three lines in Volume 2. This explanation is not an attempt to blame the computer for my errors. Length (size) and cost have always been matters of concern for academic presses. The present writer, for example, had to shorten the manuscript for *Folktales of Egypt* (University of Chicago Press, 1980) by eighty-thousand (80,000) words (all original data) as a non-negotiable condition to its publication (see EL-SHAMY 1995 1, 461). Similarly, El-Shamy's monograph *Brother and sister: Type 872** .... (EL-SHAMY 1979) was accepted for publication in *Fabula* provided the manuscript be cut to the length of an article.

Thus, the reviewer's comment on the empty entries is a restating of what the author has already "admitted." Hopefully, these spaces will be filled during the coming years.

Issue three
Listing what she sees as problems in El-Shamy's expansion of the motif-system, Jason noted: "This [expansion] the compiler does without indicating whether a reference to a motif is taken from folk literature or from the description of a custom" (JASON 1996, 185).

Being able to infer the generic affiliation of a reference requires some knowledge of the nature of the resources (bibliography). An entry such as "A844.2, Earth supported by bull. □ *NLV,* EGYPT:- N. Maḥfûẓ I 75" should be treated by those who are not familiar with the "sample" of references cited for this case as follows:

1. In the "Bibliography" under Maḥfûẓ, N., the following can be found:
"Maḥfûẓ, Nagîb. I: *Bayna al-Qaṣrayn;* II: *Qaṣr al-Shawq;* III: *al-Sukkariyyah* [Autobiographical novel]. Cairo, 3rd Printing, 1960." (EL-SHAMY 1995 1, 453).

2. The source is characterized by El-Shamy as an "[Autobiographical novel]"; this trait is applicable to the contents of all three volumes.

3. If additional information is needed, the novel—preferably in Arabic (volume 1, page 75)—is to be consulted; if the original is inaccessible, a translation may be a fair approximation (cf. the Human Relations Area Files below). It will be found that this motif is a folk belief that the novelist (Maḥfûẓ) attributes to a good-hearted (naive) mother, as recalled by her son.

Also consider the following examples of the citing of references in Thompson's index: "P253.0.1, Sister's son [(nephew)]. Irish myth: Cross"; "P297. Nephew. *F. B. Gummere The Sister's Son (Oxford, 1901); C. H. Bell The Sister's Son in the Mediaeval German Epic (Berkeley, 1922); Irish myth: Cross." (THOMPSON 1955–1958). Thompson provided neither annotations, nor accounted for differences between "folk" (low) or "high" cultures.

Also consider this sample of EL-SHAMY's amplification of this theme: "P297.2.3§,

Inherent rivalry (enmity) between maternal-uncle and sister's son (Cf. K2217.3§, P798.1§).
☐ *PEN,* OMAN:- Rhodokanakis *Zfâr: SAE* VIII 50-2 No. 13; *SHM,* PALESTINE:-
Hanauer 21 n. 1" (1995).

    Granted that evaluating Arabic sources requires knowledge of the language at a level of
competence that might not be readily available to the non-Arabist. Yet, providing an annotated
bibliography and evaluations of each reference cited in a motif index is an ideal that may be
met in the future. Instances of such evaluations are given in analytical studies as "Comments
on the Variants" (EL-SHAMY 1979, 31–32), and as assessment of the objectivity of editors and
translators in presenting texts of verbal lore and the relevance of their texts to "scientific"
research. An example of such assessment is the pointing out the impact of some of the alter-
ations Inea Bushnaq made in her *Arab folktales,* an impressive anthology of free translations
of previously published texts, but regrettably does not give credit to the collectors or cite the
sources from which the texts were taken (EL-SHAMY 1988d, 18–20; 1990, 73–76). It may be
pointed out that such annotations are an aspect of El-Shamy's forthcoming work: *A demo-
graphically oriented tale type-index for the Arab World (DOTTI-A),* to which the work under
review "was developed as a necessary component" (EL-SHAMY 1995, 1, first sentence of
"Introduction"); for "Sample entries" of tale-types in *DOTTI-A* see: EL-SHAMY 1988a
159–62; 1995, 1, xviii-xxi.

Issue three:
"In the reviewer's opinion this lumping together of the contents of folk-literary texts with
those of folk belief, customs, and religion (folk and high!; both are cited in the references) pre-
vents an understanding of the repertoire of either area" (JASON 1996, 185).

    It is unrealistic for a student of culture to expect to be able to determine (or "under-
stand") repertoires representative of cultural strata (hierarchy) without conducting an objec-
tive study through one of the recognized research methods (e.g., statistical, longitudinal,
cross-sectional, ex-post facto, etc.; or perhaps through an application of the "historic-geo-
graphic"/"Finnish School" method). Yet, setting apart "literary tradition" from current living
lore is specified under the title "NOTE ON DATA PRESENTATION, ABBREVIATIONS,
AND ARCHIVAL MATERIALS" (EL-SHAMY 1995, 1, xxiii). The following example should
clarify the practice: "A661.0.1.3.1§, Archangel Ruḍwân as porter of heaven. Type: 802D§. ☐
al-Thaˁlabî 19; *PEN,* QATAR:- al-Duwayk I 211-2; *SHM,* JORDAN:- Gh. al-Ḥasan 271-6
No. 50; LEBANON:- al-Râsî *khabâyâ* 121" (EL-SHAMY 1995).

    In this example, al-Thaˁlabî's work, not assigned to a certain country, is a literary tra-
dition; the rest of the references indicate current occurrences of the motif. If sufficient appli-
cations of this motif indicate that it appears only (or predominantly) in literary works, then it
will be possible to gain an "understanding" of its literary nature. This, predictably, will be the
case with new Motif: A671.0.1.1.3§, "Hell is located in the seventh earth. ☐ al-Thaˁlabî 5"
(EL-SHAMY 1995); I know of no occurrence of this old belief in current lore (yet, the place for
stating this sort of personal knowledge is not a guide that is meant to assist in conducting
objective research in locating data that would contribute to reaching verifiable conclusions).
Thus, what "prevents an understanding" of the issue is not El-Shamy's practices, but seems
to be the reviewer's unrealistic expectations.

Issue four
"Folk life (belief, custom, religion, etc., and the social organization of these) is being contin-
uously indexed by the HRAF (Human Relations Area Files, New Haven; available on micro-
fiche); there is no need to obscure an index of folk literature by peppering it with information
from other fields of human culture" (JASON 1996, 185).

    This is a perplexing statement, especially when considered in light of the reviewer's

extensive work on types and motif classifications. Perhaps she should have provided examples of
materials ("information") that she views as merely "peppering" and ought to be removed from
this work, which is *not* designated as "an index of folk literature." Motifs dealing with "beliefs,
customs, religion, etc." are inalienably a vital division of the motif classificatory system. These
motifs are the core of chapter five "Religion" and constitute major components of others (e.g.,
A. Mythological Motifs, D. Magic, P. Society) in Thompson's motif-index; such motifs also
constitute the totality of many folkloristic works on religious belief systems, such as Dov
Neuman's (Noy's) classification of Jewish beliefs (NOY 1954). Even in the case of lore that is not
manifestly expressed as "belief," religious beliefs still may constitute the context for its mean-
ingfulness and continued raison d'être (EL-SHAMY 1967, 139–50). In Motif J2212.2, "Burial
in old grave to deceive angel" (cited above), it is the religious beliefs about death and death-
rituals that make the humorous anecdote, in which the motif appears, meaningful (these
beliefs are designated in part by new Motifs: A679§, V66.0.1§, etc.). Thompson alludes to this
fact by comparing Motif J2212.2 to Motif E750, "Pearls of the soul" (THOMPSON 1955–1958).

    The experience on the basis of which the present writer makes his comparison with the
HRAF is more than just a piece of "academic" information (in the mid 1960s he served as
Filing Clerk, and Chief Filing Clerk/ "Archivist" at the HRAF at Indiana University, then a
facility annexed to the Anthropology Department, not to the library as is the case now).
Compared to the motif system, the HRAF's system (even when reached by a potential user,
found open, and cards in place, etc.) is inadequate for addressing the myriad of cultural vari-
ations on a single idea or theme (motif). However, the comparison between the HRAF and
Thompson's motif-indexing system is given in a footnote and is meant to highlight the inde-
pendence of a folkloristic (rather than an "anthropological") accomplishment.

Issue five
"The discipline generally uses an asterisk in front of an addition: standard usage is thus
'N250.*5 (El-Shamy 1995)' and not 'N250.5§.' Everybody has the right to invent his own
symbols, of course, but it is an inconvenience for the user" (JASON 1996, 185).

    Computer-managed programs (databases, etc.) are the future tools for indexing, archiv-
ing, retrieving, etc. A requirement of these systems is that each sign or symbol be unique,
especially for "Search-and-find" operations. An asterisk is already used in a number of other
functions in both the Aarne-Thompson tale-type system, and in Thompson's motif system
(EL-SHAMY 1995, 1, xvii n. 18).

    Within the context of computer-generated/run indexes (constituting "files"), an aster-
isk to the left of the new additions (motifs, or tale-types) would result in *two* computer "sort-
ed" segments: one with an asterisk (from *A to *Z, or *1 to *2500), followed by another
without an asterisk (from A to Z, or 1 to 2500); example:*A9, *K9, *Z9, A0, K0, Z0. That
means "*A9" is judged by the computer as lesser than "A0" or "Z0"; this is due to the fact that
the ASCII value of the asterisk (*) is 0.42, whereas the value of the Zero (0) is 0.48. The same
is true of tale-types: new tale-type "*2000," for example, would be computed as lesser than
"old" tale-type "1." Additionally, since an asterisk within a motif number may be preceded by
a period (i.e., ".*5") or followed by a comma (i.e., ".5*,"), it will pattern differently with both
the preceding and the following characters in terms of the ASCII value of each. Consequently,
within the motif system, the presence of an asterisk will generate a non-sequential "sorting":
"N250.*5" will be rated as lesser than N250.3, and will precede it.

    Considering this *disruptive* effect of the asterisk, "the discipline" will eventually have to
view its use as dysfunctional. It is also very likely that the discipline will have to switch to a
four-digit system for numerical identifications of motifs and tale-types (e.g., Motif: A0001,
J0010, Z0325, etc.; Type: 0001, 0001A, 0325, 0706, 0706A, 2235, etc. and decimals will also

have to be in at least two digits, i.e., A0010.02.01). In the current system Type 2235 would be listed before 325, and 725 after 2235. (The four-digit format is the system for the unprinted versions of *GMC-A*, and the forthcoming *DOTTI-A*. The problem with this unavoidable system is that, in spite of its efficiency, it does not look visually appealing in print, and consumes much space).

Thus, under these conditions, the system followed by "the discipline" would not have been the optimum choice for *GMC-A*. The newly adopted sign (§) seems to be less disruptive, and, consequently, more adequate.

Issue six
"The use of the sign ʿ to indicate the Semitic consonant ʿain is a completely new invention and strikes the reviewer as very odd" (JASON 1996, 186).

Students of the Arabic script (as is the case of the present writer when he taught the language) will recognize that a close approximation of the "odd" sign (e.g., Σ, &, ?) have been used to designate the ʿain/ʿayn letter. Among these, for example, is the transcription of the spoken Arabic of various groups: the Jews from Tunis (COHEN 1964), speakers of colloquial in Cairo (SALIB 1981), and others (e.g., GAY-PARA 1988, 129–54, 182–208). The "ʿ"-sign was adopted for practical reasons: signs typically used to designate the "ʿain" ("ʿ", or "C/c"—the letter C/c in superscript, usually italicized) are also used for other purposes; "ʿ" is the closest in form to the Arabic ʿayn ( ); additionally it is also economical: a computer file containing only the sign ʿ requires 328 byts to generate, a file containing only the letter "c" requires 697 byts—a difference of 369 byts. When multiplied by hundreds of occurrences in a manuscript, the cost in computer disk-space, memory, and speed is substantial.

Thus, as can be seen, in the absence of a specific Latin letter designating this "Semitic" phone, El-Shamy's use of the uncommon ʿ is an adaptive practice, though seemingly "odd" to some.

II. THE RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH "RELIGION" IN FOLKLORE

The risks a folklorist runs by dealing with folk traditions is illustrated by the reviewer's following casual remark.

Issue
"The list of Islamic concepts (Appendix 2, "Islam-based worldview," 443–444) seems either superfluous (cf. *Encyclopedia of Islam,* second ed. 1960) or insufficient (a whole worldview of a culture cannot be codified in a mere two pages)" (JASON 1996, 185).

This evaluation is to be considered in light of the clarification El-Shamy makes concerning the relationship between *a* "religion" on the one hand, and one of the many worldviews based in part on that religion on the other. This fact is also indicated by the article "*An,*" which is missing from the reviewer's quote, and by further designating the worldview as: "The Supernatural Belief-Practice System in the Contemporary Folk Cultures of Egypt." The treatment is of "religion among the folk" not of "folk religion"; it should be also noted that the title specifies "cultures," not a single culture. It was clearly stated that:

> Since the present work treats Arabic-Islamic materials, an outline of "*An* Islam-based Worldview…" is provided as an example. By examining that outline, users of *GMC-A* will be apprised of the rationale behind the author's decisions concerning revisions to existing motifs, development of new ones, and their placement within the motif indexing system…. Also, the overview of Egyptian balladry (Appendix III, pp. 445-8, below) should serve this purpose. It should be noted that the title of the Appendix *does NOT*

use the adjective "Islamic." Forcing this aspect on the work is injurious to its systemic folk-
loric nature. Formal religious dogma (especially in its ecclesiastical format where it is guarded
against error and change by elite clerics) lies outside the realm of the folkloric phenomenon.
(EL-SHAMY 1995, 1 xxii; emphasis added; also see EL-SHAMY 1973)

Jason's labeling of the system "Islamic" and her citing the *Encyclopedia of Islam* disre-
gard this unequivocal plea; her limiting the extent of *GMC-A*'s contributions to the field of
beliefs to "a mere two pages" does not take into account the expressed purpose of those "two
pages" and the systemic structure of the data given, nor the hundreds of new and old motifs
designated (of which a sample appears in this essay), with references in primary sources such
as works by Ismâ¿îl and Walker, al-Nabhânî, al-Tha¿labî, and Khalîfah, among others. The
Encyclopedia of Islam addresses Islam; El-Shamy's *GMC-A* does not address Islam,
Christianity, or Judaism as religions, but treats folkloric phenomena interconnected with
these denominations as they are exercised by social groups in the Arab World (with empha-
sis on Moslem groups). Mixing the formal faith (ideal culture) with folk beliefs and rituals (a
facet of "folkloric behavior") and inability to set one apart from the other are serious errors.
Regrettably, numerous individuals in the field of "Folklore" do not seem to perceive (or
acknowledge) this elementary distinction, with consequences that are often grave for folklore
scholarship and for folklorists.

Exemplifying this grave situation is an incident triggered between 1987 and 1988 at the
University of Kuwait, where it was provocatively and erroneously claimed in newspapers,
magazines, and leaflets distributed on street corners that El-Shamy's research on "The
Brother and Sister Syndrome..." (in legends, spirit possession cases, literature, etc.) is an
attack on "Islam" and that he slanders sacred brother-and-sister figures about whom legends
are told and folk beliefs are spun (e.g., ANONYMOUS 1987a; 1987c). The mere accusation, aca-
demically erroneous as it was, resulted in summary condemnation of El-Shamy and his
research by the University of Kuwait's high administrators and interior ministry officials
(ANONYMOUS 1987b); consequently, Hasan El-Shamy has been formally banned from "Arab
Gulf States" (and their spheres of influence). Whether motivated by sincere concern for the
faith, or by other less "selfless" urges, the claim was shown by El-Shamy to be based on false
premises, fragmentary understanding of the discipline of folklore—mistaking the folksy for
the formal, and, as amply demonstrated in several "replies," failure to read key Arabic terms
correctly, let alone comprehend terms in a foreign language (EL-SHAMY 1987; 1988b; 1988c).
The accusers prevailed; but the ultimate loser is objective scholarship, the discipline of folk-
lore (currently under constant attacks), and social groups whose folk traditions are inhibited
(or altered in order to avoid such attacks). Thus, the "study" of these traditions becomes a
monopoly for the unnamed "accusers" who emerge as "the sole" folklorist(s) in the region.

Naturally, El-Shamy is *not* suggesting that the reviewer is motivated by such sinister
personal incentives; nonetheless, her applying cursory perceptions to his work without veri-
fying their validity leads to inferences that are inaccurate, and potentially dangerous.

Finally, Jason seems to be uncomfortable with El-Shamy's atypical sort of scholarship.
She appears to view his deviation from the trodden paths in folklore scholarship as a result of
a need to merely differ and declares that although "[e]verybody has the *right to invent his own*
symbols," such inventions constitute an "inconvenience for the user" (JASON 1996, 185,
emphasis added). Similarly, assessing one of his works ("Oral Traditional Tales and the
Thousand Nights and a Night: The Demographic Factor," EL-SHAMY 1990), she did not
address the "demographic" aspect of the study (e.g., gender, class, etc.) and took exception to
his citing the debate between Walter Anderson and Albert Wesselski on "folk and high!" tra-
ditions—to use her words (JASON 1996, 185). She reached a conclusion congruent with what

is argued here to be her perception of El-Shamy's work as motivated by a sort of having it his "own way." Thus she wrote about him as

> finding it interesting to pick up today [in 1990] an argument from the early thirties with Wesselski (1931). Apparently no jumps are possible and *everybody has to have his own experience.* (JASON 1992, 343; emphasis added)

Missing from the reviewer's consideration are the facts that the great debate between Anderson and Wesselski constitutes an organic part of El-Shamy's theoretical framework of folklore as behavior, with the Anderson-Wesselski classic discourse (involving such theoretical issues as "memory," "experimental folklore," context, and performance) at its center (EL-SHAMY 1967, 21–26; 1976a 151–54). Also missing is the fact that El-Shamy's new motifs and tale-types, the contexts in which they occur, and how they are performed are only components in the broader system of "Folkloric Behavior," through which aspects of "the Brother-Sister Syndrome" (rather than the presumed "Oedipus Complex") are predominantly expressed (e.g., EL-SHAMY 1976b; 1979; 1981; 1982, 22–29. See also EL-SHAMY 1995 vol. 1, 445, ballads no. I-A.1 to I-D.1).

It was stated that "behaviorism in its psychological context cannot be taken in bits and pieces, nor can behaviorism alone account for the entire folkloric phenomenon" (EL-SHAMY 1976a, 157). Likewise, *Folk traditions of the Arab World: A guide to motif classification* alone cannot list all literature to which it refers; it should be *carefully* and *objectively* considered within the system of which it is only one component. If such a broad perspective is inaccessible, then it should be evaluated in terms of its unambiguously stated objectives.

REFERENCES CITED

AARNE, Antti, and Stith THOMPSON
    1961 *The types of the folktale.* FF Communications 184. Helsinki: Academia
         Scientiarum Fennica.
ANONYMOUS
    n.d. *'alf laylah wa laylah* [Thousand nights and a night], 4 vols. Cairo: al-Jumhûriyyah.
ANONYMOUS
    1987a ʿâjil jiddan [Very urgent], *al-Qabas* (December 6).
ANONYMOUS
    1987b 'îdâh min *'Âfâq* [Clarification from *'Âfâq,* edited by ʿAbd-Allâh al-Ghazâlî
          (Kuwait Univ. magazine)]. *al-Qabas* (December 9), no. 5594.
ANONYMOUS
    1987c fasâd fikrî taht sitâr al-ʿilm [Intellectual depravity under the guise of science]. *al-
          Mujtamaʿ,* no. 847 (December 15). Kuwait.
BUSHNAQ, Inea, ed., tr.
    1986 *Arab folktales.* New York: Pantheon.
COHEN, David.
    1964 *Le parler Arabe des Juifs de Tunis.* Paris: Mouton.
EL-SHAMY, Hasan
    1967 Folkloric behavior: A theory for the study of the dynamics of traditional culture: A
          case study of the stability and change in the lore of the Egyptian community in
          Brooklyn, N.Y. Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.
    1973 The supernatural belief-practice system in the contemporary Arab folk culture of
          Egypt. Presented at The IX International Congress of Anthropological and
          Ethnological Sciences, Chicago, Illinois (September).

1976a Behaviorism and the text. In *Folklore today: A festschrift for Richard M. Dorson,* ed., Linda Dégh, et al., 145–60. Bloomington: Indiana University Research Center for Language and Semiotic Studies.

1976b The traditional structure of sentiments in Maḥfûẓ's trilogy: a behavioristic text analysis. *Al-ʿArabiyya: Journal of the American Association of Teachers of Arabic,* 9: 53–74.

1979 *Brother and sister. Type 872*: A cognitive behavioristic text analysis of a Middle Eastern oikotype.* Folklore Monograph Series 8. Bloomington: Folklore Publications Group.

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

1981 The Brother-sister syndrome in Arab family life. Socio-cultural factors in Arab psychiatry: A critical review. *International Journal of Sociology of the Family* 11: 313–23.

1982 *Belief characters* as anthropomorphic psychosocial realities. *al-kitâb al-sanawî li-ǵilm al-'igtimâǵ* [Annual Review of Sociology] 3: 7–36.

1987 d. Ḥasan al-Shamî yuwaḍḍiḥ [Dr. Hasan el-Shamy clarifies]. *al-Qabas* (December 9) no. 5594.

1988a An index for tales of the Arab World. *Fabula* 29: 150–63.

1988b radd ʿalâ maqâl [A Reply to an essay]. *al-Mujtamaʿ,* (February 9) no. 855: 40–41.

1988c tawḍîḥ ḥawla naẓariyyatih ʿan râbiṭat al-'akhkh wa al-'ukht min al-doktôr al-Shâmî [Clarification from Dr. El-Shamy concerning his theory about the brother and sister bond]. *al-Qabas,* (January 6 and 7) no. 5621 and no. 5622. Kuwait.

1988d Towards a demographically oriented type index for tales of the Arab World. *Cahiers de literature orale, no. 23: La tradition au présent (Monde arabe),* ed. Praline Gay-Para, 15–40 . Paris.

1990 Oral traditional tales and the Thousand Nights and a Night: The demographic factor. In *The telling of stories: Approaches to a traditional craft,* ed., Morton Nøjgaard et al., 63–117. Odense: Odense Univ. Press.

1997 Psychologically-based criteria for classification by motif and tale-type. *Journal of Folklore Research* 34: 233–43.

GAY-PARA, Praline, ed.

1988 *Cahiers de literature orale, no. 23: La tradition au present (Monde arab).* Paris.

JASON, Heda

1992 Review of *The telling of stories: Approaches to a traditional craft,* ed. Morton Nøjgaard et al. *Asian Folklore Studies,* 51: 343–44.

1996 Review of El-Shamy, Hasan. *Folk traditions of the Arab world: A guide to motif classification,* 2 vols., Indiana University Press, 1995. *Asian Folklore Studies* 55: 184–86.

NOY (Neuman), Dov

1954 Motif-index to the Talmudic-Midrashic literature. Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University. Bloomington, Indiana.

SALIB, Maurice B.

1981 *Spoken Arabic of Cairo.* Cairo: The American University Press.

THOMPSON, Stith

1955-1958 *Motif-index of folk-literature.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Hasan EL-SHAMY
Indiana University
Bloomington, Indiana