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Type- and Motif-Indices 1980–1995: An Inventory

Abstract

The present article considers current trends in the documentation of narratives. Approximately seventy indices published during the last fifteen years are compared for contents and structure and are evaluated within the framework of the existing national and international systems of classification. Three basic tendencies were observed: 1) a renewed interest in the documentation of narratives in Europe and beyond; 2) the inclusion of genres that up to now have received less scholarly attention (e.g., animal tales, nursery rhymes, ballads), and of specific forms within individual genres (e.g., contemporary legends); 3) an increasing specialization (systematics, period) in the indices despite the retention of the international systems of Aarne and Thompson's *The Types of the Folktale* and Thompson's *Motif Index*.

Key words: Type-index—Motif-index—classification—documentation

IN THE PAST FEW YEARS narrative research—which for decades was focused on content analysis and comparative studies of motifs—has turned to new issues. Interest is now being directed to processes of transmission and to the interdependence of oral and written texts (including the issue of re-oralization). The function of a text is now stressed, especially in cases where the text appears in different genres, giving rise to the question of if, and in what way, the various contexts might influence future traditions. When considering modes of transmission it is also considered important to show general trends and to question the relation between illustrations and *Lieblingsmärchen* (favorite tales). This has meant a broadening of such traditional paradigms as märchen, legends, fables, humorous stories, etc., to include genres like family stories, autobiographies, rumors, jokes, and stories about war, expulsion from homeland, and refuge. Modern narrative research is realizing the importance of attending not only to the more established modes of transmission like puppet shows, radio, film, TV, and records, but also to new audiovisual media like videos, compact discs, and computer games.

This change in general orientation is obvious from even a brief glance at the recent articles in the *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* (BREDNICH et al. 1977–). It is also apparent from the many new lemmata that were not included in the first list of keywords published in 1973 and that did not exist even in 1984, lemmata such as *Familiengeschichten*, *Familientradition*, *Gerücht*, *Klatsch*, *Lebensgeschichte*, and *Medien* (*audiovisuelle*). The advances of the last few decades can be seen even more clearly by comparing the recent keywords to those in the first list of possible keywords sent to the scholars in the late 1950s. We have seen an immense increase in the number of articles relating to sources and genres, as well as to functional and theoretical issues.

In Europe interest in introducing new texts from oral tradition has waned. A similar trend can be seen with regard to fieldwork. The reasons for this development are manifold, but may be attributed basically to the large

amount of written material from oral tradition found in several European archives. In this situation "new" fairy tales, legends, and humorous stories are hardly imaginable. On the other hand, the number of indices appearing outside of Europe has increased, as is clearly demonstrated by the fact that more than a third of the material examined in this paper deals with non-European narratives.

Catalogues of types and of motifs are of great interest not only for traditional comparative studies but also for the new areas of research mentioned above. They have much to contribute to the investigation of stylistic and source-linked associations, to the illumination of oral-literary relations, and, last but not least, to the processing of individual accounts and even entire anthologies of texts (UTHER 1984, 1987a). It is no accident that researchers have stressed the continuing applicability of such indices, as this is the prerequisite for an analytic comparison beyond ethnic and national borders (HONKO 1985).

SYSTEMS OF CLASSIFICATION

Indices during the past fifteen years have continued a trend that began soon after the second revision of the Aarne and Thompson index (AaTh) was published in 1961 (see UTHER 1984, 1987a). Of the approximately sixty indices that have appeared in this period nearly half are based on either the AaTh system (20) or the *Motif-Index* (THOMPSON 1955–58) system (6).[1] Certain indices represent a combination of both of these classification systems. There are other principles of categorization as well, mainly for the recording of legends (BIHARI 1980), fables (DICKE and GRUBMÜLLER 1987), ballads (ŠRÁMKOVÁ and SIROVÁTKA 1990), and exempla (BERLIOZ and POLO DE BEAULIEU 1992; DÖMÖTÖR 1992), as well as of smaller narrative forms like riddles (ABRAHAMS 1980). Moreover, the majority of indices using independent systematizations cite AaTh or *Motif-Index* numbers or those of related systems. In indices that are based on AaTh (e.g., PERKOWSKI et al. 1995) the system of types is often considerably supplemented. This is even more true for the *Motif-Index* system, since the abundance of systematized material allows a more detailed specification of certain subjects (EL-SHAMY 1995, WILBERT and SIMONEAU 1992, SCHOTT 1993). Indices with their own systematizations are generally based upon a numeric order that is genre-oriented (riddles: ABRAHAMS 1980; children's books: MACDONALD 1982). Others distinguish according to theme (physical impediments; HOLDEN 1991) and/or protagonist (saints: BRAY 1992). Such systems are primarily applied in the classification of non-European narratives (23).

There are in addition several collections that cannot be considered type- or motif-indices despite their highly informative nature with respect to the

specific region they cover. This is especially true for national, often critically edited, series like *Skazki i mify narodov Vostoka, Folktales of the World*, and *Die Märchen der Weltliteratur*. Other large collections decode the texts and give all-encompassing indices, commentaries, and classifications, like the 29-volume *Nihon mukashibanashi tsūkan* [Survey of Japanese folktales] (INADA and OZAWA 1977–90; INADA 1988). Editions of this sort present a representative overview of the "recent," that is, of the surviving narrative material in a region. Other projects compile remote publications and attempt to give a synopsis, as in the documentation of the tales of the South American Indians (31 ethnic groups) by Johannes WILBERT and Karin SIMONEAU (1970–92). The last volume—the general index—contains a detailed index of motifs (1992).

As many scholars have noted,[2] the central concepts of the indices remain quite consistent even when the areas covered are quite different. The reason is that the predominance of the European heritage in the AaTh has influenced the structure of all subsequent indices. Indeed, about thirty of the sixty indices issued in the last fifteen years concern European folktales, primarily fairy tales, fables, and comic tales. Folktales from other continents are only seldom taken into account. Thus for the African continent there exist only three indices within our period of discussion: HARING's index of Malagasy tales (1982); SCHMIDT's two-volume South African index, which provides primary sources (1990); and EL-SHAMY's recently published index of motifs in Arabian folktales, which also contains North African texts (1995). It should be noted in this regard that Haring's index is conceived more as a contribution to the description of narrative structure than as an index of types in the traditional sense (see UTHER 1986). The index of East African folktales by May Augusta KLIPPLE (1992) turned out to be a reprint of her dissertation, published in 1938. For Asia there is a total of thirteen indices available.

International classification systems have been much criticized. The main criticisms have been: 1) imprecision in the definition of motif and type; 2) the introduction of too many oikotypes with minimal variants; 3) a one-sided orientation toward Europe; 4) insufficient integration of the available indices; 5) an exclusive orientation toward traditional genres, with no consideration of minor forms. In connection with the last point it is often pointed out that classification into types and into groups like animal tales, ordinary folktales, jokes and anecdotes, and formula tales would be quite different if done with regard to function. It is unclear, for example, what caused a certain variant with a jocular character to be categorized as a tale of magic. Not considered at all are tales of origin (etiologies), legends, anecdotes, jokes, tales of everyday life (work tales, family stories), autobiographies, tales of

war, or specifically versified forms like ballads.

Although Stith Thompson recognized that his system is primarily oriented to Europe (AaTh 1961, 7), later researchers have adopted it uncritically, forcing some texts into the scheme, leaving out others, and creating a portrait that is misrepresentative of the actual situation. This has led scholars to the false conclusion that the majority of the world's folktales are thematically related to European tales and that oikotypes are rare. Examples of this are the index of Chinese tale-types by Nai-Tung TING (1978) and Heda JASON's catalogues of Jewish-Iraqi (1988) and Indian (1989) folktales.

PRESENTATION OF NARRATIVE MATERIAL

Significant qualitative differences can be seen in the presentation of the text materials. Some indices present short tables of contents, analyze individual stories by listing the elements, and mention variants in chronological and nonchronological sequence (sometimes with contaminated tale-types). Sources and regions are presented, and there is much information on secondary literature and regional specialties. Other indices list only variants or restrict themselves to quoting archive numbers, giving no consideration to the structures of the tales. Regions may be noted, but regional specialties and changing protagonists are not mentioned, and the tables of contents are limited to translations of the AaTh texts. Nor are any detailed descriptions given.

In view of the European orientation of the AaTh index, it is important that a new system of classification be developed for non-European texts (POPPE 1979, HEISSIG 1979). Several have even been implemented. Walther HEISSIG, for example, drew upon the work of T. G. Bordzanova and S. A. Kičikov to devise a plot-oriented structural model for Mongolian heroic epics based upon fourteen structural patterns (1979).[3] This model leaves room for individual variations, thereby offering many advantages over Thompson's theme-oriented system. Several years later HEISSIG used his model to catalog over fifty previously untranslated heroic epics, creating an extensive index of the surviving Mongolian heroic narratives (1988).

Unfortunately, the textual elements listed by Heissig—*Formeln*, *Motive*, and *Themen*—relate only to content, consisting of concise details and short characterizations. When still-living traditions of epic performance are dealt with, formal criteria should be considered, after the model of Milman PARRY (1971) and, especially, Albert Bates LORD (1960). Since formal elements can influence the structure of the epic it is important to include indications of incipits and final formulae, formulaic links, rhythm, repetition, alliteration, rhyme, verses, and dialogues. The large number of Central Asian epics in print invites us to compile an index based on this representative material, one that includes typological and structural analyses for

historical comparative research.[4]

When the Africanist and ethnologist Rüdiger SCHOTT (1989) tried to document the approximately one thousand texts (narratives, songs, oral history) that he and his colleagues collected from the Bulsa in Northern Ghana in the years 1966–67, 1974, and 1989, he recognized immediately that the current classification systems were inadequate to handle the disparate material. For the first volume of the Bulsa tales, containing twenty-one texts about the heavenly god Naawen, new perspectives and extensive preliminary work were necessary (SCHOTT 1993; see UTHER 1994). In many cases the narratologists from Münster supplemented Thompson's categories and created new descriptions of motifs. These encompassed tales of origin (etiologies), tales of animals (motif categories A, B), and other categories. While these criteria, oriented mainly to internal textual criteria, were relatively easy to establish (as were the contextual annotations), it was quite difficult to assign themes or types to the majority of tales. Thus in many cases multiple assignments were used.[5] This thematic indexing was completed through the listing of keywords drawn from the original text, the translation, and the table of contents.

Although, as SCHOTT admits (1993, 13–16), this method does not exclude subjectivity, resolve all speech and translation problems (as with synonyms, homonyms etc.), or allow for hierarchical categorization, it nevertheless permits the inclusion of a broad range of contents and structures. This facilitates comparative studies within the same ethnic group, explaining linguistic characteristics, incongruities in the flow of the text, and peculiarities of the oral performance that are not visible in the written form. In a number of appendices Schott presents the structures he and his colleagues have discovered. He adds a sample questionnaire, an index of keywords and motifs, and a bibliography. This work stands out among publications based on field research. Schott's work-saving model recommends itself particularly for the documentation of the narratives of smaller ethnic groups.

Sigrid SCHMIDT, a narratologist from Hildesheim known for her publication of South African texts (see UTHER 1991), has compiled a typological index of Khoisan folktales (1990). This index, the result of a decade of research, is an extremely careful piece of work, though unfortunately lacking in example texts. From primary sources she documents 757 tales (in 1,944 variants) from the Bushmen (San, Marsawa), Khoekhoe (Khoihoi), and Dama (Damara). For only 100 tales does she give more than five variants. The author reports that it was not always simple to discern the origin of the tale or distinguish Bantu, Malayan, or European influences. On the other hand, she claims that "Khoisan storytellers regard these stories as their property, and most of the stories are amalgamated with the local life and

thought, some are even transformed into bitter anti-European satires" (SCHMIDT 1990, 1: 10).

The index includes fairy tales and comic animal tales as well as other genres like legends, anecdotes, and local etiologies. Schmidt has justifiably avoided using content-based criteria to order her 2,371 narrative types (with gaps for future insertions). The material is divided instead into the categories *Himmelskörper und Naturerscheinungen* (1–99), *Anthropomorph vorgestellte Trickster* (200–399), *Tiertrickster* (400–599), *Tiergeschichten* (600–99), *Märchen und Schwänke vorwiegend europäisch-asiatischer Herkunft* (1000–1289), *Novellistische Erzählungen und Sagen* (1300–2299), and *Ortssagen* (2300–99). Some problems exist. Schmidt's differentiation of narratives into authored stories and folk stories is somewhat problematic, for example, as is her categorization of the tales according to whether they are "truly of the folk" or are the "result of individual imagination." Both problems are closely related.

The extensive bibliography presents extremely useful references for the collections (exact records of the local narratives presented, a list of borrowings from other sources, etc.). The individual ethnic groups and their customs are described in a special index. Corresponding AaTh numbers are given for the narratives, analysis is made in accordance with Thompson's motif numbers, and a detailed subject index is provided (this was something that could in no way be assumed in the older African type indices). The stories are then thoroughly analyzed for their narrative elements and types in the second volume.

WILBERT and SIMONEAU's influential general index of the narratives of South American "marginal tribes" marked the conclusion of a twenty-four volume series that included texts and motif analyses (1970–1992). The series, of great value for future comparative research, is a good example of how the narratives of minorities can be documented without being made to appear exotic. The rapid speed at which the volumes were issued was maintained throughout the project, so that all twenty-four appeared within twenty-two years (LINDELL 1995). The general index includes the names of eleven contributors who through their fieldwork and documentation made the project possible.[6] It also contains a bibliography plus a short, comprehensive commentary on the individual groups, their settlements, and their history (as far as it is known).

The concordance of motifs (more than 50,000) provides a useful complement to Thompson's *Motif–Index*.[7] The collection has made it clear that the international motif-index—despite its acknowledged weakness of automatically atomizing the contents—can be applied as a tool in such general analyses. However, the emphasis on (and repetition of) individual groups of

motifs in the course of the decades-long process of classification resulted in inconsistencies among the volumes. This first became obvious when preparing the synopsis. In spite of the additional work involved the publishers decided to make the necessary corrections, so that the general index contains the definitive classification. The general index also provides an alphabetical subject index of the individual motifs (over 4,000 keywords and short summaries of the content of each motif). This gives users another access to the motifs, one independent of the numerical classification. The redistribution of motifs into larger groups reflects the large number of myths and stories of tricksters, animal-brides, and animal-grooms. The origin tales are similar to those found in the folklore of the North American Indians, as in cosmogonic myths and in narratives of the stealing of fire and marriage to beings from the world beyond. Most tales can be ascribed to groups A (Mythological Motifs), B (Animals), D (Magic), F (Marvels), J (The Wise and the Foolish), and K (Deceptions).

There has been a remarkable development in folklore research in the East, especially in the Arabic-Islamic region. For a long time nothing relevant was available except the work of René Basset, Victor Chauvin, and Otto Spies. Several new indices have been issued within the past few years, however. These reflect recent developments and endeavor to register the historical dimension of the narrative material. Ulrich MARZOLPH, for example, has published an index of recent narrative texts from Persia (1984), an area known for its importance in connecting ancient Indian culture with the high cultures of the Mediterranean. The index includes 1,300 published and unpublished fairy tales, comic tales, and formula tales for a total of 351 tale types, all collected in the area of present-day Iran. Each tale type is accompanied by an extensive description of the structure, with annotations to individual episodes and variant motifs. With each source is an indication of protagonists and requisites. Contaminations with other types are noted, and, when ascertainable, indications of localities. A motif index, designed on the model of EBERHARD and BORATAV's Turkish index (1953), lists all themes and subjects.

In 1992 Marzolph published a comprehensive study of the comic short prose in early *adab* literature; the second volume consists of an index of jokes, comic tales, and anecdotes from the medieval Arabic world (RÖHRICH 1994). This was urgently needed, not only because many folklorists were unfamiliar with the rich Arabic tradition but also because the Arabic world formed a bridge and pivotal link with antiquity. Thus narratives from antiquity often migrated back to Europe (and sometimes to India and North Africa) through Arabic mediation. Marzolph's evaluation of more than 12,000 texts resulted in 1,247 tale types. It soon became obvious that Thompson's motif numbers could only be used provisionally, for Thompson included very lit-

tle Arabic material in his index and, in addition, eliminated erotic or sexual themes (HOFFMANN 1973, 5–6). Summaries of the narrative types, in combination with chronological lists of the sources and literature, provide the user with a quick overview of the tale from its earliest appearance until its inclusion in contemporary collections. Of particular value are the systematic indices of the Koran, a concordance according to AaTh and *Motif-Index*, a list of personal and place names, and an extensive subject index (consisting of 77 printed pages).

Folklorist Hasan EL-SHAMY's long-announced (1988a, 1988b) index for Arab folktales finally appeared in 1995. A type-index is expected to follow. MARZOLPH rightly calls it "one of the most meaningful contributions to the deciphering of the Arabic popular literature and also an ideal tool for the application-oriented classification of motifs (in accordance to Thompson)" (1996). El-Shamy registered thousands of motifs, gathering data from newspapers, essays, and books and including material from the archives of Doha and Kairo as well as his own collections. His index of subjects (575 pages in small print) corresponds in size to the entire subject index in Thompson's *Motif-Index*, suggesting the range of motifs.

El-Shamy's index, however, also shows some of the weaknesses that characterize many of the newer studies. The authors, spellbound perhaps by their knowledgeable ordering of the material, seem to forget that certain minimal conditions must be met for the sake of the potential user. El-Shamy does not facilitate use of the index, for example, by employing numerous cryptic abbreviations and special signs. Nor does he convincingly explain his introduction of the new term "sample" for his sources. He also needs to clarify what he means by "folk tradition," particularly since his bibliography includes classic Arabian literature, translations, and modern works. El-Shamy obviously had it in mind to revise the *Motif-Index* as he documented his materials. How else can we account for the fact that he adopted all of Thompson's central motif groups and supplemented Thompson's system by introducing new numbers? And why are other signifiers introduced to refer to existing motif numbers? This modus operandi probably explains why there is often no documentary evidence for numbers deriving from Arabic sources.

New type- and motif-indices that document European narrative material continue existing indices, provide amendments, or identify new genres. Many are in English, French, or German; they often appear in the *Folklore Fellows Communications* series, with its rich tradition of folklore indices. Certain long-term endeavors, such as the Hungarian index (*Magyar Népmesekatalógus*), have reached satisfactory conclusions following initial difficulties. Others have proceeded slowly while distinguishing themselves

conceptually somewhat from previously published volumes. One example is
ANGELOPOULOU and BROUSKOU's Greek type-index (1994), which, as the
title indicates, deals with the genre "Other Tales of the Supernatural" (AaTh
700–49). Some works, despite much effort, are not yet ready for publication,
such as the projected *Index of the German-Speaking Secular Narrative
Literature from the Beginnings to 1400* (cf. LICHTBLAU et al. 1982). Dieter
RÖTH has announced a type-index for European tales of magic translated
into the German language (1995). Entries are from the *Die Märchen der
Weltliteratur, Volksmärchen, Das Gesicht der Völker*, and the *Insel-Verlag* series,
a selection of 92 volumes and 6,000 texts. According to the compiler, the
index is "restricted to European romantic tales and tales of magic because of
practical considerations" (1995, 25).

Some promising indices turn out upon closer examination to be of less
value. *Les Exempla médiévaux* (BERLIOZ and POLO DE BEAULIEU 1992), for
example, is simply a concordance of several classic collections compiled by
Friedrich C. TUBACH (1969), revised according to principles of numerical
order. Christoph DAXELMÜLLER notes that "the title, which promises a study
of the medieval exemplum, misleads the reader," and judges the book "of no
use to the expert and of minor use for the beginner; the only way to judge
whether it actually speeds reference to Tubach's *Index Exemplorum* would be
to hold a competition" (1995, 311).

Lena NEULAND's motif-index of Latvian folktales (1981) seems rather
superfluous, as it more or less goes back to the motif-analyses of the standard
collection originally edited by Peteris Smits (revised and enlarged in the sec-
ond edition by Haralds Biezais, 1962–70); (see UTHER 1983). Nor is it like-
ly that Fernando PEÑALOSA's translation of AaTh into Spanish (1995) will
be of real profit to general narrative research, especially since the Spanish
material is already documented by many type- and motif-indices in easily
accessible languages like English.[8] The user of this index must also acquire
the original work, as the most interesting references have not been included.
Moreover, the translation perpetuates a number of mistakes earlier pointed
out by Walter Anderson, Haim Schwarzbaum, and his colleagues, mistakes
that Thompson and his team were responsible for when they revised AaTh
(see UTHER 1984). Some examples: Peñalosa uncritically accepts mistaken
motif-numbers (in AaTh 234, Mot. A 2347.5 instead of A 2241.5; in AaTh
123 Mot. K 971 [nonexistent]); he misses known double entries (AaTh 125*
equals AaTh 122 M, AaTh 178 equals AaTh 916 IIc); he fails to add absent
motifs (in AaTh 282 A* to Mot. J 612.1; in AaTh 285 to Mot. B 391.1 and B
765.6); and he does not include Thompson's back references (in AaTh
244** there should be an additional reference to AaTh 1927).

SUMMARY AND PREVIEW

The amount of material that has been collected and documented through-out the world during recent years has made revision of the international type- and motif-indices essential. At the very least the existing type-indices must be integrated and obvious mistakes eliminated. A comprehensive table of contents is urgently needed in order to avoid wrong classifications.

In establishing concepts for new indices and integrating the narrative material of a region or ethnic group the following steps should be taken (see UTHER 1987a, b):

1) clear definition of time and area when documenting literary and oral traditions;
2) presentation of recorded notations in accordance with a theme-ori-ented system, on the basis of already existing classification systems or as an independent system, which includes reference to international type- and motif-numbers;
3) indication of the individual structural elements;
4) chronological and structural listing of the variants;
5) indication of contamination with other narrative types;
6) suggestion of related tale types;
7) notation of the year of recording (publication);
8) references to international sources and literature;
9) indexing of subject matters, names, places, and narrators.

There is much to be gained by taking these steps, since at present the sys-tems used in the larger archives are for the most part heterogeneous and thus incompatible. There is, for instance, the system of registration used in the "Zentralarchiv der deutschen Volkserzählung" in Marburg, with over 170 different categories. There is also the file of legends in the Department for Volkskunde in Freiburg, an index consisting of thousands of slips of paper (Göttingen provides only selected material, an index compiled by Will-Erich Peuckert up until 1962).

Regardless of whether or not a revised type- and motif-index becomes available in the foreseeable future, there are already several other sources of folktale information available to the researcher. These will be given in the next installment of the *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* (Göttingen). This con-tains an extensive system of concordances that lists every type-index since THOMPSON (1955–58) and AARNE and THOMPSON (1961). This "index," which provides information about the present status of our type research and about the several hundred thousand texts in our archive, will hopefully serve as a basis for further study. Another, less encompassing, catalogue notes additions to the international *Motif-Index* (texts, indices, literature). A pro-

visional type- and motif-index of the material in the already published volumes of the *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* provides information about the diverse historical contexts as well as the present-day environments where folklore is found.

NOTES

* This article was originally presented at the ISFNR Congress in Beijing 1996.

1. Indices appearing in more than one volume are counted here only once.

2. Recent examples include (in alphabetic order): BENNETT 1987; BREMOND 1980; CARME ORIOL 1990; COURTÉS 1980; DOBREVA 1979; EBERHARD 1980; EL-SHAMY 1988a, 1988b; ELLIS 1994; GAŠPARÍKOVÁ 1984; GEORGES 1983; GLAZER 1984; GRAF 1988; HLÔŠKOVÁ 1991 (with English summary); HODNE 1984a, 1984b; JASON 1982; KERBELYTE 1983; KLÍMOVÁ 1991 (with English summary); KLINTBERG 1993; LINDELL 1987; LUNDELL 1986; MARZOLPH 1983; MILNE 1988; NAGY 1990; OZAWA 1981; PENTIKÄINEN 1989; SCHOTT 1989; UTHER 1984; VOIGT 1988.

3. See the survey by B. HOLBEK for the structural patterns (1984).

4. See the series "Asiatische Forschungen" by Harrassowitz (over 100 volumes).

5. This multiplicity was supported by the model of structural types developed by Lee HARING (1982).

6. See the article "Indianer"(chapter 3, "Südamerika") by S. A. Niles, in *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* 7 (1994), 128–38.

7. New motifs are found on pages 83–253 (WILBERT and SIMONEAU 1992).

8. CAMARENA and CHEVALIER have published a new type-index in Spanish (1995).

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