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## Review of Dov Noy, *Israel Folktale Archives Publication Series*

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## Review of Dov Noy, *Israel Folktale Archives Publication Series*

### **Abstract**

In 1962 the Ethnological Museum and Folklore Archives of Israel initiated a new series of folktale collections. Since then, two to four volumes have appeared each year, so that the Israel Folktale Archives Publication Series now stands at the substantial number of fifteen books and booklets. In addition to the texts, each of these include notes, type and motif indexes, and summaries in English, all of which make the small volumes valuable not only to the student of Judaica but to the comparative folklorist as well.

### **Disciplines**

Cultural History | Folklore | Jewish Studies | Near and Middle Eastern Studies | Oral History

Inclusions: He has included the various journals of England and Lowland Scotland, the county and shire and other volumes of English collectors, up to the Celtic borders. Similarly, in Canada and in the United States he has included only the materials of English, Lowland Scottish, and Scotch-Irish immigrants to North America.

The index before us, therefore, has been reduced to a single and definite purpose: "To study the folktales of the English language tradition in both the British Isles and North America, to show what is included in the corpus of each country, to show the frequency of occurrence and distribution of each tale, and to determine, as far as possible, what the relationship between the tales of the two countries has been" (p. vi). In the body of the work Baughman has included 371 types, with 1,652 variants, and 1,211 whole-number motifs, with 11,431 variants. A simple table in the Introduction reveals the varying proportions of tale types in the two countries: there are about the same number of Animal Tales, but America seems to have yielded something like twice the number of Ordinary Folktales and about four times the number of Jokes and Anecdotes. The tabulations of motifs show that these are much more diverse in distribution. For instance, under "Marvels: F200-399, Fairies and Elves" there are four times the number of variants in England. On the other hand, under "X900-1899, Humor of Lies and Exaggerations" there are about one hundred times more in America. These are some of the more significant findings presented in the introductory tables.

Some comments on the project as a whole are in order. Although Baughman has scanned some 1,200 articles, books, and runs of journals for the study (and says that a complete coverage of the field would take a lifetime), there are some important omissions. He has used the theses and dissertations in the Indiana University Library, but apparently he has not made use of those in other universities. For instance, my dissertation at the University of Kentucky was not covered, although the published representative tales in *South from Hell-fer-Sartin*, containing about half of the story variants, was used. The many archives in libraries and with individuals were not surveyed. The runs of current folklore magazines were examined, but not all of the short-lived ones, such as *Kentucky Folklore and Poetry* and the *Bulletin of the Virginia Folklore Society*. A journal missed was *West Virginia Folklore* (1952-1967). Some of the late-starting magazines such as *Northeast Folklore*, *Potash Kettle*, and the *Oregon Folklore Bulletin* (now *Northwest Folklore*), may not have appeared in time for his final revision of 1964. Likewise, many of the general, regional, musical, and literary monthlies and quarterlies were not scanned—though, as the compiler says, it would have taken a lifetime to cover the entire field.

As it stands we have a usable but not perfect type and motif index of England and North America, one cited by Stith Thompson for the more detailed coverage of Anglo-American folktale materials. It may be the best of this kind we can hope to have for some time.

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LEONARD ROBERTS

*Israel Folktale Archives Publication Series*, General Editor, Dov Noy.

In 1962 the Ethnological Museum and Folklore Archives of Israel initiated a new series of folktale collections. Since then, two to four volumes have appeared each

year, so that the Israel Folktale Archives Publication Series now stands at the substantial number of fifteen books and booklets. In addition to the texts, each of these includes notes, type and motif indexes, and summaries in English, all of which make the small volumes valuable not only to the student of Judaica but to the comparative folklorist as well.

The collecting of these tales started in 1955 under the direction of Dov Noy. His project has had a dual purpose: first, the salvage of the folklore of incoming Jewish ethnic groups before drastic cultural change wipes it out completely, and second, the classification of these texts on a systematic basis in order to make them available to further research. Ultimately, Dov Noy intends to explore the thematic continuity of Jewish folklore, the similarities between the traditions of geographically remote Jewish communities, and the relationships between the folklore of the Jews and that of the people among whom they live.

To achieve these goals Noy has organized a network of volunteer collectors who devote themselves to the accurate recording of oral traditions. (For a recent report on the progress of this project see Dov Noy, "Collecting Folktales in Israel: Ten Years of a Project," *In the Dispersion*, VII [1967], 151-167.) The majority of the most active collectors are teachers, community workers, clerks, and occasional writers who have ample opportunity to contact informants from various ethnic groups in the course of their own work. The quantity of texts they have recorded illustrates their devotion to this project: more than ten of these amateur folklorists have collected 150 tales each.

The present Israel Folktale Archives Publication Series is one of the outlets through which these texts are made available to interested readers. So far, over 280 tales have appeared in this form, and, since in most cases they are recorded from immigrant informants, they represent more than twenty-two countries, ranging from Russia to Yemen. Most of them, however, originated from Mediterranean and Near Eastern countries, including those from various ethnic groups who have lived in Israel for many years, such as Druzes, Samaritans, local Arabs, and Ashkenazic and Sephardic Jews.

There are three types of collections in this publication series: annual anthologies, regional collections, and selections from the repertoires of individual narrators. The annual anthologies are a by-product of the institution's procedures. The archivists accumulate the texts submitted to them during a particular month, and only at the end of this period do they classify, index, and file them away. At this point, a committee of judges selects the "tales of the month." Twelve such texts constitute an annual anthology. So far five of these books have appeared: Dov Noy, *A Tale for Each Month* 1961, IFAPS (No. 1) Haifa, 1962; Dov Noy, *A Tale for Each Month* 1962, IFAPS (No. 3), Haifa, 1963; Ziporah Kagan, *A Tale for Each Month* 1963, IFAPS (No. 6), Haifa, 1964; Ziporah Kagan, *A Tale for Each Month* 1964, IFAPS (No. 9), Haifa 1965; and Dov Noy, *A Tale for Each Month* 1965, IFAPS (No. 11), Haifa, 1966. Each collection contains biographical data about both collectors and informants and, occasionally, descriptions of the narrating circumstances themselves. Theoretically, such a serial publication might have had significant value; if the judging committee had established its criteria with sufficient care, these small volumes could have provided an adequate sample of the art of storytelling in a particular culture and time or could have reflected the nature of the tales received by the Archives during a certain year. Unfortunately, no such standards had been formulated. The selection, as Dov Noy has pointed out, is

often accidental and subjective, and thus the potential value of this type of collection remains to be explored.

The second type of book in this series is the regional collections of tales. They comprise a selection of tales recorded by a single collector, who, owing to his position, was able to contact many narrators in that area. The regionality of these collections implies neither a higher preponderance of local legends nor any ethnic homogeneity of these traditions. Thus, for example, Zalman Baharav's *Sixty Tales: Collected from Narrators in Ashkelon* (ed. Dov Noy, IFAPS, No. 5, Haifa 1964) includes mainly North African, Asian, and European *Märchen* and has little to do with local traditions about the ancient city of Ashkelon.

Other regional collections are Jacob Avitsuk, *The Tree that Absorbed Tears* (ed. Dov Noy, IFAPS, No. 7, Haifa, 1965); Eliezer Marcus, *Min ha-Mabua (From the Fountainhead); Forty Four Folktales Collected by the "Mabuim" School-pupils* (IFAPS, No. 12, Haifa, 1966), and Samuel Zanvel Pipe, *Twelve Folktales from Sanok* (ed. Dov Noy, IFAPS, No. 15, Haifa, 1967). These last two books require special attention.

*Min ha-Mabua* is a collection of tales recorded by the pupils of a regional school in the Northern Negev from their parents. Methodologically such a project could serve as a pilot study to locate potential informants and illustrate the dynamics of folklore in the interactions between parents and children. Pedagogically it is an example of applied folklore at its best. In a situation of cultural change, such as immigration, children confront the inevitable conflict between school and home. Whereas the school education stands for modernization and progress, the culture of the family circle is likely to represent tradition and backwardness. Thus, by initiating such a collecting project, the teachers provide the sanction of modernization for the traditional literature and help to bridge the gap between school and home and reduce the tensions of cultural change. If the concept of applied folklore is to have any meaning, such a project is definitely one of its better examples.

*Twelve Folktales from Sanok* is the only collection in this series the texts of which were not recorded in Israel. Sanok is a town in Galicia, Poland. This exception was made in order to commemorate Samuel Zanvel Pipe, a Jewish folklorist who was killed by the Nazis in 1943 in Poland. Pipe was a student of Y. L. Cahan. The letters his teachers sent him appeared in *Studies in Yiddish Folklore* (ed. Max Weinreich [New York, 1952], pp. 316–351). By the outbreak of the Second World War he had been an accomplished scholar who had already published several articles in Yiddish about Jewish folksongs and children games. His only essay in English is "Napoleon in Jewish Folklore" (*Yivo Annual of Jewish Social Science*, I [1946], 294–304). The present booklet contains some texts which were published previously in Yiddish and others which are taken from a manuscript in the possession of Pipe's brothers.

The third group of publications in this series consists of selections from the repertoires of individual narrators. Most of these booklets are slimmer than the rest of the collections, containing from five to, at the most, eighteen tales each. They are not intended as exhaustive studies of single informants, but rather as glimpses at the art of the narrators whose tales are filed with the Israel Folktales Archives. In some cases, the informants actually wrote down these tales from memory, as for example Miriam Yeshiva, *Seven Folktales* (ed. Dov Noy, IFAPS, No. 2, Haifa, 1963); Moshe Nehmad,

"The New Garment," in *Five Folktales from Jewish-Persian Tradition* (ed. Otto Schnitzler, IFAPS, No. 14, Haifa, 1966), and Gershon Bribram, *Jewish Folk-Stories from Hungary* (ed. Otto Schnitzler, IFAPS, No. 10, Haifa, 1965). In other cases, the texts were written down from actual oral narration, as Esther Weinstein, *Grandma Esther Relates* (ed. Ziporah Kagan, IFAPS, No. 4, Haifa, 1964), and Yifrah Haviv, *Never Despair, Seven Folktales, Related by Aliza Anidjar from Tangiers* (ed. Edna Cheichel, IFAPS, No. 13, Haifa, 1966). Another book, Ratson Tsadaqa, *Samaritan Legends: Twelve Legends from Oral Tradition* (ed. Dov Noy, IFAPS, No. 8, Haifa, 1965), combines both tales written down from memory and tales recorded from other informants. This particular small volume of legends is unique among all the other publications in that series, for it is the only collection of a non-Jewish ethnic group published by Archives so far.

The Samaritans, who practice a syncretistic religion with many Jewish elements in it, number four hundred people at the present time. They have lived in Shechem and its surroundings since the Biblical period (see II Kings 17:24-29). In fact, this is probably the only group that has lived in the land of Israel as a religious, social, and ethnic group continuously since that time. This social-religious and geographic continuity makes their folklore an extremely interesting test case in examining the historicity of oral tradition. Thus, some of the events related in their narratives can be dated as far back as the fourth and sixth centuries, whereas others are concerned with relatively recent periods, such as the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. However, the transmission of these tales has not depended exclusively on oral channels, for many of them have parallels in Samaritan chronicles. Because of the nature of the material, the questions of the historicity of the events and the relationship between oral and written texts have become a central theme in Noy's annotation, and he has omitted in most cases any motif analysis of these legends.

In general, the annotation to the texts of these small publications is excellent, rich in reference to Jewish written sources, comparisons with parallel versions filed with the Archives, and references to similar tales in the folk literature of other languages. Very often the English version of the notes provides the reader with summaries that are too brief and do not reflect their actual quality. For example, the note to tale No. 1 in *Twelve Folktales from Sanok* amounts to a brief comparative bibliographic essay on the jester figure in European Jewish folklore. The English summary, however, lists only the Aarne-Thompson type number of this story and its various motifs.

Perhaps this brevity of the English sections is a result of the financial problems of the Archives. Almost every preface to these small volumes refers to the difficulties which beset these publications. The budgetary problems affect not only the format of these booklets, but also the extent of research which they encompass. Thus, *Samaritan Legends* is only a fraction of the folklore of this group; the regional collections do not represent a systematic survey of the folklore in these areas, and the selections from the repertoire of individual informants are too meager to reflect the gamut of tradition these narrators command. To a great extent, these collections only indicate the potential resources for folklore research which exist in Israel. We hope that in the future the Israel Folktale Archives will overcome these technical difficulties and will be able to issue more complete studies of the folklore of ethnic groups, regions, and individual in-

formants, studies which will include, in addition to the comparative-bibliographic and biographical data, ethnographic descriptions of the dynamics of folklore.

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DAN BEN-AMOS

*Folktales of Germany*. Edited by Kurt Ranke. Translated by Lotte Bauman. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966. *Folktales of the World*. Pp. xxviii + 257 \$5.50.)

*Folktales of Germany* is one of the many volumes already published—there are more to come—in the series *Folktales of the World* under the general editorship of Richard M. Dorson. This volume contains eighty-two tales, varying in length from eight lines (the section titled "Numskulls") to several pages. To judge from the examples given in this work, a folktale may be of any length. It must have been orally recited at one time or another; a collector records it for posterity and then he or someone else aligns it, more or less, with a motif in Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* or with a type in the Aarne-Thompson *The Types of the Folktale*.

The annotated portion of this collection is the real gem. Here one discovers that no few of the contributions have a rather widespread and ancient usage as well as a written heritage. The comparative notes (pp. 197–223) are a feast for the folktale scholar. This imposing collection was selected from the many unpublished manuscripts in the stock of the Zentralarchiv für deutsche Volkserzählungen in Marburg/Lahn and consists of tales recorded within the last century. Should one ever doubt how great a variety of narratives falls under the classification of folktale, this collection should set him straight. It includes "Sage, Märchen, Legend, anecdote, animal tale, etc." (page xxvii). The "etc." is further clarified on the back inside cover flap as "tales of spirits, ghosts, and giants; tales of patience and righteousness, of wise men and numskulls, of saints and sinners, of the rag, the tag and the bobtail of Silesia, Saxony, Westphalia, Hesse, Schleswig-Holstein, Austria and Alsace-Lorraine." The translator of Kurt Ranke's notes (or are the notes Ranke's own English?) also mentions frequently "this joke," "this farce" or "farcical tale," so that coverage of narration of practically every type is most complete.

The tales in their English translation, despite the occurrence of a flavorful four-letter word in several of them, have preserved very little of the charm they most certainly must have had in their original dialect forms. The moment one begins reading a tale, one is aware that one is reading a translation and not a rendition into English equivalents. As difficult as it is in a task of this sort, the folk atmosphere should be preserved, no matter what the effort in time and patience.

I shall not enter into a discussion of the contribution of the Grimms in this area. Professor Dorson has taken care of this in his most erudite Foreword, but it may be summed up in his own words, "Kurt Ranke is the outstanding folktale scholar in Germany today, sharing the enthusiasm of the Grimms for *Märchen* and *Sagen*, but critical of their *Märchen*-polishing and excessive chauvinism" (p. xxiv). He adds further, "The present volume represents the first major collection of German folktales to appear in English since the translation of the Grimms' *Kinder- und Haus-*