

*Tales from Ulithi Atoll: A Comparative Study in Oceanic Folklore.* WILLIAM A. LESSA. (University of California Publications, Folklore Studies: 13.) Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1961. x, 493 pp., 2 appendices, literature cited, 5 maps. \$8.50.

*Reviewed by J. L. FISCHER, Tulane University*

This monograph is divided into two major parts. The first part consists of English translations of 24 folktales which the author collected on the Micronesian atoll of Ulithi during his fieldwork there after World War II. Each tale is accompanied by comments giving items of cultural background helpful in understanding the tale. While no extensive Ulithian texts are given and the tales were evidently recorded with the aid of an interpreter, the English versions appear to be full and careful translations. This part of the monograph is therefore a welcome and useful addition to the series of publications by Lessa on the ethnography of Ulithi.

The second major part of the monograph presents and discusses the wider distribution of the 16 tale types and 15 motifs found in Ulithi which were also shared by other cultures whose folktales were examined. Lessa has tried to examine all published—and some unpublished—folktale collections from Oceania, extending to Australia and Madagascar, and has examined some also from Eurasia as well. He estimates that he has consulted perhaps about thirty thousand tales (p. 4). This seems modest if anything in view of his 29 page bibliography, containing mostly references to collections of tales.

In this comparative part of the study Lessa also inserts some comments on a variety of theoretical approaches to folklore as the material stimulates him. Thus an Oedipus tale stimulates a discussion of psychoanalytic theory; the motif "Island Fished Up By Demigod" leads to some remarks on naturalistic theories of mythology; and at various points he takes up the question of myth as embroidered history, as institutional charter in Malinowski's sense, etc. However, the bulk of this part of the study consists in a presentation in summary form of the tale types and motifs from other cultures in Oceania, and the greatest contribution of the monograph is probably in its identification of historical relationships between the folktales of Ulithi and other cultures. In this connection Lessa notes that Ulithi shares practically nothing in the way of folktale content with Australia, although clear relationships appear with every other area in Oceania, including Madagascar, and with Eurasia.

The genetic relationships between tales which the author proposes all appear sound and conservative, although as he points out, some of the relationships connect rather remote places with Ulithi. His caution is indicated by the fact that out of 167 motifs from the Ulithian tales listed in Appendix B only 15 are recognized as occurring elsewhere in Oceania (p. 446). On the basis of my own familiarity with the tales from Truk and Ponape I believe that a review of the material with somewhat laxer but still respectable standards of cognation would yield a much higher proportion of cognates. But then it is a tricky task to establish respectable standards of cognation for folktale material. When comparing 24 tales with 30,000 others it is probably an inevitable strategy to concentrate on the most plausible and firm cognates, in view of the time-consuming methods available to date. Sooner or later it will probably be desirable to assign a major part of the task of comparing texts and detecting cognates to computers, but before this we must first learn more about semantic componential analysis of texts in order to give the computers the necessary information.

In his conclusion Lessa suggests it would be interesting in further work to study

tales for "changes in content and stress in varying cultural milieus" (p. 454). He makes a few remarks along these lines as it is, e.g., he notes that the spirits in Ulithian tales seem more friendly than those in tales from Yap and Ponape, "where the present inhabitants are aggressive," in contrast to the benign Ulithians (p. 169). However, elsewhere Lessa implies an opposition between genetic and other explanations of folk-tale content—e.g. his discussion of psychoanalysis versus diffusion on p. 449—and takes the diffusionist side. He contends that "Ulithian culture is a conglomerate with not too distinctive a character. The folktales clearly indicate this" (p. 2). This is probably a natural conclusion, given the primary objective of searching for plausible cognates of Ulithian tales. Yet if one were to build on Lessa's study by taking a few of the cognate tales he has identified, concentrating on the differences, and investigating thoroughly the associated sociocultural background, I suspect that a sharper characterization of Ulithian folktales in terms of values or ideal personality might be possible.

*The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography.* ANTTI AARNE. Second revision translated and enlarged by STITH THOMPSON. (FF Communications Vol. LXXV, No. 184.) Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1961. 588 pp., bibliography, index. 3000 mk (paper bound); 3300 mk (cloth bound).

Reviewed by KATHARINE LUOMALA, *University of Hawaii*

This book cannot be reviewed in any ordinary sense of the word. Who, from a narrow base of acquaintance with relatively few tales of the Europe-to-India tradition, can review an encyclopedic reference work founded on knowledge and perspective gained from surveying hundreds of collections, published and unpublished, in that traditional as well as analyses of specific tales? *The Types of the Folktale* is a production to be greeted with hosannas and with humble gratitude and warm congratulations to Dr. Stith Thompson for undertaking and completing so successfully his second revision of Antti Aarne's *Verzeichnis der Märchentypen* (FFC 3, Helsinki, 1910). To share in the satisfaction of the accomplishment is a core of colleagues whose contributions, sparked and kept glowing by Dr. Thompson's leadership, skill, persistence, and patience, cannot be overlooked or underestimated.

What makes the publication even more noteworthy is that it is only three years since the appearance of the sixth and last volume of Thompson's revision and enlargement of his *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* (Bloomington, Ind., 1955–1958). Also during these last few years he has published with joint authorship other catalogues of motifs and of tale-types relating specifically to India. Work on these and other studies has been carried out despite Dr. Thompson's busy schedule in retirement as guest professor in folklore in more than one university in the United States and as lecturer and guide to folklorists in his travels outside the country.

Reference works like these indexes of motifs and tale-types are of fundamental importance to any scholar with scientific interest in orally transmitted narratives. They can also be both timesavers and sources of information to anyone, who, curious about a given tale or motif, wonders where else it is known and where to look for what may have been learned about it.

As with any reference work, one must make a little effort to understand any of these folkloric guides as to the purpose of each, its organization, and the kind of information it can reasonably be expected to provide. The point is worth stressing in a periodical like the *AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST* because a surprising number of "old