

BOOK REVIEW

Heda Jason: *Studies in Jewish Ethnopoetry*. (Narrating-art-content-message-genre).

Vol. 72 of: *Asian Folklore and Folklife Monographs*. Taipei (Taiwan), The Orient Cultural Service, 1975. 259 pages. US\$7.00 (Orders to be addressed to: The Orient Cultural Service, 422 Fulin Rd, Shihlin, Taipei, Taiwan, China).

As we learn from the Preface, this book brings together papers written independently at various dates, under the general heading "Jewish Ethnopoetry". This ethnopoetry is—or was—part of the traditional culture of the Near Eastern Jews living as minorities in the countries along the African and Asiatic Mediterranean as well as other regions, such as Yemen, Mesopotamia, Afghanistan, India and even China (where there was once a Jewish Community in Kaifeng, not mentioned in the book). The creation of the State of Israel in 1948 brought about a large scale immigration to that country so that many, perhaps most, of the Jewish minority groups within the once co-territorial cultures ceased to exist. In the Introduction we find much valuable information on the history and fate of many Jewish diaspora communities.

The texts investigated by H. Jason have been recorded from immigrants to Israel and are kept in the Israel Folklore Archives. Throughout the book Jason places the Jewish folk poetry in its context of the social and cultural environment of the Jewish folk poets in concordance with the pioneering principles of Prof. Linda Dégh (Indiana University), laid down, among others, in her paper "Some Questions of the Social Function of Story Telling" (*Acta Ethnographica* 6:91-146), principles which are a necessary complementation to the Aarne-Thomson folk literature research method.

The chapter headings are as follows:

Chapter 1: Folk Narrative Art in Yemen and Israel.

Chapter 2: Concerning the "Historical" and the "Local" Legends and their Relatives.

Chapter 3: The Rabbi and the King: Aspects of the Character in the Sacred Legend.

Chapter 4: Conflict and Resolution in the Sacred Legend.

Chapter 5: Proverbs in Society: The Problem of Meaning and Function.

Chapter 6: Numskull Tales: an Attempt at Interpretation (see *Asian Folklore Studies* 31 (1972:1-39)).

Chapter 7: The Jewish Joke: The Problem of Definition.

A Bibliography and an Index conclude the book. Heda Jason, linguistically adequately prepared for her task, gives an unbiased presentation of Jewish Folk Poetry in accordance with all the up-to-date rules of folklore research. Her Ph.D. thesis ("Conflict and Resolution in Jewish Near Eastern Sacred Tales", Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind.) makes up Chapters 3 and 4 in the present book. This book is without doubt an important contribution to Judaistic research work and at the same time to the Science of Folklore and Folklife. M.E.