

ISLAM

SCHWARZBAUM, HAIM. *Biblical and Extra-Biblical Legends in Islamic Folk-Literature*. Beiträge zur Sprach- und Kulturgeschichte des Orients, Band 30. Walldorf-Hessen/Germany: Verlag für Orientkunde Dr. H. Vorn-dran, 1982. 237 pages. Bibliography, tables of types and motifs, general index. Paperback DM 69.50.

This is a book on applied folklore—a new branch which still evokes hot debates among folklorists. Advocates of this branch defend its practical use in life, whereas its opponents condemn its abuses and misapplications and give as examples Communist Russia and Nazi Germany, where folklore has been used to propagate political ideologies. The opponents can now strengthen their case by citing the book under review as an example of the misuse of folklore in another field—religion.

The main aim of the author is “to place Arab legends associated with Biblical Personages within the matrix of international folklore research” (7). He gives examples of the narrative material embodied in the Qur’ān (the Holy Book of Islam), the *Ḥadīth* (an account of what Prophet Muḥammad said or did), *Tafsīr* (Islamic exegetical literature), *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā’* (the stories of the Prophets) and Muslim historiography, and attempts to trace the narratives embodied in these literatures to their allegedly Jewish sources.

In dealing with the stories of the Qur’ān, Schwarzbaum bases his study on an argument unacceptable to Muslims, namely, the denial of Muḥammad’s prophethood. According to Schwarzbaum, it is impossible that the Qur’ān should be true or that Muḥammad has been a prophet. Schwarzbaum claims that Muḥammad was a storyteller who obtained his stories through oral channels. No evidences are given, and no detailed comparative study of the stories in the Qur’ān, the Bible and the Torah (the Holy Book of Judaism) is carried out. All we have is statements such as: “Muhammad’s dependence on his Jewish and Christian informants is well known. Any one studying the Qur’ān at once perceives that its main narrative fibre has been spun from hearsay” (11, 12). This argument is an old one. Here it is revived with an up-to-date embellishment and an allegedly scientific approach. The similarities between Islam, Christianity and Judaism do not mean that Islam borrowed from Christianity and Judaism, or that “Christianity . . . was profoundly affected by Judaism” (13), but that originally all were divine revelations (cf. Khalifa 1983: Chapter I).

The Qur’ān and the *Ḥadīth* are the two main sources of Islam. The *Ḥadīth* is the second in authority to the Qur’ān. The validity of the text of each *Ḥadīth* depends on two criteria, namely: the *isnād* (chain of informants) and the *matn* (content). Accordingly, the degree of trustworthiness of each *Ḥadīth* is established. The *Ḥadīth* is either *ṣaḥīḥ* (sound), *ḥasan* (good), *ḍa’īf* (weak) or *saqīm* (infirm). The first category of *Ḥadīth* is the genuine one because it satisfies both criteria. But Schwarzbaum accepts only the second criterion (the *matn*) and rejects the first one (*isnād*) as “spurious forged” (55), “not significant, untrustworthy in most cases” (32), and “nothing else than fictitious fabrications made up for various pragmatic purposes” (24). This allows him to take into consideration narrative material (embodied in weak and infirm *Ḥadīth*) which Muslims consider invalid and therefore untrustworthy.

With regard to Islamic exegetical literature and accounts of the lives of the Prophets, Schwarzbaum speaks also of the impact of Christianity and consequently Judaism on the two genres. But we have to remember that Islam regards Judaism and Christianity as religions of God, and recognizes Moses and Christ as prophets and the Torah

and the Bible as revelations from God. It is therefore only natural that earlier commentators on the Qur'ān draw on Judaism and Christianity, and that earlier writers give accounts of the lives of the prophets because these prophets are regarded as predecessors of Prophet Muḥammad, "the Seal of Prophets." Similarly, earlier Muslim historians draw from the same sources. The authors in the three genres, some of whom were Muslim Jews, have, however, included in their writings Jewish folk material to the extent that some strict Muslims regard these writings as untrustworthy and depend on the Qur'ān and *Ḥadīth* only, and that some Arab folklorists call for an immediate scrutiny of the material in the three genres.

In the last chapter of the book, Schwarzbaum illustrates his folkloristic approach to the Qur'anic narratives by taking two examples. The first example is the story summarized in Verse 261 in *Sūra* (Chapter) II. Here he gives the "original" Jewish story which he claims Muḥammad has heard from Jewish and Christian informants. And here again he uses folklore—this time politically—by pointing out that the story acquires a special significance in view of Muḥammad's pronounced affirmation of Israel's Return to Zion and the Rehabilitation of the Holy City, i.e. Jerusalem. In the second example, he uses folklore to serve a religious purpose, namely, to refute part of Verse 30, Chapter IX: "The Jews say Uzair is the Son of God"—on the grounds that Muḥammad confuses in his mind what he hears from his informants. Schwarzbaum holds that "in *oral* narration such blunders are quite frequent" (99), and illustrates this by Verse 29, Chapter XIX, where Mary, the mother of Jesus is designated as "Sister of Aaron," whereas Aaron is in fact her paternal uncle. Here Schwarzbaum's knowledge of Arabic fails him or he ignores the wanted meaning. He takes the word "sister" literally, and not in the broad sense. Aaron was the first in the line of Israelite priesthood. Mary came of a priestly family, and was therefore "sister of Aaron."

A recent work on applied folklore (Hurreiz 1986, 24) has pointed out that "ethnocentric and ideologically biased folklorists oriented folklore material and studies to serve certain ideologies and groups to the exclusion of others." Schwarzbaum denies Muḥammad's prophethood, regards the Qur'ān, the Holy Book of more than one billion Muslims, as folk literature, identifies the Qur'anic narratives as an "*islamization of genuine, authentic Jewish legends*" (58), and claims that this phenomenon of islamization is "quite common in the history of post-Qur'anic sources" (58). This implies that seen through Schwarzbaum's "eyes," Qur'anic narratives and Arabic narratives associated with Biblical personages are in general of Jewish origin!

In conclusion, the overall impression one gets from the book is lack of impartiality and willful bias. The study satisfies only those who share Schwarzbaum's attitude—an "attitude, so common a generation ago, is today giving way to mutual tolerance and an interest in dialogue" (Scale 1970, 3).

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CANADA

QUIGLEY, COLIN. *Close to the Floor. Folk Dance in Newfoundland.* Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Publications, Monograph Series No. 3. St John's Newfoundland, Canada: Department of Folklore, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1985. Viii + 128 pages. Maps, bibliography, list of sources. Soft cover US\$10.00; ISBN 0-88901-099-4.

If you are a square dancer or a trusting person, you might read this book from front to back without too much trouble. Although the book is short, the first two chapters provide much detailed information about people, places, and types of dances that make you wonder how it will all fit together. Chapter Three on the dances in context and Chapter Four on the dynamics of change use those details admirably to describe the social network and the role of preserving traditions in a changed society.

Hence, it may be good to preview Chapter Four before beginning the book. Then you will realize that the data is mainly about the dances of the first half of the twentieth-century and that the Red Cliff Dancers represent an attempt to keep alive dance forms that are no longer a natural expression of community individuality. Your attention will be focused also more on the numbers of people involved in the dance than upon the various twists and turns of the styles. At least I found myself doubting certain reports (not dated) and, as a square dancer of years ago, trying to visualize the movements of the various styles. The information in the fourth chapter resolved my difficulties.

Though the art is dying out due to the influence of new music and dances brought by radio and television and to the mobility offered by cars, Colin Quigley first learned of these dances through a 1978 Canadian Broadcasting Company television film. Both the music and the style of dancing intrigued him and he set out on a study which involved listening to tapes of the music, interviewing people, and participating in the celebrations when these dances were performed.

Chapter One is a folksy introduction to the famous fiddlers and solo dancers of the region and a general description of the place and the types of people who settled there. The immigrants from southwest England and southeast Ireland brought their music and dances as well as their respective religions. Though the communities were mixed, either Roman Catholicism or Anglicanism would be dominant in a particular community. United Church of Christ members are also reported. The religious tint of the community affected the days and the manner in which the dances were held.

Chapter Two draws on the author's musical background in the investigation of the various dances. Names of dances varied greatly as the fiddlers learned mainly by observation and imitation and not from musical notations preserved in a book. Although there is a chart to show the differences in the square dance figures among the communities, some simple chart using circles and squares to depict the basic movements would have made the reading easier. (See, for example, *The Illustrated Extended and Mainstream Basic Movements of Square Dancing.*) The emphasis, however, is mainly on the numbers of people involved in the dances, the types of movements, and