Isabel Cardigos and her collaborators have presented us with a very welcome window to Portuguese culture. While the panorama of the story-scape is interesting in itself, it raises many culture-historical questions.

While working on her Catalogue, Isabel Cardigos seemed to have encountered two problems. The first was to describe the Portuguese oral folktale, and the other was to try out the new type of catalog, presented by H.J. Uther (FFC 284–286) as recommended by the editors of the FFC. In the first task the author has succeeded admirably. A solid foundation for further investigations of the Portuguese folktale has been laid. Now we know which stories are told (except for legends, of course) and which types are popular. The proportions of types to texts can be computed and compared to other repertoires (see, Boggs 1930). For instance, there are 739 animal tales, distributed among 115 types; of these 9 types are extremely popular with over 20 texts each, up to 52 texts (types 1, 4, 15, 60, 62, 106, *122F(Marzolph), 130 and 225) and 12 types have 10–19 texts (types 2B, 3, 6, 9, 34B, 56A, 62 *A, 122A, 122F, 155, 222, and 275C). A detailed analysis of the types used (or not used!) will show how far the Portuguese oral literature fits or does not fit into the three cultural sub-areas of Christian Europe and its Iberian part, the Mediterranean area, and the Muslim culture area. While the latter is now a neighbor, let us not forget that it once included the territory of what is today Portugal.

Indian Folklore Research Journal, No.9, 2008: 67-69
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As for the second problem, namely the usage of ATU (Aarne-Thompson-Uther) as the basis for a regional catalog, the result is less satisfactory. ATU caused a large disorder and confusion by canceling so many AaTh (Aarne-Thompson) types, by rewriting type descriptions while using an existing AaTh number and often title, and by not including regional types which were devised between 1961 and 2004. Number 34 with its sub-numbers 34A, 34B and 34B* can serve as an illustration of the disorder which ATU has caused the AaTh system. Numbers AaTh 34* and 34A* are missing in ATU although they should be used before 34B* according to the accepted order (see Jason 2000: 80). ATU canceled number 34B* (Uther, vol. III, p. 8). For number 34, Uther wrote a new description of content in a way to include both AaTh 34 and 34B. The latter is a separate episode, but ATU did not give it a separate code, and now it is not possible to quote it (no code “34 II”). ATU left AaTh 34A, with a more verbose description of content (which does not add details!). Next, ATU canceled the AaTh number 34B*, the content of which differs considerably from the other “34” family of types. Thus, this content (which is oral!) has lost its code. Faced with such confusion, what shall the next poor cataloger do? Our colleague Cardigos had two ways out of the impasse: to either reintroduce the “good old” AaTh’s types or devise a new number for the content already described and numbered by AaTh. Cardigos should be thanked for choosing the first alternative (e.g., return of type AaTh 34B to independent use) as the second alternative would have only added to the confusion. Cardigos had to use 50 such numbers; compare this with the 44 numbers from regional catalogs of ethnic groups from the Iberian Peninsula used earleir. These quantities demonstrate clearly that AaTh cannot be discarded and ATU does not supersede it. The need for using the discarded AaTh numbers resulted in numbers like “435P (AT)” which parallel “1088*A (Cardigos)” which is the usage adopted for marking a regional catalog: “ATU 425P (AT),” parallels “ATU 1088*A (Cardigos).” Does the discipline want such a relationship to the AaTh catalogue that was up to now the axis of our system? Was ATU meant to replace AaTh with a new system, or to update it? (See my review of ATU in Fabula 47 (2006): 172–186). The difficulty which ATU created by not incorporating new types from regional catalogs is also evident when a new regional catalog devices a type for a story-content which has already been assigned a type number in an earlier catalog. Example: AaTh 929 *B (Jason 1965) and AaTh 882*C (Robe 1973) are taken over by Cardigos under Robe’s number. ATU should have combined the two numbers. Type 1526 *D (Cardigos) has an antecedent in type 1528 *B (Jason 1965); for the text summarized by Cardigos under no.1588** see no.926 *E–I (Jason 1975). The confusion also shows up when a new regional catalog uses a number already in use by an earlier
regional catalog; for instance: no. 873 *A is used by Jason 1965 and is now reused by Cardigos. However, the two contents are not connected at all. Similarly, No. 986 *A used by Jason 1988 has now been reused by Cardigos. Once again, there is no link between the two stories. Wasn't the ATU meant to do away with such confusion?

Let us thank Isabel Cardigos for her effort and start using Cardigos’ Catalogue in our work.

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