

## BOOK REVIEWS

SABATOS, Charles D. *Mit ve Tarih Arasında: Orta Avrupa Edebiyat Tarihinde Türk İmgesi*. [Between Myth and History: The Turkish Image in Central European Literature through History] İstanbul: Bilge Kültür Sanat, 2014. 256 p. ISBN 978-605-4921-22-5

The Turkish monograph *Between Myth and History: The Turkish Image in Central European Literature through History* is the first comprehensive and major work on the perception of Ottoman Turks in Slovak, Czech and Hungarian literature throughout history and will benefit Turkish scholars, practitioners and students alike. The main focus of this book are images of the Ottomans, both “historical” and “mythical” aspects of Turkish rule, from the sixteenth century to present day. As the author says “in East Central Europe, in contrast to Western powers, the image of the Turk was not a justification for imperialism and colonialism, but a means of preserving cultural identity when the homeland was threatened or occupied” (p. 255). However, Sabatos rightly differentiates between varieties of historical experiences with Turks in Czechia, Hungary and Slovakia. Whereas Czechs had only limited contact with the Ottomans, it is mostly mythical legacy that is prevalent in both their consciousness and literature. For Hungarians, on the other hand, the Ottoman impact and occupation is part of the national past and therefore more of a historical legacy. The case of Slovakia, according to the author, shows one of the more complex examples of the Turkish image in Central Europe: both historical and mythical. What is equally important to stress at the beginning is the fact that the writer has excellent knowledge of Slovak and Czech which means that he worked with original sources. The book under review is the fruit of more than a decade long uninterrupted methodical study between Bratislava, Prague, İstanbul and other locations.

The monograph is evenly divided into four chapters and well organised. In the first chapter, “The Historical Turk: Frontier Orientalism in Early Modern Literature” the author analyses representations of the Turks in Central Europe in historical chronicles and in folklore while using Andre Gingrich’s concept of “frontier orientalism”. Travel writings and captivity narratives include those of Georgius de Hungaria, the Czech Václav Vratislav z Mitrovic, and Slovak Štefan Pilárik. Turkish captivity was an important motif in folk culture, such as the anonymous historical songs “Siládi and Hadmáži,” and “The Turkish Tollman,” in which a Christian held in captivity in a border region of the Ottoman Empire bargains for his freedom by offering his daughter in marriage. Hungarian literature is full of images of Turks due to the direct occupation and personal experiences. For instance, the poet Miklós Zrínyi (the great-grandson of Szigetvár’s defender) immortalised the battle in an epic poem, *The Siege of Sziget*. Turkey was also a haven for political exiles such as Prince Ferenc Rákóczi II in the

eighteenth century. Kelemen Mikes, one of Rákóczi's entourage, wrote what is still considered outstanding work of eighteenth-century Hungarian prose in Turkey, his *Letters from Turkey 1718–58*.

Chapter two "The Metaphorical Turk: Encounters with the East in 19th Century Literature" concentrates on writers who turned history into metaphor and used the concept of the "Turkish threat" in order to create the sense of national identity and/or national emancipation. The Slovaks, for instance, who faced the pressure of "Magyarization" and persecution, often used the historically distant Ottoman threat to express their readiness to face Hungarian efforts at assimilation. The Turks also represented a safe and neutral topic that indirectly inspired national pride. The theoretical framework of this chapter draws on Hayden White's influential *Metahistory*.

Beginning from the nineteenth century the Ottoman-Turkish 'other' has widely been used, for example, also by Slovak historians, composers and writers in order to create and strengthen new Slovak identity, albeit this time in relation to Hungarians, Austrians and Czechs. Although the Ottoman threat was no longer a contemporary reality at that time, the ability to withstand foreign invasion was instrumental in the works of Slovak writers such as Samo Chalupka's *The Turk from Poniky*, Jozef Ignác Bajza's *The Adventures and Experiences of the Youth René* or Jan Cikker's opera *Beg Bajazid*.

In part three "The Mythical Turk: The Ottoman Legacy in Modern Czechoslovak Literature" the author argues that in modern society historical reality is replaced by an abstract meaning that Roland Barthes has described as the "concept". In twentieth-century Czechoslovakia, the Turkish theme was mainly seen in folklore and historical fiction, which invoked the era of the Ottoman invasions. The "rediscovered" Turkish threat shifted again in relation to the evolving Slovak or Czech sense of national identity.

Chapter four "The Metafictional Turk: Questions of Identity in Postmodern Literature" deals with the period after the Prague Spring of 1968 when Czechoslovakia was occupied by the Soviet Union. In this context the "Turkish threat" had been a relatively "safe" theme and a replacement for modern forms of repression. Ján Ballo in his *Flowers from Allah's Garden* is one of these writings that recreates the suffering and courage of the past as a message for the present. The more "metafictional" use of the Turks also continued into the twenty-first century, with Stanislav Komárek's *The Opšlstis Foundation*, which uses a Czech historian's research on the Janissaries for an ironic questioning of Central European past.

Great effort has been done in order to keep Slovak, Czech and Hungarian diacritics correct, but the final text contains a significant number of misprints. Here are only some of them: *Sziget veszedelem* instead of *Szigeti veszedelem* (p. 18), *Pút lásky* instead of *Pút lásky* (pp. 19, 91), *Eleslőveszet* instead of *Éleslővészet* (p. 22), *Kakošová* instead of *Kákošová* (pp. 67, 245), *Ludovit Štúr* not *Ludovit Stúr* (p. 90), *Slovenské národní pohádky* and not *Slovenské narodní pohadky* (p. 92), *Janicsarok vegnapjai* instead of *Janicsárok végnapjai* (p. 95), *Český literární mýtus a Slovensko* instead of *Český literární mýtus a Slovensko* (p. 157), *Mladé Leta* instead of *Mladé letá* (p. 167), *Zoltán* not *Zóltán* (p. 186), *Sťahovaví vtáci* not *Sťahovávi vtáci* (p. 214), *Karel Jaromil Erben* instead of *Karel Jaromír Erben* (p. 228) and many others. Some other inconsistencies appear from time to time in the book, for example when the author speaks of the

Hungarian (co-)king who ruled right after the battle of Mohács it is somewhat confusing to call him Ján Zápolya (p. 89) because in Slovak he is called Ján Zápoľský and in Hungarian János Zápolya. Notwithstanding, Sabatos' study is certainly one of the milestones in this area of research on Central European literary history through the lens of "frontier orientalism".

Although the book is in Turkish and therefore generally inaccessible to Slovaks or Czechs, indeed one could say to all non-Turks, the author has already published his research results in English in scientific articles such as the "Slovak Perceptions of the Ottoman Legacy in Eastern Europe," in *Middle Eastern Studies* 44 – 45 (2008): pp. 735 – 749. Also, I would warmly recommend the book to Slovak (and also Czech or Hungarian) publishers as this volume has a great deal to say to our scholars engaged both with Central European literatures and history, not excluding the broader public too.

Gabriel Pirický

ŠVIHRANOVÁ, Jarmila. *From ideology to politics of racism. German Southwest Africa (1884 – 1915)*. Sládkovičovo: Vysoká škola Danubius, 2015. 218 p. ISBN 978-8167-020-6

The title of the monograph promises an interesting reading about the process of the implementation of racism into political practice in Africa during the period of European imperialism of the 19th and early 20th century. During this period, there were many lively discussions among the intellectuals in Europe about the differences of human races and in the context of the development of new scientific disciplines such as sociology and anthropology, hardly a few of them doubted the cultural and biological superiority of the white race over the others.

All European countries that participated in the colonisation and division of the African continent in the 19th and 20th centuries applied to some extent these theories into political practice while managing their colonies. The book *From ideology to politics of racism* uses for illustration of this practice a German colony known as the German Southwest Africa (today Namibia).

The monograph is 218 pages and in relatively small space, readers will find a wealth of information as well as scientific facts. It is divided into 5 chapters and in terms of content, it can be divided into two basic parts. The first one analyses two theorists of European racism – Arthur Gobineau (1816 – 1882) and Huston Steward Chamberlain (1855 – 1927). The second part deals with the manifestations of racism in political practice in the colonial administration of German Southwest Africa. The author chose the method of intentionalism when writing memoirs, and in the introduction she indicates that this method emphasises the *ideology that forms the intention*.

In the analysis of the above-mentioned theorists of racism the author begins with a short summary of their life, work, and she focuses on particular circumstances, which