

THE TURKISH FOLK CULTURE IN WORK OF SLOVAK SCHOLARS

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In the last five decades of the 20th century the Slovak Turkologists did not only deal with the Turkish history and literature but they also paid their attention to the Turkish folklore.

The well-known Turkologist and connoisseur of Turkish folklore Armin Vámbery (Hermann Wamberger, 1832-1913), the professor of Oriental languages in the University of Budapest, was born at Dunajská Streda (according to some historians in Svätý Jur) in the South of Slovakia. His childhood and youth were spent here and later in Bratislava. At Imel village in the South of Slovakia was also born the Turkologist Jozef Blaškovič (1910-1990), the honorary member of the Turkish Linguistics Association (*Türk Dil Kurumu Şeref Üyesi*). His scholarly investigation was directed to the history of Turks within Slovakia and to the occurrence of Turkish words in Slovak with an accent on the toponyms.¹ From 1950 Blaškovič worked at the Charles University in Prague but he regularly contributed to the annual of the Slovak Orientalists *Asian and African Studies*.

The Jozef Blaškovič's study, published in *Asian and African Studies* 12/1976,² sets forth and discusses two Turkish poems which were composed during the course of the Ottoman campaign against Nové Zámky (Uyvar, Neuhäusel) in 1663. The author of the poems reflecting the historical event was an unknown folk poet Ahmed Üsküdarî. Nine Üsküdarî's poems including two dealing with the conquest of the Uyvar fortress were preserved in the old manuscript published by Feyziye Abdullah³ in 1936. On the basis of the poems Blaškovič

¹ BLASKOVICS, J.: *Some Toponyms of Turkic Origin in Slovakia*. In: Acta Orientalia ASH 27, 1973, pp. 191-199.

² See Bibliography I/7.

³ ABDULLAH, F.: *XVII inci asır sazşairlerinden Üsküdarî*. In: Ülkü, VIII, No. 44, Istanbul 1936, pp. 119-122.

came to the conclusion that Üsküdarî was probably a member of the Corps of Janissaries led by Ibrahim Pasha, who is mentioned in one of Üsküdarî's poem, and that he took part not only in the expedition to Uyvar, but also in the conquest of Crete (1669). Blaškovič gives the basic data concerning the Turkish folk poetry and also mentions European and Turkish research workers working in the sphere, which is an important part of the cultural inheritance of the Turks. The transcribed texts of Üsküdarî's two poems were translated by Blaškovič into German and supplemented by their schema of metre and rhyme.

Jozef Blaškovič can be regarded as a founder of the post-war modern Turkology in Slovakia owing to his translations from Turkish literature and folklore into the Slovak language. He also published some of his translations of Turkish fairy tales and anecdotes of Nasreddin Hoca in Slovak periodicals.

The publication of Turkish fairy tales was arranged by Milan Odran⁴ who attended a few semesters of Turkish during his study of Bulgarian language and literature at the University of Sophia. Unfortunately the Odran's translation of Turkish fairy tales cannot be evaluated as successful.

On the other hand the book of anecdotes of Nasreddin Hoca, which were selected and translated into Slovak by Vojtech Kopčan (1940-2000),⁵ is evaluated very positively. Kopčan studied in Prague under leadership of Jozef Blaškovič and he concentrated his research activities on the investigation of Ottoman history in relation to the countries of Central Europe including Slovakia. He went in for translation as well, mainly from the Ottoman historians.⁶ Kopčan translated with a commentary the passages from *Seyahatnâme* of Evliya Çelebî, in which the famous Turkish traveller is talking about his trips within Slovakia and to Budapest and Vienna.⁷

Vojtech Kopčan's selection of 235 anecdotes of Nasreddin Hoca was done on the basis of two editions. The first was Veleđ Çelebî Bahâ's *Latâif-i Hoca Nasreddin* published in Istanbul 1908 and the second was the book of *Nasreddin Hoca fikraları* edited in Sophia in 1957. Kopčan divided his book into seven thematic spheres. In the epilogue he makes a Slovak reader more familiar with the figure of Nasreddin Hoca. He quoted the sources, which support the real existence of the legendary figure. According to these sources Nasreddin Hoca was born in 1208 at Horto village and died 1284 in Akşehir. Kopčan situated the personality of Nasreddin Hoca and his stories in their historical context. In his prologue he also mentioned the tradition of humorous stories in the Near East.

The Kopčan's translation of Nasreddin Hoca anecdotes was published within the very successful edition *Pradávne príbehy* (Ancient Stories) of the Publish-

⁴ See Bibliography IV/1.

⁵ See Bibliography IV/2.

⁶ KOPČAN, V.: Translations of Mehmed Necâti, Mustafa Zühdi, Hasan Ağa, Peçevî and others, not published.

⁷ EVLIYA ÇELEBİ: *Kniha ciest. Cesty po Slovensku* (Seyahatnâme. Travels in Slovakia). Translation and prologue Vojtech Kopčan. Bratislava, Tatran 1978. 328 pp.

ing House *Mladé letá* (Youth), which brought near to the Slovak readers the folk epic of different nations of Europe and Asia. In the same edition, known by the first-rate adaptation of texts and illustrations made by the top Slovak artists, was published in 1981 the Turkish folk epic *Köroğlu* translated by Xénia Celnarová.⁸

During compiling the Slovak edition of *Köroğlu* were used the four sources from which I would like to underline the *Köroğlu Destanı* of Behçet Mahir.⁹ This was not my first contact with this unique product of the folk spirit of Turkish nation. In my comparative study *Typologische Auswertung einiger Rebellengestalten*, published in the *Asian and African Studies* 8/1972,¹⁰ where stories of some folk heroes – outlaws from England to the Middle East were analysed, the Turkish *Köroğlu* took one of the first places in the framework of comparison.

My comparative work is divided into three chapters. The introductory one deals with the outlaw epic as a unique kind of folk epic, with the historical background of its origin and with the anchoring of this subject in written literature. The motifs and episodes of individual epic narratives about outlaw heroes are amplified in chapter II. From the Turkish area, besides the already mentioned *Köroğlu*, there are also *Sepetçioğlu*, *Çakırcalı Efe*, *Kaçak Nabi* and *İnce Mehmed*, the title hero of the famous novel of the contemporary Turkish writer *Yaşar Kemal* (born 1922). In the mentioned study beside the Turkish heroes we can also find outlaws of the Carpathian Mountains, of the Balkan Peninsula, English Robin Hood and *Sándor Rózsa* from Hungary. Chapter III contains a typology confirming that the epics on outlaws contain a lot of common or analogous episodes and motifs.

The leading Slovak folklorist *Viera Gašparíková* declared the work *Typologische Auswertung einiger Rebellengestalten* to be instructive and she quoted from it the summary showing the common marks of epic heroes.¹¹ *Mehmet Bayrak* in his monograph on outlawry and folk songs on outlaws ranked the mentioned work among the important European works done in this field. He quotes the chapters II and III (translated in Turkish by *Metin Alemдар*).¹² Czech Turkologists also mentioned positively the work in their dealing with Turkology in Czechoslovakia.¹³

⁸ See Bibliography IV/6.

⁹ See Bibliography II/2d.

¹⁰ See Bibliography I/4.

¹¹ GAŠPARÍKOVÁ, V.: *Povesti o zbojníkoch zo slovenských a poľských Tatier* (Legends on Outlaws from the Slovak and Polish Sides of the Tatras). Bratislava, KSLK 1979, pp. 70-72; 247-248.

¹² BAYRAK, M.: *Eşkıyalık ve Eşkiya Türküleri*. Ankara, Yorum Yayınları 1985, pp. 135-150.

¹³ VESELÁ, Z. – HŘEBÍČEK, L. – BEČKA, J.: *Turkologie in der ČSSR*. Materialia turcica. Band 9. 1983, Bochum, Studienverlag Brockmeyer 1984, pp. 111-112.

The mediaeval Turkish epic cycle *Kitab-ı Dedem Korkut* is not only a unique cultural monument, but also a noteworthy document of its epoch. I have studied all available editions of The Book of Dede Korkut, and I evaluated five editions from the 1970s in my review articles.¹⁴ Especially the Turkish edition by Orhan Şaik Gökyay dated 1973¹⁵ is evaluated as the most complete processing of The Book of Dede Korkut available so far.

Since 1989 the main subject of my studies has become the relations between Sufism and Turkish folk literature (written and folk as well).¹⁶ Especially my attention was focused on the personality and poetry of the great Turkish Sufi Yunus Emre.¹⁷

Within the context of the international comparative project I concentrated my effort on the factors, which have united the Turkic literatures into a literary community. Especially Sufism and the poetry connected to it, was a very important and connecting factor. My study *The Interliterary Community of Turkic Nations within the Context of Islamic Culture*¹⁸ was evaluated from precisely this point of view by the Uzbek scholar J. A. Sultanov who wrote: "The study is of a high theoretical standard. Celnarová deduces Yesevi's works from Islamic ideology from folk literature and classical literature, acquire the form of literary tradition in Ahmed Yesevi's tradition that played an important role in the forming process of literature of several Turkic nations. Celnarová gives convincing evidence of Ahmed Yesevi's influence on the well-known Turkish mediaeval mystic Yunus Emre. Of value are also her reflections intimating that the poetry of the mystics became a mediator between folk and classical literature and contributed to the development of literary languages. Celnarová has outlined a perspective in the development of Islamic literature and has shown that when Islamic cultural impulses weakened in the early 17th century, their function was taken over by original traditions that had formed enfolded within folk literature."¹⁹

In my investigation of the interliterary relations within the Mediterranean region I laid stress on the role of folklore during a creation of the cultural interchange among the nations of this region. There were Turkish fairy tales, anecdotes of Nasreddin Hoca, and proverbs as well, which infiltrated from the Asia Minor to the countries around the Mediterranean Sea and further to the North.²⁰

I would also like to mention my selections from the Turkish folk poetry, which was presented by examples of *koşma*, *türkü*, *manî*, *nini* etc., and was pub-

¹⁴ See Bibliography I/1., 4.

¹⁵ *Dedem Korkudun Kitabı*. Hazırlayan Orhan Şaik Gökyay. İstanbul, Millî Eğitim Basımevi 1973. 359+DCLXXI pp., 1 map, 12 supplements.

¹⁶ See Bibliography I/20., 21.

¹⁷ See Bibliography I/14., 17., 18., 24., II/4b, III/2., 13., 18.

¹⁸ See Bibliography I/15.

¹⁹ SULTANOV, J. A.: *Uzbek Voice about Dionýz Ďurišin's Scientific Initiative*. In: Slovak Revue No. 1, 1993, pp. 172-173.

²⁰ See Bibliography I/24, pp. 321-324.

lished in the renowned periodical *Revue slovenskej literatúry* (Review of Slovak Literature). Each of these selections²¹ was introduced by a study²² describing the individual genres of Turkish folk poetry.

A charming little book of Turkish proverbs and sayings, that was published in Bratislava at the end of 2000,²³ is for the present the last Slovak work concerning Turkish folklore. At the end of my prologue to this book I wrote: "...Turkish words of fathers are a well full of humorous and serious lessons, advice, wisdom and they are for us a source of a knowledge of people from another country living in the distance and not so distant past. We can find among Turkish proverbs and sayings a lot of parallels to Slovak ones, but there are also expressions reflecting the different culture and different human experience."²⁴

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²¹ See Bibliography I/20., 21.

²² See Bibliography I/14., 17., 18., 24., II/4b, III/2., 13., 18.

²³ See Bibliography IV/7.

²⁴ CELNAROVIČ, X.: *Pár slov o slovách tureckých predkov*, p. 9. See Bibliography I/25.

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