

OLGA DANGLOVÁ:

**Modrotlač na Slovensku**  
[Blueprint in Slovakia]

*Centre for Folk Art Production (ÚĽUV),  
Institute of Ethnology SAS, Bratislava*  
2014, 376 p.

Issues of material culture are highly topical in present-day ethnology. Academic researches and researchers' interest concentrate mainly on the current globalisation processes and on their cultural and social contexts and consequences in the development of modern society. Evidence of a society's material culture is usually the subject of interest of memory institutions and museums, which mainly focus on its protection and preservation. A return to the traditional elements of material culture can be partly observed in the revitalisation efforts of our regions, towns and municipalities along with the raising number of handicraft festivals.

Blueprint is one of the areas of material culture which constitutes an important element in the development of our society not only within the narrow circle of clothing culture; it is the evidence of historic ethnic processes in a wider geographical context and a reflection of the social and cultural development both in the urban and rural environment from the 18<sup>th</sup> century until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century or, in the countryside, until the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Blueprint manufacturing is linked to peasant production of flax and linen, and, as such, it is one of the strongest expressions of the visual arts of a community. The importance of blueprint is also proven by its expansion and use across almost the entire territory not only in tradi-

tional folk clothes (mainly parts of female clothes), but also interior textiles.

In spite of the importance of blueprint, the only comprehensive publication on this topic is by Josef Vydra from the 1950s. This area was later studied by several ethnologists who mostly dealt with partial thematic or regional relations and with their context. In spite of the recent massive boom in traditional handicrafts, blueprint production is slowly fading out.

The book *Modrotlač na Slovensku* [Blueprint in Slovakia] by Oľga Danglová, launched at the end of 2014, is a new comprehensive monograph on blueprint. The author builds on her well-informed overview of the issue. The monograph proves her long-year systematic and consistent field work in ethnic, cultural, social and partly also economic contexts. Her own research materials are completed, documented or compared with the existing published knowledge by other authors in a diachronic development order and also in a synchronic regional and geographical context. The work is based on archival academic researches of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAS) and on the current condition of this part of cultural heritage, preserved in authentic environments, and, in particular, on the collections of Slovak museums. Thus, the monograph is a complex modern scientific work on blueprint from the perspective of present-day science, which has so far been absent in our academic literature.

In the first parts of the publication, the author describes the historic and ethnic conditions and the context of textile printing up to its extension to our territory. The next large part deals with the economic and socio-cultural contexts of production after the disappearance of guilds, which largely contributed to the ex-

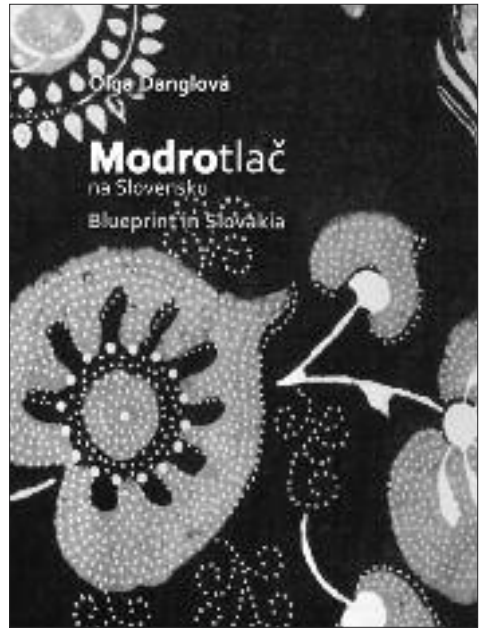
pansion of dye workshops in rural areas up to the competitive and, at the same time, liquidating rise of industrial production. The author also focuses on the social dimension of production in the role of the very dyers, observing them as peasants, craftsmen and traders at a time. She also tackles the importance of mutual relations in blueprint production and linen production, not leaving out the regional context of production in the background of journeymen's wanderings and sale regions.

Oľga Danglová dedicates much space to workshops, including a chapter on the technological and production process: generally known issues described by most authors in partial thematic publications. Because of its complexity, this topic is indispensable, and the author goes beyond of just describing the well-known facts by making them original thanks to regional examples or clarifying the meanings of apparent, yet often key details.

The book also describes the links of blueprint production to the Centre for Folk Art Production (ÚĽUV), which later remained the only institutional form covering blueprint production and a bridge to preserving traditional blueprint production until today. The work mentions in various contexts the name of Stanislav Trnka, an important and so far the last blueprint master, through concrete examples, thus accentuating his importance in this field.

Blueprint forms represent the most comprehensive part of blueprint production. In addition to their practical function in linen printing, they can be considered a separate type of folk art given their specific nature and the way of production. Besides the specific technology of the production of forms, the design as such constitutes their essence. It not only shows the chronological development of craft manufacturing or adherence to a specific region or locality: they reflect the social context and links, and prove the skills and art of the masters. The author managed to fully present this essence of forms as elements of material culture with links between the meaning of patterns and the spiritual level.

The book not only fills the vacuum with regard to studies on material clothing culture in our present-day ethnology in terms of its topic, but is also the result of the author's long-year consistent research and her expert potential and serious work with sources. It proves her



geographical knowledge, as reflected in the number of concrete regional background materials. The language of the book is professional and comprehensible at the time, and the refined and natural stylistics proves the author's high professional status. Given the monograph character of the publication, a wider elaboration on its methodological basis in the introduction would be desirable.

Undoubtedly, the high level of the publication is also due to rich, high-quality images both from field researches and archive sources. They document the preservation of blueprint production items in our museums, thus providing a comprehensive picture of the production, extension and use of blueprint in our territory throughout its development. The professional level of the book is adequately highlighted by its artistic layout. The monograph not only fills the academic vacuum in this specific area of ethnological science, but also provides high social benefits in clarifying and preserving the elements of the culture of our ancestors.

ZDENA KRIŠKOVÁ,  
*Institute of Social and Cultural Studies  
of the Faculty of Arts, Matej Bel University  
in Banská Bystrica*

ZORA VANOVIČOVÁ:

*Autorita symbolu*

[*The Authority of a Symbol*]

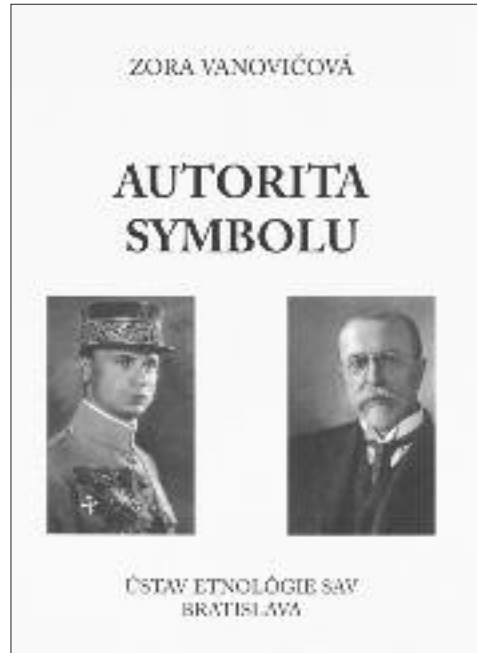
*Institute of Ethnology SAS, Bratislava*

2014, 119 p.

The publication *Autorita symbolu* [*The Authority of a Symbol*] offers a collection of studies by PhDr. Zora Vanovičová, a long-year researcher of the Institute of Ethnology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAS), published in different academic journals between 1991 and 2009, as well as a lecture given at the Basel University, Switzerland, which has not been published yet. All studies relate to the shaping of the picture of a hero in Slovak fictional folklore on the basis of an analysis of materials on important historic personalities of our recent history, such as Milan Rastislav Štefánik, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and the members of his family. These personalities largely contributed to the birth of the Czechoslovak Republic, and were and still are publicly presented, for example, at state celebrations, in school education, etc. However, the narratives recorded by the author create a unique parallel picture of these personalities on the basis of folk traditions, focusing more on the fates, relationships and characteristic features of these heroes.

In the cycle on Štefánik, the author highlighted eighteen episodes which are most present in narratives, and compares them with the bios structure in the biography of St. Cyril and St. Method. In both cases, the most elaborated episodes are the ones on living in an alien world and on their tragic death and post-mortal cult. Zora Vanovičová followed the dissemination of the tradition on Štefánik in a return research also among the youngest generation. By means of experimental compositions she found out that children preferred using information obtained at school than the memories of the older generations of their families. The fairy-tale and sci-fi motives incorporated by children in their school knowledge were also worth noting.

The studies were primarily based on the materials from Štefánik's birth place and its surroundings, but also describe different ac-



tivities across Slovakia (national pilgrimages to the burial-mound at Bradlo, the erection of memorials, etc.), which leads to a hypothesis about an all-Slovak folklore response to Štefánik topics. Štefánik was the symbol of fight for freedom and justice in many crisis periods. It would perhaps be interesting to also follow in the future the different reactions and fantastic or conspiracy theories, found on the internet especially in the periods of celebrating special anniversaries of his death.

President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (TGM) is a slightly different type of a hero in the narratives recorded by the author. People mainly highlight his folk character and his open relationship to local people in Topoľčianky and Bystrička pri Martine where he used to spend his summers together with his family. The author also mentions certain confessional differences in the narrations on TGM in the Catholic town of Topoľčianky and the Evangelical town of Bystrička. These differences may relate to the fact that Topoľčianky used to be the representative seat of presidents also after Masaryk's death and that its inhabitants still preserve narratives about Jozef Tiso and other presidents. The apparently senseless idiom "When Tiso

was Masaryk” in a narratives clearly shows which of the two is perceived as a symbol of presidential authority.

The villa in Bystrička was the private summer residence of the Masaryk family, and the other family members also have their place in the narratives. Masaryk is seen here as a “good ruler”, as common in Slovak fictional tradition, like in the narratives about King Matthias. I believe that a research in other Slovak locations could also reveal other topics related to TGM. I remember that during a Sunday family trip to Kopčany, while seeking to visit the architectonic monuments of this region, the local inhabitants were showing us in a very assertive way the birth house of TGM which was under reconstruction and in which they planned to create a commemorative room. They referred to the testimonies of older generations, according to which he was “registered” in Moravia, but was born in Kopčany.

In her studies, Zora Vanovičová warns about the creation of folklore myths around these important personalities of the Czechoslovak history. She points out the main criteria on the basis of which personalities have become symbols in the cultures of any civilisation. It was mainly their folk character, moral credit or the status of a victim, as can be observed in the narratives about Štefánik and Masaryk.

Though I was familiar with most studies contained in the book *The Authority of a Symbol*, by reading this collection I realised the targeted and sophisticated way by Zora Vanovičová of collecting materials and analysing them, and studying the different aspects and bringing theoretical generalisations. For conclusion, I would like to quote the apt evaluation of her work in the foreword to the book, written by PhDr. Jana Pospíšilová, PhD., Head of the Branch Office of the Ethnological Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic: “The novel character of the works by Z. Vanovičová lies, in particular, in her sophisticated approach to the given topics and thorough elaboration on the different aspects, which are original and intrinsic to her work. She is not afraid of experiments, and does not doubt about the correct choice of topics. This feature stems from the very essence of

the author who knows the right values of this world.”

EUBICA DROPOVÁ,  
Bratislava

**PETER SLAVKOVSKÝ:**

**S nošou za industrializáciou krajiny. Tradičné podoby dopravy na Slovensku.**

**[Pursuing the Country's Industrialisation with a Back-Basket.**

**Traditional Forms of Transport in Slovakia]**

*Veda, Bratislava 2014, 127 p.*

Given the life-long priority focus of his research on agrarian and ethnographic issues, the unusual title of the latest book *S nošou za industrializáciou krajiny* (Pursuing the Country's Industrialisation with a Back-Basket) by Dr. Peter Slavkovský surprised not only the reviewer, but also many readers from academic circles. The picture on the cover page of the book (by Theodor Jozef Mousson, an important personality of Slovak painting) and the content of the text would, however, convince the reader that, regarding the thematic focus of the publication, the title is accurate. The author decided to produce this book in the form of a compendium with the aim to provide an ethnological perspective of the ways of traditional transport in the Slovak countryside (p. 10). The four chapters of the first part of the publication (pp. 13–63) offer a picture of the different kinds of transportation and transport, following the common systematic approach in ethnological works. The author presents the different kinds of transportation and transport according to the corresponding means: carrying by human force (braces, sheets, cloths), towed (sliding) means of transport [sleds for transporting persons, or materials (*vlačuhy*), chutes (*smyky*)], wheeled means of transport/types of carriages and tools (*jarmice* – single frames for animals, yokes, horse-collars), and water transport (boats, rafts, ferries). Given the increased focus on this topic in older researches and data recording by prominent personalities of Slovak ethnography (R. Bed-



nárik, J. Mjartan, M. Markuš, J. Koma, J. Podolák), as well as later researchers and disciples studying this topic, we dispose of a rich body of data from the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, published in works of local or regional nature. Although these works did not always deal specifically with transportation and transport, they enriched the database and preserved the results of researches which addressed other areas of traditional material culture – agrarian culture, stock-raising, meadow and pasture management, crafts, trade, complementary jobs and sources of livelihood – with typical means of transport of tinkers, glaziers, travelling merchants selling loom harnesses, spices, healing oils and ointments, etc.

As noted by the author, the most complex overview of the central topic of this book in terms of territorial scope is offered by two synthesis works of Slovak ethnology, published in the 1990s: the *Ethnographic Atlas of Slovakia* and the *Encyclopaedia of Slovak Folk Culture* (p. 11). This body of selected phenomena (documented in both synthesis works by means of maps and comments, instructive illustrations and entries) proves the long persistence of traditional ways of

carrying loads in the everyday work process until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century in land farming and stock-raising as the main source of livelihood of more than 60% of inhabitants of rural communities in Slovakia.

The second part of the book with the title Appendixes (pp. 69–105) presents the wider context of the traditional ways of transporting loads, and describes the special methods of transportation and transport used in agriculture, meadow and pasture management, forest management – primary forest production, and water transport. The material presented in the book allows obtaining more in-depth knowledge about the individual phases of the work process of selected jobs and about the work tools used. The text and the selected pictures are properly combined, offering the possibility to “reconstruct” the different work phases and techniques. It should be noted in this respect that this part of the book is not just a common appendix, but has the quality of a separate chapter, the content and formulations of which are equivalent to the previous parts.

The way of presenting this already “archaic” issue in ethnology from the perspective of the author Peter Slavkovský is truly comprehensive, describing the existence and the functions of the means of transportation and transport in actual everyday work processes of not only peasants, but also other important activities related to logging and timber transportation, the floating of logs and other goods to remote areas by water-currents running across the Slovak territory and joining the Danube river. We should not forget to mention other topics which can be hardly observed on the ground at present (for example, the ways of harnessing animals during field works and the tools used for this activity, the means of transport related to the carrying trade, or the traditional way of transporting ploughs to the field, etc.). Besides phenomena of purely material nature, the author also tackles the division and organisation of work in the different carrying or load transportation activities given the differences between sexes (for example, the carrying of loads or the harnessing of animals by means of cloths – sheets, tablecloths, etc.), as well as some other data documenting the magic and ritual acts tied



to these works (e.g. the sprinkling of yokes with holy water).

The main benefit of the work, which can be characterised as a monothematic monograph on traditional forms of transportation and transport, was achieved by the author mainly thanks to his in-depth knowledge of the facts obtained during long-year field researches focusing on the author's life-long topic of his research – traditional agrarian culture “live”, i.e. at times when these phenomena still existed in some regions and localities as an inseparable part of the work process in the Slovak countryside. Last but not least, the high quality of the expert interpretation of the topic is also due to the many years' work experience of Peter Slavkovský, who at the beginning of his professional “career” obtained exceptionally broad education thanks to his work in the Slovak National Museum in Martin and the generation of his older colleagues (J. Hyčka, A. Polonec and others), at that time active ethnographers with many-year practice in research and museology. It was undoubtedly a quality launch of his later academic work and field researches. In this context, it is by no accident that the author dedicated his books to his close friend, excellent photographer of the Ethnographic Museum in Martin Ján Dérer – according to the author – “*a photographer with the heart of an ethnographer*”. This close human and professional “alliance” definitely played a role in producing the rich, demonstrative and unique appendix, which presents the documents and the atmosphere of the phenomena in natural, candid situations, predominantly from the period of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As for illustrations, we should men-

tion the excellent drawings by our colleague A. B. Mann in terms of their factual and documentary value, originally produced for the purposes of the Ethnographic Atlas of Slovakia.

These facts are also reflected in the presentation and interpretation of the issues of transportation and transport, which are formulated in such way that the reader would understand both in the introductory parts and in the next chapters of the book the significance and the close relationship between this area of material culture, the natural environment, and the historic and economic conditions of Slovakia until mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. And finally, we also appreciate the overall graphical adjustment of the book, preserving the professional character of the work with an extensive list of reference literature, sources and an English summary.

And finally, I would like to express my personal thanks for this publication, which took me, through my recollections, into my student years completed by a thesis on transportation and transport in Orava and, later, to the period of my long-year participation in the preparation of the Ethnographic Atlas of Slovakia. I was happy to read this interesting book, by which our colleague Peter Slavkovský closed this topic, delivered valuable knowledge for the Slovak ethnology and young ethnologists, and contributed to the list of books addressing this topic, previously commonly studied by European ethnology.

MAGDALÉNA PARÍKOVÁ,

*Department of Ethnology and Folklore  
Studies of the Faculty of Arts of the Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra*