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## OBSAH

### ŠTÚDIE

Č u k a n Jaroslav: Význam etnologického štúdia v priemyselnych centrách a ich dosahu .....	257
D i v i č a n o v á Anna: Etnokultúrne zmeny na slovenských jazykových ostrovoch v Maďarsku I. ....	264
K r u p a Viktor: Rané kontakty Európanov s obyvateľmi Oceánie a Japonska. Reakcie a stereotypy .....	283
R o t h s t e i n Robert A.: Makarónske ľudové piesne: jidiš-slovenský príklad v slovanskom a jidiš kontexte .....	296
H l i š k o v á Hana: The Problem of Historical Consciousness and its Narrative Forms in the Development of Scientific Interpretation in Slovakia .....	304

### DISKUSIA

Rozhovor s Dr. Venetiou Newall (Zuzana P r o f a n t o v á) .....	321
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### MATERIÁLY

S l a v k o v s k ý, Peter: Tradičné formy žatvy u Slovákov v Maďarsku – srp a kosák (Atlas ľudovej kultúry Slovákov v Maďarsku – pokusné komentáre) .....	327
M u r í n Ivan: Neoficiálne spôsoby fungovania a ritualizácie života vojenskej komunity .....	334
C h u r ý Slavko: Vidiecke sakrálné pamiatky v Liptove na začiatku 19. storočia .....	348

### ROZHLADY-SPRÁVY-GLOSÝ

Ludvík Kunz osemdesiatročný (František K a l e s n ý) .....	354
The City: Today, Yesterday and the Day Before (Viera F e g l o v á) .....	356
Maďarsko medzi „Východom“ a „Západom“ (Marta B o t í k o v á) .....	359

Seminár „Oral history – metóda či cieľ?“ (Zora V a n o v i č o v á) .....	360
Letný národopisný tábor v Békešskej Čabe (Marta B o t í k o v á) .....	361
Seminár „Z dejín a života Slovákov z Bulharska“ (Mojmír B e n ž a) .....	363
Medzinárodné kolokvium ICTM-UNESCO „Pretváranie ľudových hudobných tradícií v meniacej sa Európe“ (Jana D r o b o v á – Eva K r e k o v i č o v á) .....	364
Výstava „Karol Plicka 1894-1994“ v Martine (Zora V a n o v i č o v á) .....	366

### RECENZIE-ANOTÁCIE

Fügedi, E. – Gregor, F. – Király, P.: Atlas slovenských nárečí v Maďarsku (Soňa K o v a č e v i č o v á) .....	367
A. Jurová: Vývoj rómskej problematiky na Slovensku po r. 1945 (Zuzana K u m a n o v á) .....	369
D. Holý – C. Nečas: Žalující píseň (Eva K r e k o v i č o v á) .....	370
J. Botík: Slováci v Bulharsku (Peter S l a v k o v s k ý) .....	372
Männerleben Lebemänner (Peter S a l n e r) .....	373
Po cestách Asklepiových (Kornélia J a k u b í k o v á) .....	373
Heller, A. – Weber, T. – Wiebel-Fanderl, O.: Religion und Alltag (Zuzana B e ň u š k o v á) .....	374
F. Schlepper-Lambers: Beerdigung und Friedhöfe im 19. Jahrhundert in Münster (Emília H o r v á t h o v á) .....	375
Kríza, I.: Felsőnyéki halotti búcsúztatók (Roberta K r a k ó c z k i) .....	376
Kišgeci, J.: Konope, konope, zelené konope... (Juraj Z a j o n c) .....	377
V. Chromeková – A. Bitušiková: Horná Mičiná; Vinšujeme Vám (Jolana D a r u l o v á) .....	379
Anotácie .....	380

# CONTENTS

## STUDIES

- Č u k a n, Jaroslav: The Importance of Ethnographic Studies in Industrial Centres and their Surroundings ..... 257
- D i v i č a n o v á, Anna: Ethno-cultural Changes in the Slovak Language Islands in Hungary I.. 264
- K r u p a, Viktor: Early Contacts between Europeans and the Inhabitants of Oceania and Japan. Reactions and Stereotypes ..... 283
- R o t h s t e i n, Robert A.: Macaronic Folk Songs: A Yiddish-Slovak Example in the Slavonic and Yiddish Contexts..... 296
- H l ô š k o v á, Hana: The Problem of Historical Consciousness and its Narrative Forms in the Development of Scientific Interpretation in Slovakia..... 304**

## DISCUSSION

- A Conversation with Dr. Venetia Newall (Zuzana Profantová) ..... 321

## MATERIALS

- S l a v k o v s k ý, Peter: Traditional Forms of Harvest of the Slovaks in Hungary – Sickles with Smooth or Toothed Blades (Atlas of the Folk Culture of the Slovaks in Hungary – an Experimental Commentary)..... 327

- M u r í n, Ivan: Unofficial Ways of Functioning and Ritualisation in the Life of the Military Community.....334
- C h u r ý, Slavko: Sacreligious Village Monuments in Liptov at the Beginning of the 19th Century.....348

## HORIZONS-NEWS-COMMENTS

- Ludvík Kunz – the Octogenarian (František Kalesný).....354
- The City: Today, Yesterday and the Day Before (Viera Feglová).....356
- Hungary between „East” and „West” (Marta Botíková).....359
- Seminar „Oral History – The Method or the Aim?” (Zora Vanovičová).....360
- Summer Ethnographic Camp in Békéscsaba (Marta Botíková).....361
- Seminar „From the History and Life of the Slovaks in Bulgaria” (Mojmír Benža).....363
- The International Colloquium of the ICTM-UNESCO „Re-creating Folk Music Traditions in a Changing Europe” (Jana Drobová – Eva Krekovičová).....364
- Exhibition „Karol Plicka 1894-1994” in Martin (Zora Vanovičová).....366

## BOOK REVIEWS – ANNOTATIONS



## THE PROBLEM OF HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND ITS NARRATIVE FORMS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCIENTIFIC INTERPRETATION IN SLOVAKIA

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The author understands *historical consciousness* as a system with norms and values of expressed, spontaneous and authentic reactions, of a certain society at certain stages of its ethnic consolidation, to knowledge of the past, filtered by immediate experience. It is a system of feelings and experiences, but also of information, which is socially important, or is considered so by society. It has a function of informing, but above all of evaluating with the aim of integrating and emancipating the given society. The *historical awareness* of society is created on the level of its ethno-social consolidation as a modern nation. The resources are the scientific conception of the interpretation of the past of a given society. Both forms may coexist at the same time, and also mutually influence each other.

This contribution is an attempt to evaluate the present state of research on this problem, which the author defines as the problem areas:

1. the beginning of interest in the prose folklore of Slovakia,
2. interest in legendary material, especially historical,
3. the methodological starting point and theoretical approaches to legendary material.

### I.1

I understand *historical consciousness* as a system with norms and values of expressed, spontaneous and authentic reactions, of a certain society at certain stages of its ethnic consolidation, to knowledge of the past, filtered by immediate experience. It is a system of feelings and experiences, but also of information, which is socially important, or is considered so by society. It has a function of informing, but above all of evaluating with the aim of integrating and emancipating the given society. The *historical awareness* of society is created on the level of its ethno-social consolidation as a modern nation. The resources are the scientific conception of the interpretation of the past of a given society. Both forms may coexist at the same time, and also mutually influence each other.

### I.2.

Historical consciousness is also objectivised in texts of other genres, such as legends. In Slovak folklore this also occurs in ballads (S. Burlasová, 1982, 1984), in historical songs (R. Brtáň 1978), in military and recruiting songs (S. Burlasová 1991), in story telling (J. Michálek 1971).

### I.3.

In another place I have devoted more detailed attention to the methodological aspects of the study of the problems of historical consciousness (H. Hlôšková 1992, 131-150). This contribution is an attempt to evaluate the present state of research on this problem, which I define as the problem areas:

1. the beginning of interest in the prose folklore of Slovakia,
2. interest in legendary material, especially historical,
3. the methodological starting point and theoretical approaches to legendary material.

In the first problem area, I trace the development of interest in the prose folklore as such, while in Slovakia, the folk prose traditions about historical events and personalities connected with the First and Second World Wars mostly have a genre form of memorate or oral personal narrative.

### I.4

I start from the existing state of knowledge and heuristic basis, and at the same time I want to observe that this modest total of theoretical views – especially in the initial period and in the period of the national revival are in manuscripts or scattered in contemporary periodicals, and still not thoroughly evaluated. I concentrated on these collector's aims and on these theoretical conceptions, which I consider significant for the stage of research on this problem.

Work of a historiographic character has so far been absent from Slovak folklore studies, but V. Urbancová has written of the history of ethnography (V. Urbancová 1970, 1987). Her work also marginally touched the interest of educated Slovaks in oral tradition, and are therefore also conditionally usable for folklore studies.

### I.5.

In the contribution, I place emphasis on the connection with the Slovak material and especially in the initial stages I limit myself to a Slovak collection and theoretical basis, towards the present I also include the theoretical conceptions of representatives of Czech and Moravian folklore studies, since I consider that they often influenced and still stimulate the methodological orientation of folklore studies in Slovakia.

### II.1.

Interest in knowledge of the Kingdom of Hungary – its natural riches, people and culture, gave rise to various extensive monographic works on Hungarian counties, and especially literature about the homeland – travel writings (J.I. Bajza, J. Glatz, S. Bredetzky and others) (J. Tibenský 1962: 20). In research on the homeland at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, the demands of A. Školka (1788-1816) represents a methodological contribution. In 1813, in „Ideen zum einer statistischen Orts-Beschreibung in Ungarn” (A. Školka 1813), he formulated his idea of general research about the homeland, as well as a proposal to estab-



lish a topographical periodical and a topographical society. This conception of research and its further processing, included among other things the history of communities, the origin of the population and the method of settlement according to historical records and also according to folk tradition (V. Urbancová 1987: 32).

In periodicals concerned with history and general information about the homeland, Alojz Medňanský (1784-1844) among other things also published literary versions of legends connected with the territory of Slovakia. The popularising-entertaining periodical „Taschenbuch für vaterländische Geschichte“ had the character of a publication giving information about the homeland. It published contributions with a historical subject, devoted to the histories of feudal families and castles, geneological tables and historical legends. A. Medňanský also published articles of a similar character in the periodical „Hesperus“ and in the „Archiv für Geographie, Historie, Staats und Kriegskunst“. A. Medňanský published reworked versions of articles which had been published in periodicals, in travel books „Malerische Reise auf den Waagflusse in Ungarn (Pesth 1826) and „Erzählungen, Sagen und Legenden aus Ungarns Vorzeit“ (Pesth 1828). The works made accessible historical legends from among the gentry and towns people of the time, as well as stories found in a folk environment. Štúr's followers valued Medňanský's activities in this field. Above all they were interested in the folk historical legends, and at the first meeting of the society Tatrá, J. Bysterský was entrusted with translating, among other things some „legends from Hungarian history“ (D. Rapant 1950: 83). Apart from this, they decided to publish a selection of Medňanský's work. However this intention was not fulfilled for almost one and a half centuries (A. Medňanský 1962).

## II.2.

The national consciousness movement in Slovakia in the 19th century was part of general European socio-economic processes. Processes of emancipation of national cultures accompanied the formation of modern nations. If among other nations, this development mostly followed the narrower aim of evaluating their cultural heritage, in Slovakia, as a result of the particular economic and political status of the Slovak ethnic community, interest in the people and their culture had a mainly political and nation building mission. In my view, this is also the basic cause of the programmatic, targeted, and therefore essentially unscientific interest in folk culture generally. This aim also appeared in research on folk story telling. Interest concentrated on the wider field of culture – on the revival of language and literature (T. Pichler 1992). The two leading representatives of a concentrated and above all conceptual interest in folk story telling, P.J. Šafárik (1795-1861) and J. Kollár (1793-1852), concentrated their attention on creative poetry. The influences under which they worked and the aims with which they approached collection and publishing in this area, were exhaustively evaluated in various works (M. Dzubáková 1976, J. Michálek 1957 and others).

In his conception, P.J. Šafárik took a literary-aesthetic point of view, while J. Kollár approached the material from a wider position, and he saw more possibilities and interpretations in its use. He considered oral tradition, not only as a source of inspiration for the revival and aesthetic encouragement of the development of artistic literature, but as he said in the introduction to the second volume, it is necessary to collect proverbs, sayings and legends, with the aim of preserving the greatest range of material for posterity, and on the basis of this material to assess the characteristics and nature of the language.



The dominant orientation in creative poetry is self-conscious, fully in the intentions of the contemporary European aesthetic conception of overcoming classical principles and the birth of romanticism. Interest in folk story telling is outside the centre of folklore research, although just as in folk poetry, clarification of the ancient past of the nation and the characteristics of Slavdom were also sought in it. It is also possible to research the crystallisation and features of the further development in the terminological area, when J. Kollár uses the term *tale* (*rozprávka*), for part of a song of epic character in the later fundamental collection „National Folksongs” (Národné Zpiewanky) (Budín vol. I 1834, vol. II 1835). Oral art – in poetry and partly in prose, as a source of views on the antiquity of the nation, led researchers to construct mythological ideas, indeed a wholly mythological conception. The interest of J. Kollár in the field of folk story telling also culminated here (V. Gašparíková 1976: 163-173).

In his academic work, oriented towards linguistics and literary history, P.J. Šafárik also took an interest in oral tradition. „Geschichte der slawischen Sprache und Literatur nach allen Mundarten” (Budín 1826) is a work where Šafárik applied the concept of the connection between social and literary development. In such an understanding, Šafárik considers oral tradition as the first stage of the education of a nation, which awakened a consciousness of a higher spiritual life (P.J. Šafárik 1963: 13). The essay mentioned under paragraph 13 is devoted to the problem of oral tradition. He emphasises the importance of collecting folk songs, and also with the help of other oral genres – proverbs, sayings and legends, he expresses a view about their affirmative value in determining the character of the Slavs.

Almost until today, among some folklore experts, but mostly among historians, there is a topical conception, according to which non-tale genres of folklore can serve as a source of knowledge of the historical development of a particular ethnic community, above all when there is a shortage of other sources. The inclusion of oral historical tradition in medieval chronicles also testifies to this. Chroniclers and analysts were often aware of the poetic license of these texts, and often although including them, distance themselves from them. P.J. Šafárik, on oral tradition, evaluated the oral and therefore more poetic value as the value of a historical source: „The realm of national legends and stories stands in contrast to the realm of history: its role is support for delight in the free creative picture, the exchange of reality for poetry and myth, the ordinary for the strange and miraculous” (P.J. Šafárik 1837: 722-723). He evaluates the historical source value of this material skeptically: „National traditions about the important events and changes of a tribe, which originated long ago and are preserved in simple national songs, may assist with historical research, but cannot be the only source of truth, without the help of other testimony” (P.J. Šafárik 1837: 201). According to P.J. Šafárik, folklore material has historical source value, as a contemporary expression of the peoples’ world view, thinking or folk philosophy: „National traditions and legends, if they are original, old, strictly and faithfully preserved, not recreated by men of letters, may to a certain degree contribute to knowledge and to another look at the strictly historically faithful sources. Before our eyes they form the image of the internal life of the nation, its thoughts and feelings, in short its spiritual world. But it can never be the single and pure source of history, in the absence of other sources” (P.J. Šafárik 1837: 722).

### II.3.

The collector’s efforts and publisher’s conceptions in the area of Slovak folklore at the end of the 18th and in the first half of the 19th century fell into the contemporary climate



and philosophical conception of Slavdom. Researchers in other Slavonic countries developed similar activities: Čelakovský, Boďanský, Záleský, Karadžič, Ševyrjov and others.

#### II.4.

The activity of S. Reuss (1783-1852) and his influence on a whole further generation, represents the beginning of a trend towards a new orientation for collectors and editors concerned with Slovak oral tradition. His life and work were evaluated in another place<sup>1</sup>, here I want to point to the initiating and transitional character of his work. He marked a new orientation in looking at oral folklore, which fully developed in the generation of Štúr and his followers<sup>2</sup>. The approach of S. Reuss is a sort of bridge between the enlightenment and revolutionary followers of Štúr. He continued the work of enlightened intellectuals in the learned community of the county of Malohont (J. Feješ, S. Kollár and others) (V. Urbancová 1987: 34-37). From the historical works in verse concerned with the 16th to 18th centuries, to which the intellectuals E. Lauček and M. Holko devoted themselves, Reuss turned further towards collection activities, and theoretical interest in folk story telling. The results of his collection activities are concentrated in the Revúca manuscripts (A, B, C). M. Dzubáková described the basic theoretical starting point and development of views of S. Reuss on the prose branch of oral tradition (M. Dzubáková 1976). What is their essence?

1. To Reuss Slovak folk tales are valuable documents and „relics of the ancient past”, where he seeks analogies of historical events and figures.

2. With the lack of other sources he judges that it is possible to consider them, for their uninterruptedness and originality, as a source for the study of the ancient past of our ancestors.

3. Reuss raises and emphasises their artistic aspect.

The motive for Reuss's interest in folk legends and stories was an effort to shed light on the prehistoric history of Slovakia with their help. S. Reuss, inspired by the approach of J. K. Musäus in working out and interpreting folk tales, conceptually and organisationally caught the rising generation of Štúr and so contributed to initiating a further stage of research in the field of oral tradition.

#### II.5.

The interest of Štúr and his followers in the people and their culture crystallised into an almost prevailing orientation to the prosaic genres. They continued the theoretical heritage of the previous generation, although L. Štúr himself, in his theoretical conception of oral tradition did not devote the appropriate attention to prose tradition from the quantitative, but especially from the qualitative point of view. The clearly and strictly political views and ideological conception of L. Štúr, influenced by the topical needs of the struggle for national self-determination, were, in my view also the starting point for Štúr's theoretical conclusions on the characteristics of oral tradition. Hegel's teaching on the content of the history of nations, which forms their spiritual culture, that is religion, art and language, and also by Herder's views about the future greatness of the Slavs, as well as the aesthetic conceptions of romanticism all influenced the relationship of Štúr and his followers to oral tradition. Planned and topical political aims were in the background of Štúr's views on folk poetry, the wealth and aesthetic maturity of which, were for him, among other things, a serious argument for the antiquity and native character of the Slovak nation. Therefore Štúr also „understood oral folk tradition and explained it theoretically in connection with the



growth of Slovak national literature” (A. Melicherčík 1956: 8). Although in romanticism in Slovakia, attention is concentrated on the collection of prose forms of oral tradition, L. Štúr in his theoretical conclusions is devoted to its characteristics only marginally, which has a simple cause. Wider collecting activity began at the beginning of the 1840s. Therefore more extensive legendary and story material, comparable to the collections of songs already available to Kollár and Šafárik for the area of folk poetry, was still not available to Štúr. The impulse for the collection of prose traditions was the conclusions of the Bratislava Council of scholars of Czechoslovak language and literature in June 1840, about the need to collect oral folk traditions. The decision began to be realised in practice immediately, in the first summer vacation, by travelling and collecting in the Slovak countryside. L. Štúr gave his views on oral tradition most fully in his work „On the national songs and legends of the Slavonic peoples” (L. Štúr 1853). Prose oral tradition was not in the centre of his conception, and so he dealt with it in the conclusion of his work, only in an unfinished, marginal way.<sup>2a</sup> When looking for historical echoes in Czech, Moravian and Slovak folk tradition, he is skeptical in comparison with the great historical epic tradition of the East and South Slavs: „None of them (Czech, Moravian, Slovak – H.H.) moves in the higher strata, in none do we hear of the history of peoples, in this respect national consciousness already sleeps” (L. Štúr 1853: 137).

L. Štúr is aware of the divided branches of folk prose: „All the tales which are based on the oldest ideas, belong together. Stories about persons like Jánošík belong to a completely different branch” (L. Štúr 1955: 239).

#### II.6.1.

J. Kalinčiak (1822-1871), a follower of Štúr, was also a learned and well-informed expert on oral tradition. Kalinčiak explained the need to study man and his culture, as well as an understanding of the content of human culture in the view: „Man puts his philosophy and skill into proverbs, his psyche is reflected in song, his worldview in stories, but his greatest treasure – language, we still know and perceive very little” (J. Kalinčiak 1857: 14). Kalinčiak also confirmed his views on oral tradition, with a special artistic approach to it, which he formulated differently from the conception of Štúr: „My view was always that national songs and stories, although they describe the view of the world, way of thinking, feelings, dispositions, the hand of the spirit of a certain nation, and that they must always be the basis of national art, but nevertheless is not therefore art” (J. Kalinčiak 1965: 316). I think this view is closely connected with the state of the literary process in Slovakia at the time. This has its beginning in the period of pre-romanticism, intensively continued in romanticism, and its notable feature is the process of emancipation of artistic writing from academic and publicist writing. Apart from literary-aesthetic causes, this process was also influenced by factors of an extra-literary nature, since language, history and folk culture were factors in the formation of Slovak national culture. Such ideas were also the motivation of the inclination of J. Kalinčiak to folk legends, since the *past* „for Štúr and his followers is not only background scenery, which frames arbitrary subjectivist intentions, as it was for the majority of romantics. The legitimate historical continuity and development of the nation was drawn from its past” (E. Várossová 1963: 179).

#### II.6.2.

The whole extensive collection activity of Štúr’s group, materialised in five volumes of National Stories (Prostonárodných Zábavníkov), and similar volumes from Levoča, Kež-



marok, Prešov and Banská Štiavnica was described in detail by A. Melicherčík (1959). He evaluated the collecting effort of the Slovak studying youth, in the field of oral tradition as an act „of such exceptional value, that it is difficult seek a parallel in the Europe of that time” (A. Melicherčík 1959: 46).

## II.7.

This stage of collecting activity and publishing of folklore material culminated in the work of P. Dobšinský (1828-1885). The results of more recent research has added much to Melicherčík's description of Dobšinský's work.<sup>3</sup> I will concentrate on Dobšinský's theoretical views on folk tales, in his terminology *national legends*, which he formulated and synthetically summarised in his work „Essays about Slovak Legends” (P. Dobšinský 1871). What place and function do folk oral legends (local, historical, demonological) hold in Dobšinský's conception? In opposition to S. Reuss, who sought real national and family events in tales, Dobšinský understands them as an artistic reinterpretation of the illustrated reality, as „the first pictorial stage of consciousness of the spirit” (P. Dobšinský 1871: 9). He considers legend (in today's understanding – „legend” in contrast to „tale”) as a more recent type of shaping reality, when „people determine a specific place, people and story of events” (P. Dobšinský 1871: 13). In the manuscript lectures „History of the literature and learning of the Slavonic nation, and especially of the Slovaks” Dobšinský also speaks of the value of folklore material as evidence (P. Dobšinský 1859-1860). He places it on a level with historical sources such as charters, saints' lives, legislation and law. In paragraph 3, under point e, legend, song, sayings, language, he says: „Legends, songs, sayings, diligently sought and collected in our times, contain the remnants of ancient customs, laws, practices and words. The national legends of all the Slavonic nations together are like this, and especially our Slovak Legends”.

In the manuscript volume „Codex Revúcky C” (with the subtitle „Slawische Sagen”<sup>4</sup> I found this note: „Our people has rather a weak memory for historical memories. Nevertheless it preserves a memory of ancient times in the text of the song „Nitra milá Nitra”, memories of the Tatars, the dog-heads (soldiers) and the Turkish invasions, or the still living memory „there are Kuruci, by which people mean Rákoci's platoons – or perhaps the name is related to the crusaders travelling to Palestine, but historical songs, if some still exist, may not be known to the whole community”.<sup>5</sup> Although the volume was put together by S. Reuss and his sons, as A. Melicherčík (1959: 41) says, I attribute the quoted statement to P. Dobšinský on the basis of assessment of the handwriting. This is supported by the fact that from the end of 1850, P. Dobšinský worked as the secretary of S. Reuss, and helped him to rewrite the collected folklore material (A. Melicherčík 1959: 69 and following).

### II.8.1.

In this period, they also began to outline the germs of a new approach to folk prose tradition. The fairy tale with its artistic qualities fell appropriately into the idea and aesthetic conception of the history of national culture of Štúr's group. Knowledge of the real state of oral tradition in the whole range of genres flowed from the collected material. A new view also arose in confrontation with the historiographic research, and by coincidence or perhaps legitimately, again from the circle of the Reuss family. One of the sons of S. Reuss – Gustáv, although at the outset he clung to folk oral tradition as an adequate historical source. In historical works about Gemer, dissatisfied by the absence of historical source material, he considers folk tradition an adequate equivalent „but since I did not encounter



any legend, which could at least partly reveal the past of this valley, I must be satisfied only with hypothesis..."<sup>6</sup> In the work, „All the Castles and Monasteries of the County of Gemer” he used folk tradition on the same level as other historical sources.<sup>7</sup>

In a later work, „Chronicle of the County of Gemer”, he corrects his view, and although he says that he is not an enemy of legend, it cannot be considered an adequate historical source, since „the truth is usually disfigured”.<sup>8</sup> Such a development of view of the relationship of historical fact and folk legend as his specific interpretation, is symptomatic of a methodological problem for the stage of the emancipation of historiography from narrative and story forms, through proto-scientific to scientific self-interpretations of the history of a community at a certain stage of ethnic consolidation. The development of the view to which G.Reuss matured, also testifies to the „unprogrammed” approach to expressions of oral tradition – the beginning of scientific understanding of folk tradition in a synchronous cross-section.

#### II.8.2.

The views of L.A. Reuss also essentially started from the Štúrian conception, based on the Hegelian-Herderian starting points. In the collection of material „Local tales and stories” (L.A. Reuss, 1900), I found a brief but complete description of legend. L.A. Reuss expresses the requirement to record material in a living, authentic form, which could enable its exact interpretation. The genre of so-called non-story prose remained outside the interest of collectors, who concentrated on fairy tales, genres from the point of view of poetic ornament, compositional aim, and therefore aesthetic value. But although in legends „they express efforts, demands, hope and moral teaching, local tales and similar stories are distinguished from legends (the term for tales at the time – H.H.), in that they are on a certain subject, and connected to a certain place and frequently a named person. In contrast to this national legends are never concerned with a definite place and person, but simply begin „once upon a time”. (L.A. Reuss 1900: 137).

#### II.8.3.

L.A. Reuss also continues the fine current of interest in legendary tradition, which was begun by A. Medňanský, and was continued by J. Kalinčiak and S. Tomášik in the period of national revival. *Folk legends*, or *historical tales*, or *tales and stories* did not become the centre of interest in the Štúrian conception of oral tradition.

The educational enlightening intention extends into all stages of this relationship, as a red thread embodying historical legends into the processes of literary folklorism. In the 1880s, the need to consciously build up historical consciousness „by fictionalised history” was also pointed to by this view: „The majority of furrows which the Slovak ploughs is watered not by water, but by streams of Slovak blood. This should be fought for, partly by publishing serials about historical episodes in the „Hlásnik” and „Nový Priateľ Ľudu”, partly by publishing cheap (5-10 kreuzers) books with a similar content. This could raise self-consciousness” (M. Bodický 1882).

#### II.8.4.

We can describe the final decades of the 19th century as a period of effort for the origin of the professional linguist and ethnologist with an orientation to more detailed and general knowledge of the speech and all aspects of human life. In the area of oral tradition, this



manifested itself above all in the concentrated interest in dialectological material, and on the other side the „ethnographisation” of the orientation of research.

#### II.8.4.1.

The linguist S. Czambel (1856-1909) is a representative of the first orientation. He set himself the research aim of describing the history of the Slovak language. The basis of his conception of the history of Slovak was dialectology, for which he concentrated rich material from story tellers. However this was not presented from the folklorist point of view. For Czambel it served as linguistic material. Thus Czambel's records provided data about story-tellers and the circumstances of story-telling, a record of the story-telling repertoire from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, recording a certain stage of development of folk story-telling (S. Czambel 1906).

#### II.8.4.2.

Mostly local, but also historical and clearly mainly demonological legends also came into the records of collectors at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century: J. L. Holuby, Št. Mišík and are published in monographic works such as P. Beblavý „Tales and Legends of Vrbočany” (Modra 1907), K.A. Medvecký „Detva” (Detva 1905), K. Procházka „Kolárovičtí dráteníci” (Prague 1915). In these smaller collections of folk prose, legendary traditions also occupy a modest place. However they are not commented on by the authors from the point of view of folklore studies.

#### II.8.5.1.

In the introduction to the monumental „Inventory of Slovak Tales”, the Czech literary scientist and folklorist J. Polívka gives a review of interest in Slovak folk prose and summarily publishes individual legendary materials with information on sources (J. Polívka 1923-1931).

#### II.8.5.2.1.

In the 1940s, A. Melicherčík approached the classification of Slovak story-telling material (Melicherčík 1943: 259-331). In „Slovenská Vlastiveda” he divides prose material into these groups: 1. supernatural elements, 2. legends and legendary tales, 3. about supernatural beings, 4. from communal life, 5. comic stories, 6. animal stories, 7. legends. He identifies the last of these more closely: „with the most varied materials such as mythological legends about imps, sprites, ghosts, about fairies, their dances and allurements, about a water sprite and his wife, about pots under water in which a human soul hides, about werewolves, will-o'-the-wisps and nightmares. Stories about wizards and their various enchantments, many legends about treasures in underground kingdoms which open on Good Friday, about treasures in Sitno and many local legends connected with this matter. Historical legends, for example about Jánošík, about outlaws, about the knights of Sitno, and fragments of foreign historical story material, also belong here. Among them ghost stories about phantoms, the white lady, various spectres, apparitions of hanged men, headless horses and many others” (A. Melicherčík 1943: 299).

#### II.8.5.2.2.

In 1946, A. Melicherčík produced a methodologically important, and in my view still unsurpassed theoretical study, „Contribution to the study of the function of folk tales” (A. Melicherčík 1946). Here, *folk tales* are understood as stories as such, which then with



regard for their dominant function, he further divides them into professional, regional etc. He understands folk story telling as „certain norms constituting a creative act, which is above all correlated with the environment in which it exists. It is necessary to look at the folk tale, above all as at a social fact” (A. Melicherčík 1946: 299). Knowledge of individual functions and their hierarchy is reflected in the semantic and semiological components of the text. „Their functional relations are according to all first-rate directing factors in constructing the subject of a certain functional form of tale” (A. Melicherčík 1946: 121). From the point of view of poetic folk tradition and genre study, I consider it a valuable and today already common finding, that aesthetic effect is not an end in itself, but rather a means, and also that the permanently present aesthetic function is used in folklore to emphasise other specific functions. Such a theoretical formulation of the problem also outlined a productive orientation for the studied genres of so-called non-tale prose, and also appears to be productive in research about folk historical legends.

#### II.9.1.

In the area of interest in prose historical tradition, the period after the Second World War, may also be described as „monothematic”, in the sense that researchers concentrated attention on one subject area. Interpretation of traditions about outlaws represents one branch. I will devote more detailed attention to this. Then there is the more detailed folklorist, or more accurately cultural historical study of the tradition about king Matej (J. Komorovský). We may also consider the work of J. Michálek to be monothematic, since from the wider genre area of telling memories and stories from life, he dealt with the theme of the First and Second World Wars and resistance in the Slovak National Uprising.

#### II.9.2.1.

In the history of Slovak culture, exploitation and cultivation of the outlaw tradition has a specific place and this tradition may also be assessed from the point of view of its interpretation in folklore studies. Briefly this approach may be described as programmatic. I understand the methodological orientation of post-war Slovak folklore studies in the area of oral tradition, above all concerning outlaw traditions, as part of a programmatic tracing of those parts of folk phenomena which were seen as showing a spark of progressive ideological views. In this understanding, the folk outlaw tradition was assigned to the current of popular resistance against social and national oppression, along with peasants' revolts, anti-feudal uprisings, workers' strikes and the partisans' struggle against Fascism. However precisely this programmed character in the orientation of researchers was often the cause of a distorted picture of the ideological shaping of the poetic values and real function of these traditions in the folk story telling repertoire. At the beginning of the 1970s, O. Sirovátka (1972) pointed to the problem of the bipolarity of outlaw traditions, and traced this problem „across genres”. D. Klímová (1983) devoted attention to the Czech and Moravian material.

Thus the need for a general study of the outlaw tradition slowly began to be fulfilled. Among the first to formulate it was P.G. Bogatyriov, who applied this approach to the outlaw tradition, with the additional demand that they be traced in all forms of folk culture, specifically folk art, as part of a single socio-cultural process, and also to trace the influence of non-folklore elements into it (P.G. Bogatyriov 1971).

#### II.9.2.2.

After works of an essentially popular-scientific character (P. Sochán, R. Brtán), the work of A. Melicherčík on the Jánošík tradition in Slovakia appeared in 1952. This work fulfilled



the condition of a comprehensive approach, since it traced the development of the Jánošík tradition as a dominant feature of the cycle of outlaw traditions, including the non-folklore sphere – specifically in literature, and on the other side also giving a description of its importance and expression in folklore form. As his starting point, A. Melicherčík took the thesis that the Jánošík tradition continued the folklore of an older period. Thus, in his view, it created the image of a hero – Juraj Jánošík „grafted” onto the image of figures of fantastic folklore. He considered the change of aim from a fantastic to a realistic representation of reality as feature of development. In fighting for his realistic aim the folklore hero uses strength and magic means. Melicherčík’s emphasis on the social content of this tradition, which points to growing self-consciousness of the people, may be considered a contribution. The shift of the original folklore tradition to the system of another socio-cultural context occurred originally by literary channels. In the second part of the above mentioned work, A. Melicherčík points in a comprehensive way, which may also be evaluated as an adequate methodological approach, to studying the genesis, function and revitalisation of historical traditions as such.

### II.9.3.

V. Gašparíková continued with this methodological orientation in her work: „The outlaw Michal Vdovec in the history and folklore of the people of Gemer” (1964), and „Legends about outlaws from the Slovak and Polish Tatras” (1979). In the first work, the author, on the basis of a study of contemporary historical sources reaches conclusions about the function and historical background of one specific tradition about a particular outlaw from the period of the epilogue of Carpathians outlaws. By comparing the results of the study of folklore and the artistic processing of this particular social phenomenon – outlaw life, at various time- space co-ordinates, the author reached conclusions on certain principles which condition the formation of the image of the outlaw as a folklore hero. For her it is a specific historico-social-economic situation, which also results in the radicalisation of the rural masses. In outlaw folklore, this fact is thematised in the need „to create an example, or sometimes a heroic ideal, in contrast to the smallness and oppression of their times. Popular fantasy returns to someone very close them, a real person, who exists and who originates from their environment” (V. Gašparíková 1964: 79). V. Gašparíková sees the humanisation of the image of M. Vdovec as a specific feature of the tradition about him. In the second of the above mentioned works, V. Gašparíková uses a comparative approach to the outlaw problem, from the point of view of the contact of ethnic zones: Polish and Slovak. The author points to the similarities and differences in the themes and motifs of Slovak and Polish legendary material. As she states, the similarities were essentially conditioned by common socio- economic starting points, but the difference in the specific historic conditions on the territory of Slovakia and Poland, and in addition the different state of the previous folklore situation, caused differences in the folklore conception in a particular ethnic tradition. The researcher also writes of non-folklore influences and their penetration into folklore tradition, as records from field research in the middle of our century also shows. Specifically these are film, but especially literary versions of the outlaw theme. These become a model for innovation in the folklore tradition. The basic, important constant of the „outlaw who takes from the rich to give to the poor” is the same in Slovak and in Polish material. The author finds differences in the specific presentation of the figure of the outlaw, around whom the national tradition revolves. Thus individual types of outlaw figure are created – according to their appearance, character and deeds (Jánošík, Vdovčík, Karolicek etc.).



#### II.9.4.

Up to now, the collection of studies in the periodical „Slovenský Národopis” in 1988 represents the most comprehensive study of the outlaw tradition from the point of view of its place in the culture and historical consciousness of Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia.<sup>9</sup> This was the culmination of a project of international cooperation on the preparation of a synthesis on „Folklore of popular liberation movements of the 16th to 19th centuries in the Carpathian and Balkan area and Folklore traditions about outlaws”. The attempt at a comprehensive examination of the traditions about outlaws stimulated wider interdisciplinary research and so apart from historiographic study of the problem of a comprehensive picture of outlaw traditions, it also led to study of it outside folklore, and in other cultural systems, – in semi-popular and professional art. From the methodological point of view, this approach may be evaluated more positively, since it reveals to us more clearly, the close relationships of these systems in the origin, formation and revival of historical traditions.

#### II.9.5.

The work of J. Komorovský (1957) on King Mathias Corvinus in folk prose tradition also has a “monothematic” character. The author does not confine the problem to the prose tradition, although in the Slovak folklore material, they represent the centre of gravity. J. Komorovský takes a wide cultural historical choice, also including non-folklore sources, by which he argues with specific documents, for the close relationship and material or motif penetrations of the oral culture of various social strata (the court, gentry, craftsmen, townspeople, peasants). The author explains the content and function of the tradition about King Mathias in the older territorial framework of the old Kingdom of Hungary, according to the contemporary status of individual strata, which found significance in the image of the just monarch – the thematic dominant of the given tradition. This is also the core of this cyclic historical oral tradition. On the other hand this conditioned the existence of a tradition in specific genre forms, from the historical tale to the realistic anecdote. J. Komorovský also comprehensively studied this in his works.

#### II.9.6.

The folklore image of the revolutionary years of 1848-49 and especially of one of the leaders of the revolutionary actions of this period, J.M. Hurban, is one of the „young” and regionally limited historical traditions, from the point of view of its historical starting point. J. Michálek (1966: 1978) gave the characteristics of these cycles of tales with a historical theme. He anchors the consistently specific historical tradition, which describes period events, the role of J.M. Hurban and the popular strata in them. The oral tradition, in which the population of the Podbratlansko- Podjavorinský region thematised its consciousness of events, was grafted onto traditional ideas and images. The author collected material representing the contemporary state of the material, which was neglected by previous researchers, who approached the material from an aesthetic point of view of story telling phenomena. Precisely the typical nature of certain living situations allows the constant revitalisation of the legendary tradition, and wandering motifs are updated with local, contemporary and personal concretisation. J. Michálek, in my view correctly, considers the connecting and crossing of individual historical stages, which obviously is not a feature only of traditions about the years 1848-49, to be an expression of the continuity of story telling tradition. Above all, I consider his working out of problems, to be stimulating, because he devoted attention to the regional content of historical tradition, and recorded the contemporary state of the tradition, catching both the dominant feature and the set of motifs of the given cycle.



#### II.9.7.1.

Special folkloric works on the subject of Tatar or Turkish invasions and the lordships on the Slovak territory of medieval Hungary are rare. In synthetic works, the Turkish cycle is described as one of the dominant legend cycles of the Slovak folklore prose tradition (Čsl. vlastivěda 1968: 618). Among the special folkloric works on this theme, I consider it necessary to emphasise the work of J. Michálek and M. Kosová. In the study „Legends about the Turks in the Podjavorinsko-Podbradlanský district”, J. Michálek (1969: 79-113) starts from material collected in the field at the beginning of the 1960s in an area with dispersed settlement. The author describes the dominant thematic features of the oral tradition in relation to the Turkish overlordship, essentially in a specific historical- social context, and in this context expresses conclusions of a generalising character. The author attempts to determine the causes of the persistence of the oral tradition about the Turks, in the tale repertoire of this district, considering the character of settlement as a stabilising element, which was a condition for the preservation of archaic elements of folk culture. A brief description of the tradition, from the point of view of folk poetry is also a part of this study. The author also solves the question of the original folklore material as a basis for the literary work of S. Chalupka, and the repeated penetration of material into the folk tale repertoire.

#### II.9.7.2.

An article by M. Kosová („On the theory of story and subject” 1972: 376-392) is notable for clear methodological orientation, fitting expressions and the solution of problems of historical legends with a Turkish theme. The theoretical basis of the author’s analysis of the relationship of story and subject is formed by the principles of semiotics, as she shows in the particular scientific method of her linguistic, literary and ethnological study. The author limited the corpus of material for the study to records from the last fifty years, and the territorial area of Slovakia, the Moravian – Slovak border and partly the Ukrainian area close to East Slovakia. The texts include territory included in the Ottoman Empire in the 16th and 17th centuries, further territory immediately threatened by Turkish attack, and territories which we know from history were not under the rule of the Turks and were not threatened by them. In understanding a folklore work as a model of reality, which fulfills the role of a medium of information, M. Kosová considers „threat” to be the basic subject of legends with a Turkish theme, since it has the dominant position in the hierarchy of significant components. On the basis of explaining the origin of the subjects of the folklore legend with a Turkish theme from the paradigms of war themes, the author attempted to define them. For this, she used Propp’s approach to defining fairy tales from the point of view of the main action. She describes the subjects of folklore legends with a Turkish theme as „development from threat to its liquidation or defeat, in a process of at least binary semantic antithesis” (M. Kosová 1972: 386).

#### Conclusion

After evaluating the development of research in the field of folk historical tradition in Slovakia up to now, it is possible to conclude:

- a. The folk historical tradition became the subject of interest from a non-folklorist point of view – as a source for the study of Slovak history.
- b. The aesthetic aspects applied in the collection of folk prose caused distortion of the real state of the story telling situation.
- c. A priori and specialised approaches to the folk historical tradition led to its one sided interpretation.



d. Those methods and methodological approaches, which traced folk historical traditions as themes – across genres and in wider cultural-historical contexts, were productive, and appear to be productive for further research.

## NOTES

- 1 GALLO, J.: From tale to national reality, Literary figures of Gemer. I., Bratislava 1969, p. 5-83. In Slovak.  
DZUBÁKOVÁ, M.: The beginning of theoretical interest in folk tales. Slov. národop., 24, 1976, p. 437-441. In Slovak.
- 2 Nation building and the literary group around L. Štúr. The members of the Štúrian generation were active in the culminating phase of the Slovak national revival and the formation of the modern Slovak nation at the end of the 1840s.  
See: „Štúrovci” in the Encyklopédia Slovenska, Vol. V, R-Š, Bratislava 1981, p. 776-777. In Slovak.
- 2a For detailed information about the aesthetic conceptions of L. Štúr in relation to Slovak and Slavonic oral tradition see:  
MELICHERČÍK, A.: L. Štúr and oral tradition. Slov. Národop. 4, 1956, p. 3-13. In Slovak.  
KOCHOL, V.: L. Štúr and oral tradition. Epilogue to the work: L. Štúr: Work, Vol. 3, Bratislava 1955, p. 339-362. In Slovak.
- 3 MARČOK, V.: (editor): In honour of Dobšinský, Bratislava 1985. In Slovak.  
Collection of studies: The Life and Work of P. Dobšinský – on the centenary of his death, Slov. národopis, 34 1986, p. 357- 433. In Slovak.
- 4 ALU MS, sign. B 465.
- 5 Same, p.105.
- 6 REUSS, G.: Der Ausflug nach Stará Huta ohneweit Miskolc. Rkp. ALU MS. See note 58 in the work of Urbancová, V.: Slovak ethnography in the 19th century, Martin 1987, p. 75. In Slovak.
- 7 Rkp. ALU MS, Sign. 88 A 88.
- 8 Rkp. ALU MS, Sign. C 292.
- 9 Slovenský národopis, 36, 1988, p. 399-618. Contributions: P. Horváth, M. Šrámková, V. Gašparíková, D. Klímová, S. Burlasová, O. Sirovátka, S. Dúžek, Z. Jelínková, Z. Profantová, D. Luther, K. Ondrejka, K. Čierna, C. Kraus, E. Charous, B. Beneš, L. Čavojský, M.A. Kováč, P. Mihálik.

Abbreviation: ALU MS – Archív literatúry a umenia Matice slovenskej v Martine (Archive of literature and art of Matica Slovenská in Martin)

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