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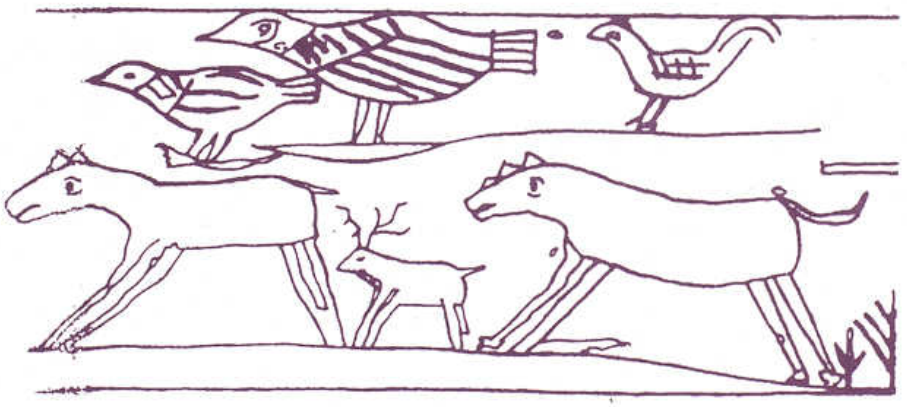

Z OBSAHU: O. DANGLOVÁ: Zoomorfné prvky v ľudovej dekoratívnej tradícii
D. BELKO: Prútkarstvo: história a súčasnosť
P. V. BOHLMAN: Židovské piesne o smrti v Strednej a Východnej Európe
Z. PROFANTOVÁ: Mentality and Historical Memory

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Preklady resumé: PhDr. Svatava Šimková

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Slovenský národopis (Slowak Ethnology) is a quarterly with a long tradition, edited in the Slovak lanquage by the Institute of Ethnology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Bratislava, Slovakia.

This review publishes papers from all spheres of Slovak folk culture, past and present, including minorities and Slovaks abroad. The journal's articles range from research on the folk culture of every region of Slovakia (folk architecture, arts and crafts, costumes and clothing, folktales, songs, customs, traditions, etc.) through information on activities of ethnological research centres and museums, archival materials, book reviews to theoretical and comparative analyses of topical issues. The most interesting studies are published in English, and all the articles in Slovak have extended English summaries.

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Erráta:

Redakcia Slovenského národopisu sa ospravedlňuje jubilantke PhDr.VIERE URBANCOVEJ, DrSc., za nesprávne uvedenie dátumu narodenia v článku v č. 2-3/1999, s. 254. Správne – 15. 6. 1929.

Zároveň sa ospravedlňujeme autorke O. DANGLOVEJ za chybné uvedenie autora správy *Výstava fotografií sakrálnych objektov* (Marta Botíková) v č. 2-3/1999, s. 274-275. Autorkou je O. Danglová.

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MENTALITY AND HISTORICAL MEMORY

ZUZANA PROFANTOVÁ

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Autostereotypes, transmitted historically through folklore, arise from the national mentality itself, and at the same time strongly influence it. Autostereotypes and national mentality are like joined vessels, which during the process of national self-identification and self-definition, mutualy influence each other. National mentality has a procesual character and is determined by geographic, politico-economic and historical conditions and circumstances. Historical mentality is a complex of ways and contents of thinking and feeling which is proper to a collective at a time: Mentality is manifested in deeds. Mentality must be determined on the basis of something far deeper than folklore narrative or other national traditions. Since the essence of mentality is also created by ability to reform national history, to cultivate oneself, to adopt autodidactics from one´s own historical events, to reduce isolation.

Kľúčové slová: mentalita, historická pamäť, folklór
Key words: mentality, historical memory, folklore

Motto:
"If you want to show the most interesting view of Czechoslovakia to American students, show them a map of Europe and tell them that this nation placed among the larger and stronger nations, the nation the ancient culture of which was plundered by wars and violence, the nation which had no literature before a century and almost no schools before half a century and before a decade no borders to be protected, this nation carried out a great deed: it simply survived. Do not judge our performance without simultaneously considering our handicap."

Karel Čapek
Misto pro Jonathana, pp. 27-28.

The examination of mentality has, undoubtedly, a long history, its schools, orientations and theoretical postulates. In recent years, however, this theme became much more pre-

ferred and topical. Politicians, anthropologists, sociologists, social psychologists, ethnographers as well as folklorists are intensively interested in it. The question is: Why the interest in nations' relationships to themselves and to other nations has been intensified just now? Characteristic features are described not only in tourist bedeckers but also in belles-lettres or reports of diplomatists. What is all this about exactly?

The term of mentality and the term of national character are sometimes identified in literature, sometimes not. Somebody writes about national character, the other about national nature, while the borders are very diffuse, or, do not exist at all. It is a matter of individual opinion. A German school (I. Kant, W. Helpach, A.Gehlen, H. Pross, P. Dinzelbacher), namely the latter, P. Dinzelbacher, grasps the term of mentality rather in the cultural-historical view. On the other hand, the American authors are predominantly psychologists and social psychologists, ethnographers coming from the positions of their own disciplines. For example, A. Inkeles and D. J. Levinson distinguish two periods in the history of investigating the national character, the mentality. From the mid-thirties to mid-fifties, the orientation towards individual communities through ethnographic and clinic methods prevailed. After 1955, the stress was laid upon comparative approach and application of qualitative methods. One of the methods used is that the collective spiritual formations and collective forms of behaviour are analyzed (folklore, art, religious systems and rituals, institutionalized forms of behaviour, etc.).

A. Inkeles and D. J. Levinson, for example, say that one should not presume that a nation "has" a national character, a mentality.

Simply, there are many controversial opinions on this issue today. N. Wilterdink mentions the so-called thorough sceptics or simple realists. He himself affirms that differences between mentalities exist essentially only in people's heads, in their ideas. They distinguish themselves by both continuity and change. They are not new, eternal or unchangeable.[1]

In Slovakia, mentality or national character was treated in scientific method only by A. Jurovský, in 1943, in his voluminous work the Slovak National Nature. He gives a detailed analysis of historical development of mentality under the impact of historical changes, political, economic and social ones, which influenced the formation of individual, in his opinion, characteristic features of the Slovaks. They are, for example, such features as emotionality-sensitiveness, temperament and impulsiveness called "broad Slav soul", unusual inclination and talent for singing, empathy – sensitivity to others, also called "Slovak dovelike nature" which actually means gentleness, pliancy, irrationalism. In addition, he shows – simple-minded frankness, diligence and incessant viability in the struggle for life, in overcoming tragedies, natural disasters, wars and continuing oppression. Based on the above-mentioned permanent struggle for bare existence (from the 9th century to mid-18th century there were struggles going on at this territory and in 19th century the national oppression started on the part of Hungary and strong Magyarization aimed at assimilation of the Slovaks. It finished with the 19th century), the author also deduced a kind of falling into lethargy, apathy; hatred to enemy adopted by the nation and looked for everywhere; or such features as envy, lowered self-confidence, alcoholism. All that found a recourse in the rooted and hitherto unrooted religiosity. The unrooted one even by the forty-year-old atheism of Marxist ideology.

Concerning historical literature more detailed references come from books of travels of the 18th century as well as from other works of the period of national revival. For example, in 1786, J. Hrdlička writes in his work the Slovak Nation: "He who roamed among the Slovaks, who is living among them and knows their morals, he must admit that they are

respectful, good-hearted, generous and kind people, open-handed to their guests, without an excessive pride, two-facedness and hypocritical justice, without flattering the ear and toadies, or slanderers ...".[2]

Of course, not all of them depicted only the good sides. Samuel Bredetzky wrote a monograph "Beyträge zur Topographie" about the nations of the Old Hungary, 1803. In Notitia historico-geographica comitatus Arvensis, 1805-1806, Juraj Durkovič wrote about the Slovaks from the Orava county that they liked drinking slivovitz very often, and they also cooked and drank beer, ... and even the poorest were good mixers, polite and hospitable. Alojz Medňanský wrote about the Nitran Slovaks, in 1817, that they liked singing. Jan Čaplovič characterized in detail the mentality of the Slovaks in his voluminous work Slowaken in Ungarn, 1818. For example, he described women as being tidy and diligent; they did not spare themselves even in pregnancy; they liked signing, etc.

I could still enumerate some more works of that period concerned with mentality of the Slovaks. A majority of authors are aware of regional differences caused by diverse ethnic population of individual regions of Slovakia which was, understandably, reflected in mentality. It still survives. We can see the differences between the Western and Eastern Slovaks also now.

If we looked for a picture of Slovak in the Romantic literature, we could see that the charactetistic features of the Slovaks were idealized then. On the other hand, the cultural literature, folk almanacs also describe negative characteristic features. They struggled against alcoholism. With the succession of the realistic literature at the turn of the century we really learn everything from the literature, in a photographic picture.

The first who analyzed the picture of mentality in folklore in Slovakia, with the Slovaks and the Slavs in general, was Ľudovít Štúr, the leading personality of the national movement in Slovakia, in the 19th century, in his work O národních písních a pověstech plemen slovanských (On National Songs and Legends of the Slav Tribes), 1853. In this work he gives a complex analysis of poetry of the Slavs in general, as well as of individual Slav "tribes", and, prosaic genres of folk provenience, too. In his opinion, the Slav mentality in literary art is manifested in love to nature; a Slav is family-oriented, faithful and deeply moral. He lives a community life, sociably. He is a strong believer – Christian, meek, humble and God-fearing. Ľudovít Štúr writes about fairy tales and legends: "Our legends are especially important for us as they present to us the n a t u r e o f t h e S l a v (i.e., also Slovak – Z.P.) n a t i o n and that is where their value rests. From this point of view there is the Slav spirit in them, without anything strange: of the kind as its very nature: here it is in the bud, here are its first flowers. The nation should be like the heroes of the nation: for those which the nation cares for, which the nation creates according to its will – the nation's nature must be cast in – the nation must live and find itself in them. From this point of view our national legends are very important."[3] In this connection he says about folklore narratives: "God-fearless and all those who sinned may be freed from a magic spell by means of d e v o u t n e s s and h u m b l e n e s s, and this is the very nature of our life. Heroes in national legends must be obedient, industrious and religious – that is where their entire soul lies; only such men can achieve great accomplishments. Away with all haughty manners. He who wants to be one of us, must have a religious, true will. He who is usually a hero in our fairy tales – he wins, and becomes a king – but with the greatest piety. It is a matter of course, for those who have piety and strength will come out at top of thousands".[4]

So much about folk narrative and a hero of 19th century. The spectrum of the functioning genres has of course changed, modified up to the presence. We find heroes in narra-

tions from World Wars I and II and, in Slovakia, also the heroes from the Slovak National Uprising. Here I could personally experience the functioning manifestation while investigating the narrations about Miloš Uher, the hero of the Slovak National Uprising from the Myjava region and his brigade, in 1971. I would describe the manifestation as having a double character as part of mentality. After 27 years from the start of the Uprising I inquired still living survivors. It was, however, three years after 1968 – the invasion of the Soviet Army to Czechoslovakia, that is, in the period of the so-called normalization that was marked by fear, social liquidation of people, imprisoning for political reasons, loss of employment, intrigues, informing by secret members of the State Security, etc. People feared one of another.

I want to mention just one experience from my research. Out of all informers which I talked to about functioning of Miloš Uher, only three dared to say: "Well, young lady, now switch off your tape recorder and I will tell you what it was all about: Miloš Uher was a rowdy, fighter and womanizer and had much on his record so he better joined the rising to avoid a jail. And as the rumours go he was killed from behind in the end. Nobody knows. As for Germans, they were polite, they did not steal, and still they did fire. As for the Russians everybody feared of them, for they robbed. That is true, it was like that. Do believe me."

So much concerning illustration of the text about the hero of the Slovak National Uprising which was among the highest status of a national hero in those times. I also wanted to document the non-official speech of general sign of mentality of the Slovaks, and namely, the permanent fear either of outside or home enemy which destroys the characters. Two-facedness was typical of that period: one – official and the other – one's own. I must, however, add that the Slovak National Uprising was the only armed uprising in the history of the Slovaks. It started on 29th August 1944 and was against fascism. Unless we take into account the Revolution 1848 in which the Slovak voluntary brigades also participated. The Slovaks are proud of their historical revolutionary events still now. Since we are essentially pacifists, the Velvet Revolution 1989 also took place without weapons.

Today, the situation in Slovakia is much more complex and absolutely confused in all aspects. A common citizen looses his orientation since he cannot identify his epoch and therefore he cannot identify himself with it. As if he fell out from the historical line, he is ranked nowhere. In general, the philosophy is spread c a r p e d i e m or "when we are dead and gone, who cares!" People changed not only their values but also many qualities. For example, "to work little, to earn much". Consumption became ideal. Families come apart. Egoism, competitiveness and corruption govern.

As we need not underline that history which passed in the spirit of the progress always moved around heroes – as the best representatives of their period. The present Slovakia also looks for them, or at least for their doubles. Today, they are showmen, singers, sportsmen, Miss beauties, and politicians that our everyday life is turning around. Models of heroes survive. People become the heroes for the competitiveness or as a source of fulfilling their wishes and expectations. At the moment, the "national hero" is represented with a great part of population in Slovakia, is represented by the leader of the mightiest political movement Movement for Democratic Slovakia, the thrice elected Premier, Vladimír Mečiar. He has became the hero of folklore narrative in everyday interhuman communication long ago. Meeting slogans such as "Our Vladko, our Vladko, we pray our Father" or "Vlado is our Jánošík" (the hero of antifeudal movement of 17th century – Slovak Robin Hood) make the rest of population laugh with fears. The fervent pensioners compose poems and songs about him, which they sing afterwards.

Our Mečiar, our Mečiar,
your country is little,
when you call up boys,
which post will you give them?

Our Mečiar, our Mečiar,
do not forget about us,
about our beautiful Slovakia
which you keep in your heart.

Our Mečiar, our Mečiar, only you,
we love you more than half of the village,
more than half of the village,
and the entire nation,
be with us, and we'll be with you.
You're a brave Lad of ours.

Don't fear, our Mečiar,
nothing bad will happen to you
the Slovak nation will defend you.

Our Mečiar, our Mečiar,
you are strong in arms,
our historians will worship you in the history.

We are pupils – democrats,
Mečiar is our leader,
we follow his commands,
we take him for our Father.

We are Mečiar's pupils,
Mečiar is our leader,
whenever you vote him,
you are secure.

The elections will be in three years
Mr. Mečiar is already waiting for us
he has progressed much by now
Mr. Mečiar attracts us.

A new historical hero was born to whom the same principles of folk heroism apply, both imputation and expurgation. Those frightful who lost economic and social certainties, identities, set their hopes on him as he promises guarantees which he, however, cannot fulfil. "We do not want foreigners' and we do not give ours", "In Slovakia á la Slovak", etc. He represents the old golden times of socialism, when everything was clear and secured. As the friendship with "the great Russian brother" used to be secured. He represents a symbol of desire for removal of offences and for innovation movement. Again, a defending stereotype and stereotype of systematic jeopardy of the nation in the history of Slova-

kia which brings a feeling of fear – all-societal and individual – have embarked. For a majority of the nation the fear of the history that might, God forbid, come back.

As said by P.Dinzelbacher concerning historical mentality "it is a complex of ways and contents of thinking and feeling which is proper to a collective at a time: Mentality is manifested in deeds".[5]

I agree with his opinion and I want to supplement the national character, from psychological approach which represents the view of mentality, as a modal structure which depicts the ways of personality variants in the given society. It is presumed that relatively stable personality characteristics exist (character features, temperament qualities, ways of emotional reaction) connected with ethnic affiliation of a man.

I would like to complete the characteristics which I consider important at investigating folklore narative (and not only them but also, e.g., writings) where it is possible to read the imprints of mentality. The very mentality is a structured phenomenon, it has a dynamic character substantiated by vector of time. It is developing and changing by time although it has its stable elements – stereotypes, self-pictures and heteropictures. In correlation with time the mentality is of many layers and variants, even though the relatively broad invariant maintains. Naturally, its diversity is determined by physical existence of the nation, geographic space, confession and, especially, historical fates conditioned by various ideologies. These circumstances must influence the folklore narrative, particularly, where self-pictures and pictures of other ethnics apear, in themes and ethic principles. For example, the genres with historical themes, narration from life, genres as well as anectodes. Narrative folklore is part of historical memory where the historical events are attached significance in agreement with the present conviction, norms, expectations and attitudes. The heroes' deeds become a measurement of the system of values when positive, if not, they fall into oblivion. A common citizen of Slovakia is characterized by weakened national awareness which is historically conditioned e.g. by non-existence of their statehood until 1918. This weakening signalizes increased danger of manipulation with historical memory of the broadest strata and manhood, the unfilled places to be filled out by politically suitable content (pictures of enemy – from a Turk, Magyar, Jew, the ideology of Western capitalism up to the political parties or their representatives). New myths arise or the old, verified ones are cultivated.

In relation to historical reality and its depiction in folklore, the folklore represents a strongly determined filter of viewing reality. Here we may talk about specific vector of social or historical memory. On the basis of confrontation, e.g., with historical sources in the self-pictures of mentality monitored it is possible to identify strong anchoring in various chronological sections of historical reality and, at the same time, elements of mythicism. The identifiable interferences or imprints of causing official ideology in forming folklore pictures point out insufficient immunity of folklore pictures against manipulation. I find it difficult nowadays to define Slovakness but Helge Pross, the German sociologist speaks about Germanness that it is based on a complex similar in the community on concepts of values in wishes and aspirations, on prevailing value orientations, system of belief and principles of behaviour. I think it is valid in general.

I personally believe that mentality must be determined on the basis of something far deeper than folklore narrative or other national traditions. Since the essence of mentality is also created by ability to reform national history, to cultivate oneself, to adopt autodidactics from one's own historical events, to reduce isolation, to follow Socrates': "Learn yourself" and the slogan "Live and let to live". Because, as a Chinese proverb reads: "While you have not forgiven to others their unlikeliness you are too far from the way towards wisdom".

NOTES

1 VÝROST, J., ZEĽOVÁ, A., LOVAŠ, L.: Vybrané kapitoly zo sociálnej psychológie III (Selected chapters from social psychology III). Veda, Publishing House SAV, Bratislava 1996.
2 URBANCOVÁ, V.: Počiatky slovenskej etnografie (Beginnings of Slovak ethnography). Publishing House SAV, Bratislava 1970 .
3 ŠTÚR, Ľ.: O poézii slovanskej (About Slav poetry). Edited by P. Vongrej. Matica Slovenská, p. 86.
4 Ibid., p. 87.
5 DINZELBACHER, P. (Hg.): Europäische Mentalitätsgeschichte. Kroner Verlag Stuttgart 1993, p.21.

MENTALITA A HISTORICKÁ PAMÄŤ

Resumé

Pojem mentalita a pojem národný charakter sa v literatúre niekedy ztotožňujú, inokedy nie. Jedni píšu o národnom charaktere, iní o národnej povahe, pričom hranice sú veľmi difúzne, resp. neexistujú. Je to vec jednotlivého názoru. Nemecká škola (I. Kant, W. Helpach, A. Gehlen, H. Pross, P. Dinzelbacher), z nich posledný, P. Dinzelbacher, chápe pojem mentality viac kultúrnohistoricky. Na druhej strane americkí autori sú prevažne psychológovia a sociálni psychológovia, etnografi, vychádzajúci z pozícií vlastných disciplín. Napr. A. Inkeles a D. J. Levinson rozlišujú v histórii skúmania národného charakteru, mentality dve obdobia. Od polovice tridsiatych do polovice päťdesiatych rokov prevládalo zameranie výskumu jednotlivých spoločenstiev etnografickými a klinickými metódami. Po roku 1955 sa kládol dôraz na komparatívny prístup a používanie kvalitatívnych metód. Jednou z metód je, že sa analyzujú kolektívne duchovné útvary aj kolektívne formy správania (folklór, umenie, náboženské systémy aj rituály, inštitucionalizované formy správania sa a pod.).

A. Inkeles a D. J. Levinson napr. hovoria, že sa nemožno domnievať, že nejaký národ "má" národný charakter, mentalitu.

Je zrejmé, že dnes existuje mnoho kontroverzných názorov na túto otázku. N. Wilterdink hovorí o tzv. úplných skeptikoch alebo jednoduchých realistoch. On sám tvrdí, že v podstate rozdiely mentalít existujú iba v hlavách ľudí, v ich predstavách. Vyznačujú sa tak kontinuitou, ako aj zmenou. Nie sú nové, ani večné, nemenné.

Ako hovorí P. Dinzelbacher o historickej mentalite,"je to súbor spôsobov a obsahov myslenia a cítenia, ktorý je vlastný určitému kolektívu v určitom čase. Mentalita sa prejavuje v konaní".

S jeho názorom súhlasím a doplnila by som ešte z psychologického prístupu, ktorý reprezentuje pohľad na mentalitu, národný charakter ako modálnu štruktúru zachytávajúcu spôsoby osobnostných variantov v danej spoločnosti. Predpokladá sa, že existujú relatívne stabilné osobnostné charakteristiky (napr. charakterové črty, vlastnosti temperamentu, spôsoby emocionálneho reagovania), súvisiace s etnickou príslušnosťou človeka.

Ešte by som doplnila charakteristiky, ktoré považujem za dôležité práve pri skúmaní naratívneho folklóru (ale napr. aj literatúry), kde je možné odhaliť stopy mentality. Samotná mentalita je štrukturovaný fenomén, má dynamický charakter podmienený vektorom času. V čase sa vyvíja a mení, hoci má svoje stabilné zložky – stereotypy, autoobrazy a heteroobrazy. V korelácii s časom je mentalita mnohovrstvová a variantná, hoci pomerne široký invariant pretrváva. Samozrejme, jej odlišnosť je determinovaná fyzickou existenciou národa, geografickým priestorom, konfesiou, a najmä historickými osudmi, podmienenými rozličnými ideológiami. A tieto okolnosti, prirodzene, musia vplývať na naratívny folklór, najmä kde sa vyskytujú autoobrazy, ako aj obrazy iných etnosov, v témach, etických princípoch. Sú to napr. žánre s historickou tematikou, rozprávanie zo života, memoráty, ale aj anekdoty. Naratívny folklór je súčasťou historickej pamäti, kde sa napr. histo-

rickým udalostiam priznáva význam v súlade zo súčasným presvedčením, normami, očakávaniami a postojmi. Činy hrdinov sa stávajú meradlom hodnotových systémov ak sú kladné, ak nie, upadajú do zabudnutia. Vo vzťahu historická realita a jej zobrazenie vo folklóre predstavuje folklór žánrovo silne determinovaný filter videnia skutočnosti. Možno tu hovoriť o špecifickom vektore sociálnej aj historickej pamäti. Na základe konfrontácie napr. s historickými prameňmi v sledovaných autoobrazoch mentality však možno identifikovať jednak silné ukotvenie v rôznych chronologických vrstvách historickej reality, ale zároveň aj prvky mýtizácie.

Domnievam sa, že mentalitu je potrebné určovať z niečoho oveľa hlbšieho ako je naratívny folklór alebo iné národné tradície. Podstatu mentality totiž tvorí aj schopnosť pretvárať národné dejiny, kultivovať samých seba, osvojiť si autodidaktiku z vlastných dejinných udalostí, znížiť izolacionizmus, riadiť sa sokratovským "poznaj sám seba" a smerom von heslom "ži a nechaj žiť". Pretože, ako hovorí čínske príslovie, "Pokiaľ si inému neodpustil jeho inakosť, si ďaleko od cesty k múdrosti".

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