

Faculty of Humanities
of Eötvös Loránd University

Judit Raffai:

THE CATALOGUE OF HUNGARIAN FOLK TALES OF VOIVODINA

The subject, objectives and methodology of the thesis

2007

Judit Raffai:

THE CATALOGUE OF HUNGARIAN FOLK TALES OF VOIVODINA

The subject, objectives and methodology of the thesis

The objectives of my thesis was to classify the tales of the Voivodinian Hungarians of Serbia, living in the area of the former Yugoslavia as well as record the tales classified into different typologies in a structured database.

The scope of the examination practically covers the processing and re-arranging of the data obtained by former tale collections performed in areas inhabited by Hungarians (Bácska, Bánát and Szerémség).

The Catalogue of Hungarian Folk-Tales of Voivodina does not yield a bibliographic list or annotations of the omnibus editions and anthologies of folk tales already published – instead, by going through these publications, it provides the series of data of each folk tale, building them into a database that contains information published in *The Catalogue of Hungarian Folk Tales* as well as completes it with additional data up to the most recent days. This database uses the current, uniform indicators of localization as well as the type numbers officially approved (by the National Council of Hungary); gives information on publications (first editions and reissues), and provides data highlighting the person(ality) of the tale teller. In addition to the types of information listed, the sources of archiving the tales are also given recorded as data. My aim for the near future is to include the texts themselves in the database as well.

The catalogue of Hungarian folk tales of Voivodina was created with the primary aim of appraising and listing the folk tales existing

among the Hungarian inhabitants of the area. Doing this created an opportunity for me to provide a historical as well as regional overview of the tales of the examined area. Having built up the database, the pattern of folk tale collection done over the past 150 years in the region became visible: who collected folk tales and where; what types of folk tales were recorded; when, where, how and by whom the collected data have been reissued since their first publication.

I also intended to acquire information on the proportion of the different genres within the body of the Voivodinian Hungarian folk tales – that is, what kinds of tales typify the shared folk tale knowledge of the region. Speaking of Voivodina, the fact that the present Hungarian population has been flooding into this area from the 18th century – coming almost from every region of the Carpathian basin –, should be always viewed as a decisive factor for the Voivodinian folklore. By building the Hungarian folk tales of Voivodina into the database we are hoping to be able to shed some light on to what extent can be the folk tale repertoire of the tale-tellers linked to the traditions of the region they have originally come from. We also expect to be able to say from our database whether there exists a definable, separate body of Voivodinian folk tales typified by the same general characteristics, and if yes, what is the nature of the relation between this group of folk tales with those existing in the South Great Plain tale region overlapping the Serbian boundary.

Although the Hungarian inhabitants, ever since their arrival to our area of study has always lived in a close co-existence with several different ethnics, the interethnic examination of the Hungarian folk tales is not among my objectives – the reason for that is the classification and description of the folk tales of other ethnic groups living in the Serbia of our days is not complete yet.

Creating a complete folk tale catalogue of the Hungarian folk tales of Voivodina was not my single objective: at the same time, I was aiming to build up a database using the data provided in the catalogue of the folk tales. The main reasons for the above database were making the consequent phases of the research easier on the other hand, and addressing the cultural needs of Hungarians living in Voivodina in

a relevant way on the other hand. I feel that this database can give effective help for people who want to gain knowledge of the folk tales existing in their own region and dialect. The folk tale telling competitions and groups that are present in the current cultural life of Voivodina are strong indicators of this existing need. This is also reflected in the series of data provided by the catalogue – that is why, instead of providing bulk numbers, we give a sequence of data for each folk tale variant describing the given variant from 33 different aspects, using not only the regular and customary marks.

My catalogue is intended to be completely in line with *The Catalogue of Hungarian Folk Tales* edited by Ágnes Kovács. Therefore the great majority of code numbers presented in it are MNK and AaTH numbers I used the numbers of the new international catalogue of folk tales published in 2004 (ATU) only when the given tale type was not included in the catalogue mentioned above. In some cases – mainly in connection with the classification of religious tales –, when the tale type in question could not be found in the mentioned catalogues, I applied the numbers of the folk tale catalogue compiled by János Berze Nagy (BN).

The structure of the thesis and research results

My doctoral thesis consists of two main parts:

–The history of research on folk tales of Voivodina, how and in what proportions these folk tales are divided regarding their genre, the region they are from, the tale teller they are obtained from; the effects Hungarian and South-Slavic folk tales have on each other.

– The catalogue containing

the data of Voivodinian folk tales, including both published texts and tales available only in manuscript (875 different tale types, 1206 tale variants), and the indicators used.

Based on findings from the catalogue, the texts of narrative tradition of Voivodina are regionally split as follows:

779 folk tales were collected throughout 71 settlements of Voivodina. This number can be further split by sub-regions of Voivodina: 401 folk tales were obtained from 29 settlements of Bánát,

374 texts were collected in 40 different places throughout Bácska, and 4 other folk tales were obtained in 2 settlements of Szerémség.

Looking at all texts collected throughout Voivodina so far, I could classify them into the following clearly definable groups:

- 5,2% animal tales,
- 31,8% tales of magic,
- 8,9 % religious tales,
- 9,7% romantic tales,
- 6,5% stupid-ogre tales,
- 1,4% Cold-Blooded servant tales,
- 2,9% village mocking tales,
- 23,3% jokes and anecdotes,
- 4, 6% tales of lying and
- 5,1 % formula tales.

Within the Hungarian folk tales of Voivodina a separate group of tales presents itself: these texts form a very rich, erotic narrative tradition that bears strong similarities to the jokes and anecdotes of the region and most probably its evolution was affected by the South-Slavic folklore. Only the number (150 texts) of these erotic tales classified into this group seems to be a reason strong enough for our recommendation to define 28 new tale types.

The classification of the Voivodinian folk tales of highlights the folk tales existing in settlements inhabited by people formerly migrated from Szeged as well as the distinctive narrative tradition of the Transylvanians from Bukovina, both being clearly characteristic of the region they are originated in.