

# Recent Works on Bulgarian Folk Verbal Art

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Although the last decade has witnessed a significant interest in more modern manifestations of the dynamics of folklore, Bulgarian folklorists have not ceased searching for new approaches to the so-called "classical" folklore heritage. Radost Ivanova's book Epos-Ritual-Myth is one example of this. The author adopts E. M. Meletinsky's "evolutionary" approach and focuses on genesis and gradual change in the epic tradition from archaic mythology to more recent historical epic narratives. Ritual and myth in this study serve as a cultural "medium" for the existence of epos in time.

Radost Ivanova attempts to reconstruct those epic works, of whose existence there is only indirect evidence, and which are closely interwoven with seasonal rituals and myths. The central epic character of Marko Kraveviti is analyzed as composed of multiple layers of features, revealing a more archaic image hidden behind that of the Prilep ruler. The more archaic figure is regarded as the "culture hero" who engages in contests with demons controlling water sources. Viewed from this perspective, the older epic narrative is linked to a group of myths and rites associated with the cosmogonic act of the vernal renewal of vegetation. Analysis of a cycle of seasonal rites throughout the Balkans and the Mediterranean region leads Ivanova to view these rites and the older epos as typological parallels of the same "calendrical" version of the creation myth. The subsequent "historicization" of the archaic epic model has led to its direct link with historical persons and events, while the connection to the myth has gradually faded. (Marko at this stage fights a real ethnic enemy and frees his enslaved fellow countrymen,

yet the images of the hero's helpers, the antagonist, and even the chains of slaves still yield evidence of the mythological layers of the epic tradition.)

The epos-ritual connection is also explored in "evolutionary" terms on the basis of the wedding theme as found in songs about the marriage of the epic hero. A parallel is sought between the "culture hero" and the epic "bridegroom" in terms of their actions and semantics. Plamen Bochkov's book The Unknown Hero is an attempt to analyze lesser known or forgotten epic themes from an unusual perspective. The work leads the reader through the complex set of characters found in the Bulgarian epos and reveals through them the changing fate of the Bulgarian people over time. Analysis is carried out within the context of Balkan history in the Middle Ages, an epoch of heroes, blind singers and their long songs. Epos-Ethnos-Ethos situates the Bulgarian epic tradition in the context of Slavic and Balkan cultures. It also offers some new approaches, and raises new issues.

Bulgarian folk narratives have also been the subject of numerous recent publications. Perhaps the most significant among them is the Index of Bulgarian Folktales by Liliana Daskalova Perkowski, Doroteia Dobрева, Iordanka Kotseva, and Evgeniia Mitseva. The authors, research scholars from the Institute of Folklore of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, completed this complex volume in 1985, but it appeared only a decade later due to circumstances related to problems and recent changes in publishing.

The (tale-type) Index presents in a systematic form more than 5,500 existing versions of tales collected between 1830 and 1985 and scattered in various published and archival sources. It is preceded by an earlier attempt at classification made by Mikhail Arnaudov (1905), which, however, is rather limited in terms of genre scope and number of texts. Earlier collections of tales often contained references to previously published versions of the texts. However, it was

impossible to obtain comprehensive data about all folklore subject-matter and themes, and all tale versions and variants. Furthermore, given the international distribution of tales and motifs and their tendency to migrate, comparative research is only possible through quick and easy access to a reliable and comprehensive reference source, especially one which follows a well-known, internationally established model. Therefore, the Bulgarian tale-type index has adopted the classification system of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson's The Types of the Folktale, whose practical usefulness has been undisputed, despite the continuing discussion about its merits and flaws. The authors had to introduce some changes, while strictly adhering to the international model: tale-type titles are sometimes modified to reflect an established national tradition; some subgenres are also named in accordance with established local practice at the time (e.g., legendary, instead of religious tales). New, specifically Bulgarian, material is incorporated through careful use of Thompson's patterns of marking types and subtypes, and by indicating all newly introduced "oicotypes" with an asterisk preceding the type number. Close to 900 new entries are thus introduced into what are considered to be the most appropriate available slots. Each unit (type, subtype) is furnished with a title, plot scheme, ample notes with cross-references to other types and indexes, notes on existing studies, on parallels in folk songs, parables and proverbs, etc. More importantly, precise cross-references are provided to the indexes of Turkish folktales (of Eberhard-Boratav) and East Slavic tales (of L. Barag et al.) thus connecting three major narrative traditions which have undergone mutual influence over time.

More than 5,500 texts have been selected, analyzed, and systematized after a careful and thorough search through scholarly and popular collections and publications, regional studies, periodicals, and major archives where folklore records have been stored for a long time. For various

reasons, not all regions of Bulgaria have been equally well covered by collectors in the past. There remains, therefore, a certain gap due to the disproportionate coverage of the country's territory. The Index, however, being an open system by design, has laid the foundation upon which further additions can be made if necessary.

Fitting a narrative tradition as as diverse and dynamic as the Bulgarian one into a rigorous classification scheme previously established to accommodate other cultural traditions, is by no means an easy task. The authors have managed to follow strictly the AT scheme, without displacing, misplacing or combining tale-types and, instead, have expanded the cross- references among the latter. There has been a danger of doing away with the characteristics of the national narrative material while fitting it into the AT model, particularly in regard to such aspects as tale classification and the understanding of the tale-type as an autonomous narrative, that is, one told as a single story. However, the authors have presented each type in a way that allows the international scholar, familiar with the AT Index, to find his/her way around in the material and, at the same time, to grasp the specific nature of the national tradition. Each type is introduced by means of an extensive yet sparse plot scheme, with the more elaborate types, e.g., those of magic or romantic tales, broken down into chief constituent parts and marked by a special system of markers. The bibliographic data for each version is followed by a short formula. This manner of presentation allows for the reading (reconstruction) of each version. Often, specific details are also given that further characterize each single version.

The volume also comes with an elaborate index of names and objects, as well as a bibliography of all major studies on Bulgarian folktales. Bulgarian Folk Ballads by Liliana Bogdanova et al. presents this genre in a comprehensive fashion. Mainly new recordings from a variety of regions in Bulgaria are included. Part I includes mythical, religious, and

legendary songs and ballads. Part II presents ballads of everyday life, historical events and persons, as well as ballads about the life of rebels and outlaws. Each text is supplied with ample notes and a bibliography of all published versions. The second volume also contains all relevant indexes, data about singers/informants and collectors, and a glossary. Nauka i izkustvo introduces a new series of folklore material with the books compiled by Albena Georgieva, Evgeniia Mitseva, Doroteia Dobрева and Svetla Petkova. It follows two earlier series -- Bulgarsko narodno tvorcestvo (12 vols, 1961-63) and Bulgarska narodna poezii i proza (7 vols, 1981-83), in which all major verbal genres are represented by selected annotated texts and by extensive introductions. The same pattern is followed in the new series. The main difference is that in the new series, each book focuses on a major theme and the texts published are supplemented and/or "interpreted," as if "from within," by other related folk material, an approach that creates the semantic context inseparable from the text. Thus, A. Georgieva's book focuses on folk legends of origin and ethical issues, E. Mitseva's on folk demonology, D. Dobрева's deals with jokes and anecdotes, and S. Petkova's book deals with folklore about the plague and other pestilence. Among the texts are earlier recordings as well as more recent and previously unpublished ones. Each text is accompanied by other related records of folk concepts and beliefs, songs and stories, ritual practices, proverbs and riddles, as well as by detailed notes and references. Comprehensive introductory essays provide an in-depth analysis of the corresponding matter.