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Armenian Folktales in Russian Publications of the 19th Century

The Article deals with investigation of the Armenian repertoire in the multivolume ““Collection of Materials for Describing Places and Tribes of the Caucasus», which was published by the Caucasian educational district from 1881 to 1915, having released 44 volumes. The idea belonged to K.P. Yanovsiy, and it was a great event in the history of the Caucasian educational district. Along with ethnographic and folklore material of peoples living in the Caucasus, there are more than 120 Armenian folktales of all genres: wonder, realistic and animal tales. Mostly well-known and popular plots have been presented in the Collection: stories about a thousand-voiced nightingale, about a girl who changed sex, about a clever hero, about an innocently slandered heroine, about an animal groom, quite a few biblical topics, etc.

Key words: Armenian folktales, collection, repertoire, plot, storyteller.

After the end of the Russian-Turkish war in 1878, Russia began a new policy in the Caucasus. A program of transferring schools to the new subordination of the Ministry of National Education began, and in 1892 almost all church schools in the Transcaucasian region came under the subordination of the Ministry of National Education. With the transference of educational institutions, a purposeful strengthening of the position of the Russian language was carried out not only as a subject to be taught, but also as a language of instruction. Russian became the language of instruction in the theological seminary in Tiflis. In the 1880s, in some Armenian schools the language of teaching was Russian.

In the same period, Kirill Petrovich Yanovskiy, who was an opponent of classical education, was appointed as the trustee of the Caucasian educational district. Yanovskiy spoke in favor of improving mastering local languages, but believed that the study of the Russian language would raise the level of education and culture in the Caucasus (Yanovskiy 1902).

An important event in the history of the Caucasian educational district was the publication of the multivolume “Collection of Materials for Describing Places and Tribes of the Caucasus”. The idea belonged to Yanovskiy, who also developed the program of the collection. The first issue of the collection was published in 1881 and continued until 1915, having released 44 volumes. The publication was financed by the funds of the Caucasian educational district. The frequency of publication of the journal was different, depending on the materials accumulated, approximately 1-2 issues per year. However, due to the war, its publication was suspended. In 1926, thanks to the Association of North Caucasian Mountain Local Lore Organizations, the 45th edition was published in Makhachkala, and in 1929 - the 46th edition of the collection. Then the publication came to an end completely (http://kubangenealogy.ucoz.ru/index/sb_kavkaz/0-25).

The “Collection” included information on history, ethnography, archeology, linguistics, geography of the Caucasus, dictionaries and texts of various peoples, legends and songs.

In the first issue, as an introduction, a program for collecting the necessary materials and the most important essays about the Caucasus were published. These were the basic scientific principles of collection, publication and translation of the folklore cultural layer, adopted by the editors. The program specifies the rules and principles for collecting historical, geographical, folklore and other materials. It was drawn up mainly for primary school teachers, but the participation in the collection of materials of teachers of gymnasiums and seminaries were also encouraged. Moreover, it was proposed to involve students of gymnasiums, schools, and other educational institutions in this work (issue I, 1881).

Yanovskiy's program was supplemented with a questionnaire compiled by G.N. Potanin, member of the Russian Geographical Society. New questions related to the collection of beliefs, superstitions and rituals (issue II, 1882). The "Program" was again republished in the 27th issue of the "Collection" and published as a separate brochure (1900). From 1893 to 1915 the collection was published with a foreword by L. G. Lopatinskiy.

Scientists, local historians and teachers - all who showed a keen interest in history and culture of the peoples of the Caucasus united around the "Collection". What Yanovskiy proposed was a completely new approach to the organization of research work: teachers were purposefully involved, mainly primary school teachers. The district leadership sought to ensure that teachers maintain their education at an appropriate level and are engaged in self-education.

In addition to scientific significance, the "Collection" also had a moral value: through the work, teachers in the most remote areas felt a connection with the world, realized their (even small) contribution to science. Research work filled the teachers' leisure time, increased their authority in the eyes of the public. An important point in the preparation of the publication was the fact that teachers of different nationalities wrote about peoples to which they themselves did not belong. Studying the culture of other peoples contributed to the development of mutual respect and understanding.

Among the contributors we can find S. P. Zelinskiy (graduate of the Tiflis Teachers' Institute, who published historical essays on the cities of Erivan, Shemakha and legal customs among Armenians not only in the

“Collection” but as separate editions as well), Y. V. Barsov, K. A. Nikitin, N.I. Shafranov and other prominent scholars.

The scientific value of the Collection was reviewed and determined by famous scientists V.F. Miller, director of the Lazarev Institute of Oriental Languages; K.G. Zaleman, director of the Asian Museum of the Academy of Sciences; V.V. Latyshev classical philologist and historian, director of the MNP Department.

In the Collection the folktale texts were placed mainly in the second section, which usually included ethnographic information, customs, legends, tales - i.e. folklore material of the peoples of the Caucasus. Folktales started to be published in the “Collection” from the second issue. In the “Collection” there can be found Armenian, Georgian, Tatar, Ossetian, Avar, Russian, Dagestani, Svanetsian, Abkhazian and Udi tales - tales of peoples living in the Caucasus.

In the first issues of the Collection, after the tale texts, only the name of the collector and the place are given without any comments. However, after the 18th edition, the name of the narrator, the time of recording and some comments on the text are indicated, highlighting the approach that over time, collectors and editors realized the importance of the storyteller’s identity and the information conveyed and began to provide more detailed information about storytellers.

It is worth mentioning that the same period (the 80-90s of the 19th century) is considered the “Golden Age” of Armenian folklore, since the Armenian folktale as a genre acquired its distinctive features from other narrative genres and it was during this period that the first collections of Armenian folktales were published, such as “Manana” by Garegin Srvazdyants (in 1876 in Constantinople), “Hamov Hotov” (in 1884 in Constantinople and then in 1904 in Tiflis), the first volume of “Armenian folktales” by Tigran Navasardian (1882, Tiflis), the first and the second volumes of “Vana Saz” by Gevorg Sherents (1885, 1899 Tiflis), which all prove the opulence of the Armenian material.

Of course, the manner of presentation and the aim of publications and transmission of Armenian folktales in the Collection and in the aforementioned collections were fundamentally different from each other. Although the Russian Collection had the goal of helping the peoples of the Caucasus to collect and preserve national material, all

materials were censored and the neutrality of the choice of repertoire and the establishment of some kind of equality between the peoples living in these territories can be traced.

In the Collection there can be found more than 120 Armenian folktales (in the following issues V -1886; VII- 1889; IX- 1898; XIII-1892; XIX-1894; XX- 1894; XXI- 1896; XXIV- 1898; XXVIII -1900; XLII - (42) - 1912).

The repertoire of Armenian folktales includes wonder, realistic and animal tales. Mostly the popular stories are presented. Here we find stories about a thousand-voiced nightingale, about a girl who changed sex, about a clever hero, about an innocently slandered heroine, about an animal groom, quite a few biblical topics, etc.

We can easily understand that the materials in the collection were censored or 'edited' as the tales of different nations have the same narrative language and practically do not differ from each other in the style of narration. When reading folktales of different nations, one gets an impression that the editors pursued the goal of bringing the text of the folktale into the same uniform sample. Armenian, Georgian, Ossetia, Tatar, and other tales have the same language of presentation, except that the differences are significant in some realia, although this difference is often insignificant.

The influence of the language and style of Russian folktales is noticeable, for example, you can find many Russian traditional formulas in the tales: for example, *“Долго ли коротко ли ехали братья, неизвестно: скоро сказка сказывается, да не скоро дело делается...”* (XLII, 21); *“... ни в сказке сказать, ни пером описать”* (XLII, 49); *“Жить-поживать, да добра наживать”* (XLII, 42); *один-одинешенек* (XIII, part II); *“Сел на своего черного коня и помчался на поле”* (XIII, part II); *царь-царевич* (XIII, part II), and many others.

The opening traditional formulas of fairy tale are presented mainly as Russian *«жили-были»*, *«жил-был»*, you can even find an example of Russian opening formula *“В некотором царстве в некотором государстве”* (“In a certain kingdom in a certain state” (XLII, 30).

The typical Armenian folktale endings are absent, the most popular Armenian ending formula “Three apples fell from heaven” is rarely found

in Armenian folktales, but can be found in the ending of folktales of other nations.

It is interesting to note that the names of folktale characters are almost the same everywhere, mostly Turkic. From the beginning, we simply assumed that the names were probably changed by editors and collectors, and later in the note to the folktale “*Chyplag*” (Issue VII, section 2, p. 188)we find the editor’s note, which says, “*Most of the proper names in printed tales were inserted by the collector for the convenience of the story. Among people, these tales are told with the omission of proper names, unless the latter characterize a well-known person by the very nickname: Chigali - frost, i.e. white as frost, Cheplag - naked, Taptug - found, foundling, etc.*” (Issue VII, section 2, p. 188).

So, as a result of careful editing, most of the Armenian folktales, and not only Armenian, acquired new features, literary patterns that are not characteristic of the Armenian folktales. We can also assume that this is the result of the translation of the folktales into Russian, the collector and editor simply conveyed the Armenian traditional formulas, corresponding them to the Russian, sometimes literary forms.

As regards the repertoire of Armenian folktales, a large number of tales is found in the XXVIII issue, published in 1900, where the II section, is completely devoted to the Armenian folk literature (overall 167 pages), edited and with a foreword by A.A. Bogoyavlensiy, who was a director of the 3rd Tiflis women’s gymnasium¹.

In this part of the Collection there are 13 units of Armenian legends and traditions, 13 tales, 10 units of humorous stories, anecdotes and fables.

In the preface to the 2nd section, Bogoyavlensky presents parallels of Armenian texts, with the texts of other peoples, or with other Armenian tales printed in the previous issues of the Collection as well as with the tales from Afanasyev’s repertoire. He makes comments on the plots, interprets them, makes generalizations, presents the similarities between Afanasiev’s and Armenian folktales.

A. Bogoyavlenskiy compiled an index of objects, motifs of Armenian folktales and legends, as well as an index of proper names. It is sometimes

1 Mainly Armenians studied in this gymnasium, and the new building of the gymnasium was built by the famous industrialist Hovnanyan (Ananov), therefore the gymnasium was often called ‘Ananovskaya’.

difficult to distinguish between design principle and practicality for further analysis, but they reveal different realia, as well as some motives and in this respect they are of utmost importance.

While these indexes are imperfect, they represent the first attempts to compile tale type indexes and classifications a decade earlier than the famous Aarne–Thompson classification system of classifying folktales, first published in 1910.

The tradition of writing notes or annotations by scientist-collectors was introduced by Academician Miller. In the XII issue (1891), he wrote a note about a Kabardin folktale, which became a kind of a model for analysis with subsequent commentaries on the texts of folktales. Here Miller carefully analyzes the variants and motives of the tale, gives parallels and comparisons of texts. Miller’s manner of presentation is distinguished by the thoroughness of the analysis, and argumentative conclusions.

It is noticeable that the prefaces to the texts of different peoples have the same features in the Collection, and therefore the articles, even by different authors, are very similar to each other in their structure and mode of writing, which proves that the editors had promoted clear instructions in dealing with folk materials.

Section II of the XXI issue is called “Folktales Collected by Students of the Transcaucasian Teachers’ Seminary”. Thus, the editors remained faithful to the program to involve students of schools and seminaries in the collection of folklore material. This part includes 19 units of texts, 3 of which are Armenian.

To identify the features of the Armenian fairy tales published in the “Collection”, we plan to carry out a comparative analysis with other records of folk tales collected from the same ethnographic regions, approximately in the same period. For example, it can be compared with the manuscripts of the expeditions of Yervand Lalayan, who collected folklore during the same period of time.

The tales of the Collection are rather retellings since they are mainly translated into Russian, but after thorough investigation we will be able to answer the question of how much the texts of the tales have been changed.

The significant value of the multivolume “Collection of Materials for Describing Places and Tribes of the Caucasus” is undeniable, and the study of this rich material has become a new stage in the study of Armenian folktales.

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