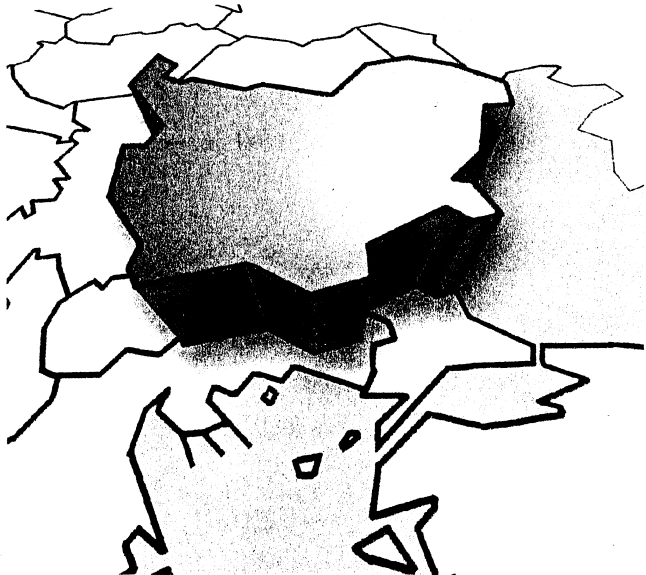


# EthnoScripts

ANALYSEN UND INFORMATIONEN  
AUS DEM INSTITUT FÜR ETHNOLOGIE  
DER UNIVERSITÄT HAMBURG

## Ethnologie Bulgariens – Bulgarische Ethnologie?



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## Narrating in Bulgaria Today

Klaus Roth

Writing about narrating in present-day Bulgaria can hardly be done without first pointing out two important facts. First of all one has to note that this relatively small country in the heart of the Balkan Peninsula has for centuries been, and continues to be, a bridge or a crossroads between Orient and Occident, that here western and oriental narrative traditions merged with each other. In this way, narration in Bulgaria – like in other Balkan countries – participated in both great traditions, but at the same time developed and maintained its own character, its own specific style and its own heroes (Köhler-Zülch 1989). This is demonstrated, on the one hand, by the type-index of Bulgarian folktales (Daskalova et al. 1994, cf. Koceva 2002), which was elaborated on the sound basis of the excellent Bulgarian narrative research<sup>1</sup> and is available in a German translation (Daskalova et al. 1995). On the other hand, it is demonstrated by the vivid exchange between oral and literary narratives in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which found expression, for example, in the adaptive inclusion of many oral narratives in the newly emerged popular literature<sup>2</sup> and in the artful transformations into high literature<sup>3</sup>. This very intensive exchange between orality and print has decreased somewhat since the 1920s, mostly because hundreds of thousands of little chapbooks with translations of the Grimms' Household Tales appeared on the market and pushed aside the local traditions of fairy tales (Roth/Roth 1989, cf. also Koceva 2007).

Secondly, one has to add the observation that Bulgaria has always been a country with a very strong and lively narrative tradition and continues to be in the present, in spite of all the influences of modern media<sup>4</sup>. People love to talk and to tell stories, just as they did during those difficult 45 years of socialism where the daily practice of narrating and especially telling risky jokes served not only the purpose of entertainment, but had essential social and above all vital functions for the individuals (Roth 1992). For obvious political reasons, Bulgarian folklorists were unable to study the forms and functions of these everyday narratives and instead focussed entirely on the traditional narrative genres<sup>5</sup>, on folk tales<sup>6</sup> and legends<sup>7</sup>, on jests and jokes<sup>8</sup> and above all on the songs<sup>9</sup> and heroic epics<sup>10</sup> that have been

collected since the nineteenth century and published in voluminous collections and editions<sup>11</sup>.

During the period of socialism, it was not really the ideological orientation and the occasional political instrumentalisation forced upon narrative research that was noteworthy<sup>12</sup>, but rather the patriotic or even nationalist tone of some publications which stressed the uniqueness of Bulgarian folk poetry and sharply delimited it from the traditions of neighbouring peoples<sup>13</sup>. In addition, the folk tradition of the ethnic Bulgarians was set apart from that of the ethnic (and religious) minorities in the country, particularly from those of the Turks, the Pomaks, the Roma and Karakachans by simply completely ignoring all these lively traditions<sup>14</sup> and even by prohibiting any kind of research into them because, as was argued, they hindered the enforcement of the “unified socialist culture and way-of-life”.

In Bulgaria – as in the other socialist countries – the 45 years of socialism have left deep marks in all spheres of society and everyday life to such an extent that it is almost unimaginable for a Westerner. The transformation that began after the collapse of the socialist system in November 1989 changed not only the entire political, economic, legal and social basis of the country, but also led to a deep crisis of its culture and its everyday life, a crisis that was attentively studied by the folklorist Radost Ivanova (1999, 2002). The deep change, the collapse of norms and values as well as the retreat of many people to their well-tested traditional patterns of behaviour and thinking has naturally also left its mark on the narrative traditions of the society. The Bulgarian folklorists needed some time, though, to react adequately to these changes. The reasons were, on the one hand, the persistence of traditional or even socialist approaches in research and, on the other hand, and more importantly, it was the simple fact that the majority of scholars had to fight for their own personal and professional survival during those difficult years.

Narrating was of great importance not only in the period of socialism, it continued to be of vital relevance in the period of transformation as an indispensable cultural strategy for coping with everyday life. Like everywhere else in Europe, however, the contents and genres of narrating changed. Traditional folk tales and jocular tales, once extremely popular, can today only be heard in villages and are told mostly by the elderly. They have been replaced by “modern” genres such as the joke and the urban legend as well as by many different forms of everyday narration, such as stories about travels abroad which are now possible without restrictions or

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narratives about the luxurious life of the nouveau riche or the arrogance of politicians. These stories appear regularly in the daily newspapers.

Meanwhile, Bulgarian folklore studies have largely overcome the effects of socialist paternalism and the shock of transformation. After decades of stagnation, ideological “guidance” and isolation from international academic exchange forced upon it by the Communist Party, folklore studies today have largely closed the gap to international research and have begun critical and analytical research into topics that were once taboo. These tendencies are most apparent in publications, particularly doctoral theses of recent years.

In my short contribution it is not possible, of course, to present all of the forms of present narration in their diversity or all of the topical approaches in narrative research in an exhaustive manner. In accordance with my own survey of the present tendencies and consultations with Bulgarian folklorists<sup>15</sup>, I will therefore focus on four fields which to my mind are of greatest relevance today, namely autobiographical narratives, local stories, religious narratives and jokes, and which, in one way or another, reflect the direct or indirect consequences of socialism and post-socialist transformation. It will be necessary to occasionally turn to the socialist period in my presentation of these developments of everyday narration and of narrative research in Bulgaria today.

### Oral History and autobiographical narrating

Although there was much narrating taking place in the period of socialism, it was almost taboo for people to bring up the troubling issues that they encountered in daily life. People could only speak openly about their hardships within a close circle of trusted family members and friends (Roth 1992). This everyday experience, the stress and pain of all those who were deprived or repressed by the socialist regime, only found its full expression after the collapse of the regime in the form of remembering. However, it is not the large number of memoirs that were written after 1989 that is surprising, but rather the very fact that the published recollections and the social discourse about the past was not dominated, as one would expect, by the *victims* but in fact by the high-ranking representatives of the Communist regime, be they privileged fellow travellers or even *perpetrators*; their self-legitimising memoirs dominated the public discourse (Gospodinov 2006: 13f., Koleva 2007: 9).

Compared to these early stories of self-legitimation which were also intended to influence the collective memory of the socialist period, the oral recollections of the “ordinary citizens” – who had to cope with the “normal” socialist everyday life and for whom the socialist period was their whole life – were more restrained and their voices were only heard much later. It was not until a few years after the changes, after the shock of the collapse of the regime and the early phase of transformation, that they were able to speak openly about their experiences. And while for some people (1) their autobiographical narratives were an easing of their burden, relief and passing on of their life experience, (2) other people never talked about this period of their life, not even with their own children, (3) while still others – in nostalgic transfiguration – even stressed the positive sides of socialism and of their own actions in their narratives.

While the autobiographical stories of the “ordinary people” were mostly told several years later, ethnographic research turned to their recollections of life under socialism from relatively early on. As early as in 1993, a Munich-based research project<sup>16</sup> began to systematically interview the inhabitants of a village in the Rila Mountains about their memories, which were still fresh, of the socialist past. Their life histories and experiences were recorded and analysed. It is not possible here to discuss the wealth of their findings on all aspects of socialist everyday life, above all, on their practices and strategies of life management in full detail<sup>17</sup>. It should be mentioned, however, that (almost) all of the villagers who were asked to talk about their memories enjoyed the experience of narrating and thereby coming to terms with their own past, such as, for example, the woman who recalled with great emotion how in the 1950s her husband was apprehended and sent to the Belene concentration camp for several years. Throughout all these years, this was something she had never been able to talk about. Also contributing largely to the comprehensive history of everyday life in the socialist village – better than any written sources – and thus providing much understanding for the researcher (Dobrova 2001) and the villagers themselves, were the life histories of all those who made a compromise with the system and profited from it. Folklorists at Sofia University proceeded in a similar manner, whereby they asked people from all over Bulgaria and from all walks of life from 1994 onwards to tell their life histories; a sample of these histories was published later (Koleva et al. 1999, Koleva 2007).

While these autobiographical histories were elicited by scholars, the Internet



platform *www.spomeniteni.org* established by writers, journalists and psychologists in 2004, is of a different nature. In recent years, hundreds of people from across the country have shared their own negative and also positive memories of the socialist period, their everyday experiences, both big and small, on the website<sup>18</sup>. In 2006, the initiators published a selection of 171 stories in a book (Gospodinov 2006) in order to make it easier for those who had lived during socialism to come to terms with their past and at the same time to keep the memory of this time of totalitarianism alive with the younger generations. It is remarkable that many emigrants contributed their recollections to this website. In view of the official policy of silencing the memories of those 45 years, this is certainly a wholesome and healing means of narrating for society as a whole.

### Local stories and histories

It is an indirect consequence of socialism, but also a reaction to the growing domestic tourism, to the integration of Bulgaria into the European Union and to globalisation, that the *local* and the *regional* have gained in importance in recent years, both in the villages and regions themselves and among the masses of “new urbanites” in the big cities with their sentimental and nostalgic memories of their family’s native village. This becomes apparent, on the one hand, in the numerous local and regional feasts and festivals, so that one can speak of a veritable “festivalisation” and, on the other hand, in the increased interest in “stories and histories”. An increasing number of books are being published about the (recent) history of villages, towns and cities which, apart from written sources, also make use of local legends and oral narratives of witnesses of the time, including the period of socialism. Contrary to often told pessimistic estimates, the telling of old and new local stories is still very strong in Bulgarian villages and small towns, as observed by the folklorist Marijana Žekova (Žekova 2005) in many regions of the country<sup>19</sup>. This joy of storytelling derives from the many functions of such narratives which are situated between traditional legend and everyday narration, between fact and fiction: they not only convey local knowledge, memories and local identity, but are also quite entertaining and often present models for action or behaviour.

It is important to note that in this narrating about individual experiences, local everyday life and local history, the voices of the ethnic and religious minorities

are heard more and more often – beside the Bulgarian majority population. In his book about the town of Tutrakan on the Danube, Nikolay Nenov (Nenov 2002) includes many tales by the local Gypsy population, and the volume by Margarita Karamihova about the Muslim “saint” Osman Baba in the village of Teketo close to the Turkish border contains stories told by Turks (Karamihova 2002, see also Aleksiev 2005). Other books present stories told by Armenians (Miceva 2001, 2007), by Catholics or by Pomaks (cf. Ganeva-Rajcheva 2004, Petkova 1998, Bojadjieva 2001), and also narratives of diaspora Bulgarians in their villages have been recorded and published (see Ganeva-Rajcheva 2004a)<sup>20</sup>. Without any doubt, this interest in ethnic groups is also a reaction to the tabooing of this topic in the socialist period.

In view of the growing discrepancy between prospering urban centres and deserted rural areas, the collection and publication of local legends and other local traditions serves at least two purposes. On the one hand, it is meant to express and strengthen the attachment of the inhabitants to their native places and, on the other hand, it also serves to popularise the place and to profit from growing domestic tourism. Thus, in order to attract Bulgarian tourists, three towns are actively engaged in a quarrel about which of them is the birthplace of the famous monk Paisij Hilendarski, who in 1765 wrote the first Bulgarian history book and is venerated as the founder of the new Bulgaria. It is obvious that – due to the growing interest in the pre-socialist national history and the growing tourism – their dispute is founded largely in commercial reasons. While in the socialist period the town of Bansko in southwestern Bulgaria had officially been declared his birthplace, today the towns of Dospej (district of Samokov) and the village of Kraley dol (district of Pernik) have renewed their old claims to being his place of birth. The interesting thing is that they present local legends and traditions as evidence and even organise, as the folklorist Cvetelina Dimitrova writes (Dimitrova 2007), conferences on this topic. At stake are not only commercial interests, but also national reputation.

### Religious narratives

Due to the atheist policy of the Communist Party and the state in the period of socialism, both the telling of religious stories and research on this topic were prohibited. While this ban had to be observed strictly in research during those years, people of course continued telling each other saints’ legends and tales of miracles, though clandestinely. In the 1980s, however, there was an exception: the narratives

about the famous clairvoyant and prophet Vanga (in the village of Rupite, SW-Bulgaria, cf. Velchinova 2006). People could talk freely about her miraculous healings and prophesies as she gave advice even to the president and Party chief and to other leading politicians.

In view of the elimination of the religious from public discourse, it is hardly surprising that immediately after the political changes these long suppressed traditions came to the surface again. In the 1990s, as a direct expression of the crisis of transformation, narratives about extra-sensual apparitions and experiences (“*ekstrasens*”)<sup>21</sup> flourished to an almost unimaginable degree not only in Bulgaria, but in almost all post-socialist countries. Up to the present, countless stories of apparitions and miracles, stories of miraculous healings and visions (see Velchinova 1999, 2006) are being told. Several volumes of the journal *Bulgarski folklor* have already been devoted to stories about miracles<sup>22</sup> and to religious narratives<sup>23</sup>, among them also Islamic narratives<sup>24</sup>. In the late 1990s, the folklorist Vihra Baeva (2001) encountered a wealth of oral religious narratives on her field trips in the region of Asenovgrad, among them narratives of personally witnessed miracles, of miraculous healings, omens, dreams and visions which were rooted both in the local tradition and in personal experiences. They are, the author holds, a reflection of the material and above all spiritual crisis of the post-socialist society and indicate, precisely through their adaptation to modernity, the use of such narratives about the supernatural as a life support. That these vital functions are still very relevant is demonstrated by the fact that today not only the oral narratives, but also the daily press often present reports of miracles and legends. The very popular belief in miraculous salvation finds its expression, for instance, in reports about a miraculous icon in the monastery of Bachkovo which saved patients who had been given up by their doctors<sup>25</sup>; the icon is said to also offer help to Muslims. The newspaper reports gave a full account of the oral legends and thus contributed to their further diffusion. In the spring of 2007 there were particularly spectacular reports in all large daily newspapers about three miracle-working icons which had been transported from three famous monasteries to the central Alexander-Nevski Cathedral in Sofia. Thousands of people prayed in front of them for the seven Bulgarian nurses who had been sentenced to death in Libya and their prayers, the reports maintained, eventually contributed to their salvation<sup>26</sup>. Other newspaper reports even wrote about alleged godly punishments for the Libyan president Ghaddafi<sup>27</sup>.

These reports and miracle tales often transcend the boundary to rumours. This is hardly surprising because in the time of socialism with its centrally controlled media, rumours were probably the most important source of information and therefore an important topic in everyday narration. While in the time of socialism people mostly told rumours about important Party leaders, about imminent measures of the Party or about catastrophes hushed up in the media (Roth 1992), today rumours – which often verge on the miraculous – about conspiracies of the “Big Powers”, but also about measures of the European Union make up part of everyday narrating. A topical example is that of the introduction of the EU excise tax on alcohol (including home-made alcohol) which came as a big surprise to the population after EU accession in January 2007; the tax evoked not only counter strategies, but also rumours and narratives about its enforcement (Ivanova 2008).

Mostly due to the taboos of the socialist period, the religious tales of ethnic and religious minorities, particularly those of the Turks and Pomaks, have received increased attention. Again, prophecies, miracle tales and reports of miraculous healings predominate, while among the Christian groups there are also many re-told Biblical stories<sup>28</sup>.

## Jokes

It is certainly correct to say that even in the period of socialism, the strongest narrative genre, both quantitatively and qualitatively, were jokes, and in all socialist countries political jokes were most popular, closely followed by erotic jokes. However, telling political jokes or jokes that could be interpreted as political was always risky for the teller<sup>29</sup>, as one never knew exactly what ears were listening. Thus, in all socialist countries, jokes with a hidden meaning which sounded harmless but carried a hidden critical message were very popular. For clearly political reasons folklorists avoided studying jokes. In a volume of 42 research papers that came out only two years before the political changes under the title “Laughter in Folklore”, (Dinekov et al. 1987) only one contribution slightly touched on the topic of joke-telling: the author only mentions cautiously “that roughly two thirds of the active joke repertoire is made up of creations with socio-political or sexual themes” (Afanasiyeva-Koleva 1987: 135).

As was to be expected, the end of the totalitarian regime ushered in the end of

political jokes; today one can still hear a few political jokes about Americans, Communists and some politicians, but they are all quite harmless. Nevertheless, jokes have remained a strong narrative genre, probably the strongest one, but their content has changed a lot since 1990 and they have more or less developed in the same direction as in most other European countries without, however, losing their specific character<sup>30</sup>. Bulgarian narrative research poses topical questions and applies modern approaches, as can be seen in the thematic volume “From fairytale to joke”<sup>31</sup> or in the studies of Stanoy Stanoev (Stanoev 2005), who discovered in Bulgarian jokes, among other things, a strong tendency to poke fun at oneself and to express doubt of oneself, both of which seem to indicate a disturbed national identity. There are, indeed, many jokes in which Bulgarians make fun of themselves and place the “foreigner” in a higher position<sup>32</sup> (Stanoev 1992). Contemporary Bulgarian jokes thus seem to continue an older tradition which found its strongest and most prominent expression in Aleko Konstantinov’s character of the uneducated, boorish rose-oil merchant *Bay Ganyo*<sup>33</sup>; in the socialist period he lived on in jokes as “Ganev the engineer”.

In addition to the oral joke tradition which remains strong until this day, the importance of the Internet as a means of distribution has increased significantly in recent years. Compared to other countries, Bulgaria has an Internet platform for jokes that is quite unusual and remarkable and is, in addition, an extremely rich and useful source for narrative research. At the address *www.vicove.gbg.bg* one can find over ten thousand jokes, and the website is structured and updated in a manner that is impressive. As with the websites of other countries, the jokes are organised in categories, but in addition each entry is furnished with information about the sender and the day of submission. Furthermore, the visitor has the possibility to forward the joke to friends and to vote for the joke; the number of votes for the individual joke is also indicated, which provides some indication as to the popularity of a joke. Nowhere else does the researcher get such a compact overview of present trends and tendencies of joke telling in a country – and of the specifics of Bulgarian humour.

On the website the jokes are grouped into the following eleven main categories, which in themselves are highly indicative: (1) animals (with 3 sub-categories), (2) popular heroes (with 10 sub-categories, among them fairytale heroes), (3) dirty jokes (with 7 sub-categories, among them many jokes about homosexuals), (4) na-

tional or ethnic jokes (with 8 sub-categories, among them many jokes about Gypsies), (5) drinkers (with 3 sub-categories), (6) political jokes (with 4 sub-categories, among them jokes about the Bulgarian president or the former prime minister, King Simeon II), (7) professional groups (with 19 sub-categories), (8) jokes about Radio Yerevan, (9) various jokes (with 5 sub-categories), (10) family jokes (with 6 sub-categories, among them many jokes about adultery) and finally (11) black humour (with 5 sub-categories, among them racist jokes).

Among the professional groups, the customs officers and policemen are the most popular characters in jokes, with the policemen being either corrupt or stupid. The following joke was posted on 13/03/2008 and received almost 2000 votes:

*A traffic policeman stops a car by night in order to check the documents. He looks through the windows – the driver has his seat-belt on, quite in accordance with traffic regulations. He smiles and says: “Congratulations! You have just won 500 leva from the programme ‘Exemplary driver’! What are you going to do with this money?” “I will register with a driving school!” the man says, but his wife interrupts him: “Don’t listen to him, Mr Policeman, he is so drunk that he talks nonsense.” From the back seat a boy rises and says: “I told you that we are not going to get very far with this stolen car!” And from the boot one hears a voice: “What’s on, have we crossed the border or not?”*

The large number of jokes with motifs from fairytales and about fairytale characters is of particular interest. Among the heroes, Father Frost, the dragon Spaska, Bear Pukh and Little Red Riding Hood form separate sub-groups. Red Riding Hood is particularly popular, and there is always an erotic element in the jokes. A joke posted on 23/07/2007 reads:

*Red Riding Hood goes into the forest and meets the wolf who says to her: “Take off your underpants, Red Riding Hood!” And she thinks to herself: “Hmm, this guy again thinks that they will fit him”.*

Likewise, jokes about the “golden fish” that can fulfil three wishes, a prominent figure in Bulgarian fairytales, is very popular in jokes. An example:

*A fisherman catches a golden fish who promises to fulfil him three wishes if he throws him back into the water. “Fine”, the fisherman says, “my first wish is that I will have lots of money. My second wish is that I*

*will have as many women as I desire. And my third wish is that I can catch you many hundred times”.*

The following joke is evidence of the permanent modernisation and adaptation of jokes. It was posted on 31/01/2008 on the website:

*Ali Baba returns to his cave and says: “Sesame, open up!” From the inside one hears a mechanical voice: “Please enter your PIN code”.*

The final example is a joke that appeared on the website in May 2005 and received over 2,300 votes, a clear indication of its popularity. In a self-critical and ironic tone the joke establishes a relation between present-day narrating in Bulgaria and the future of the country in the European Union; in view of the very critical progress reports of the European Commission about Bulgaria and Romania the humour of this long joke, however, has somewhat macabre undertones. Entitled “The Balkans are coming! Scenario for the development of the European Union” the joke forecasts the following development of the EU:

*2007 - Bulgaria accepted into the EU.*

*2010 - Romania accepted into the EU.*

*2015 - Croatia, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Turkey accepted into the EU.*

*2017 - Albania, Kosovo and Serbia accepted into the EU.*

*2018 - For the first time a European institution puts a Romanian in a leading position. He appoints his wife, all the relatives of his wife, the family members of her neighbours and her best friends.*

*- Officials from the Balkan countries account for 10% of the EU administration personnel.*

*2022 - Officials from the Balkan countries make up 60% of the EU administration. The EU administration triples their salaries, introduces flexible working-hours, the south Slavic languages take third place among the “administrative languages”. Because of stress 90% of the EU officials take sick leave. The highest numbers of notifications of sickness are reported in the periods between 15 June and 15 September as well as between 15 December and 15 January. The sick officials are observed*

*in the Alps, on the Canary Islands and at other places that are well-known for their healing effect on stress. The EU Parliament votes for a law according to which the EU budget has to pay for the cure of these illnesses. During the sick leaves the EU administration is carried out by persons with temporary labour contracts.*

*2025 - The Balkan countries make up 90% of the EU administration. The Macedonians again refuse to introduce the Euro.*

*2026 - The high costs for the EU administration demand drastic reductions. All Belgian citizens in EU service are laid off. The EU officials from the Balkans reach 99.3% of the total number.*

*- Romania successfully completes privatisation.*

*- 2028 Serbia takes over the EU presidency.*

*- In February Germany leaves the EU. One month later France and Finland follow. Until the end of the year under Albanian EU presidency, Great Britain, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Holland, Luxemburg, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Austria, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Slovenia leave the EU. All these countries introduce a strict visa regime for the EU.*

Let me summarise my findings by saying that narrating in present-day Bulgaria in its various forms and genres is a direct expression of the social developments and moods and thus a sensitive indicator of political and social developments in the country. Although everyday narrating transports many traditional genres and subject matters, these are permanently adapted to actual needs and situations. In this way they can fulfil important functions in a country that is trying – after decades of isolation – to integrate into the complex world of the European Union and of globalisation. In its contents, its genres, and its forms of communication narrating in present-day Bulgaria has certainly arrived in the age of post-modernity.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> E.g. Šišmanov 1889; Arnaudov 1905, 1933-34; Dinekov 1949; Vakarelski 1969; and also the bibliographies in the Bulgarian Tale Type Index (Daskalova et al.



- 1995: 413-424).
- <sup>2</sup> Roth 1983, 1984, 1989, 1992a; Roth/Roth 1986.
- <sup>3</sup> For example in the “Balkan legends” by Yordan Yovkov (Jovkov 1927, Jovkov 1959).
- <sup>4</sup> See e.g. the large number of recordings from the district of Blagoevgrad (Daskalova et al. 1985) and from the district of Sakar (Miceva 2002).
- <sup>5</sup> This is shown e.g. by the article “Bulgaria” in the *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* (Dinekov 1978).
- <sup>6</sup> E.g. Parpoulova 1978; Romanska 1965a; BNT 1961-63, vol. 9, 10.
- <sup>7</sup> E.g. Romanska 1964, 1967; Parpulova 1982; BNT 1961-63, vol. 11.
- <sup>8</sup> E.g. Dobрева 1992; BNT 1961-63, Vol. 10.
- <sup>9</sup> Cf. Dinekov 1976, 1967; Parpulova 1981; BNT 1961-63, vols. 1-8 and 13; Stojkova 1971, 1976 and the volumes 60 and 61 of *SbNU* (= Bogdanova et al. 1993/4, 2001).
- <sup>10</sup> Cf. Romanska 1965; Romanska et al. 1971; Holevich 1986; Dinekov 1980; Ivanova: 1989; BNT 1961-63, vol. 1.
- <sup>11</sup> E.g. Šapkarev 1891-94; *SbNU* 1889 ff.; BNT 1961-63.
- <sup>12</sup> Thus, the volumes of the journals *Bulgarski folklor* and *Bulgarska etnografija* of those years presented studies on the “socialist culture and way-of-life”, particularly on the system of socialist holidays and rituals.
- <sup>13</sup> E.g. in BNT 1961-63, introduction to Vol. 9.
- <sup>14</sup> Up to the political changes of 1989/90, all published collections of folktales and songs consist exclusively of traditions of the Bulgarian majority population.
- <sup>15</sup> I am particularly indebted to my colleague Dr. Doroteja Dobрева from the Institute of Folklore at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in Sofia for her numerous suggestions and comments.

- <sup>16</sup> In the project that was financed by the German Research Association (DFG) from 1993 to 2000, the Bulgarian participants were Doroteja Dobрева and Petar Petrov, while the German participants were Gabriele Wolf and the author (as director of the project).
- <sup>17</sup> Cf. Dobрева 1994, 2005a; Petrov 2000; Roth 2002; Wolf 2000.
- <sup>18</sup> The Website also contains a selection of stories in English.
- <sup>19</sup> See the volume *Bulgarski folklor* 1999, Vol. 1-2.
- <sup>20</sup> See the volume *Bulgarski folklor* 1994, Vol. 1 (*Folkloret na bulgarite v chushbina* [The folklore of the Bulgarians abroad]).
- <sup>21</sup> On the paranormal see vol. 5 of *Bulgarski folklor* 1993.
- <sup>22</sup> *Bulgarski folklor* 2002, Vol. 2; see also Dobрева 2005.
- <sup>23</sup> *Bulgarski folklor* 1995, Vol. 1-2, 2000, Vol. 2-3.
- <sup>24</sup> *Bulgarski folklor* 1996, Vol. 3-4, 2003, Vol. 2-3, 2006, Vol. 2.
- <sup>25</sup> *Bogorodica...* 26/04/2007: 20.
- <sup>26</sup> E.g. *Tri Bogorodici...*, 26/04/2007: 16, *Hiljadi...*, 13/05/2007:2-3, *Ikonite...*, 15/05/2007: 16.
- <sup>27</sup> Report in the largest Bulgarian daily *Trud* entitled “Kadafi v koma?”, 12/05/2007: 29.
- <sup>28</sup> See the articles in *Bulgarski folklor* 1996, Vol. 3-4, 2003, Vol. 2-3 and 1995, Vol. 1-2.
- <sup>29</sup> The first Bulgarian collection of jokes after socialism was published by Ivan Slavov in 1991. On Romania see Banc and Dundes (1986). “Banc”, Romanian for “joke”, is a pseudonym for a Romanian folklorist who for fear of persecution remained anonymous. After the publication of the book the renowned folklorist Alan Dundes was barred from entering Romania.
- <sup>30</sup> Cf. the book by the Germanist Ana Dimova (2006), who analysed German and

Bulgarian jokes.

<sup>31</sup> Bulgarski folklor 2002, Vol. 3-4; see also Dobрева 1992.

<sup>32</sup> Numerous jokes of this kind can be found in the Internet ([www.vicove.gbg.bg](http://www.vicove.gbg.bg)) under the category “nacionalni” (national ones), for example this joke from the year 2000: “People ask a three-year-old Bulgarian boy what he wants to become when he is grown up. His answer: a foreigner.”

<sup>33</sup> Konstantinov 1895; cf. Daskalov 2001.

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