

LEGENDS AND TRADITION, Radoslav Radenković, PhD, Svrlijig, 2000

Published in 2000 as a separate edition, the fifth volume of **Cultural Heritage of Svrlijig** is titled **Legends and Tradition** and contains a selection from the manuscript collection by Radoslav Radenković, PhD.

The book published by Radoslav Radenković, PhD, professor emeritus of the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš, represents a logical continuation of his long-lasting activities in collecting and studying the folklore treasury of the Southeast Serbia. Although his main interest was focused on almost all the genres of traditional literature (stories, legends and traditional folk tales, folk lyric and epic poetry, poems and stories for children), professor Radenković has not neglected the problems pertaining to the theory and history of literature, as well.

His persistent work on writing down and investigating almost forgotten traditional inheritance of the people of South Serbia resulted in voluminous collections of folk stories, legends and traditional tales. His manuscript collection contains about 700 items, but professor Radenković has selected for this book only the legends and traditional tales recorded in the area of Svrlijig and its surroundings, as the editorial policy and nature of the Project "Cultural Heritage of Svrlijig" imposed such criteria. Related information may be found in *The Editorial Note* in the book.

The material published in this book had been collected for almost thirty years, so it reflects the continuity and development of this type of folk prose. Alongside with professor Radenković's recordings, the collection contains parts taken from previously published *Lapot¹ and Anathema in Serbs* by Sima Trojanović, *Mythology, Magic and Customs* by Sreten Petrović, *The Principality of Serbia and the Kingdom of Serbia* by Milan Dj. Milićević, *On Beliefs and Customs in Svrlijig* by Aleksa Vasiljević, as well as the recordings of A. Vasiljević, D. K. Jovanović and Radivoj Agatonović published formerly in the journals *Delo*, *Glasnik SUD* and *Bosanska vila*.

The material presented in this book is classified into the following chapters: **Legends about the places in the Svrlijig region; Legends about the places in the immediate environment of Svrlijig; Tradition from Svrlijig and its surroundings; Tradition from wider Svrlijig environment** (this chapter is subdivided according to the topics and motives into: *On Prince Lazar; On buried treasure; On lapot*).

The book also includes indexes of personal names and places, an index of narrators, a map of the Svrlijig region and numerous observations of nature, origin and classification of legends and tradition, as well as valuable data on the material collecting process (work in the field), on editorial procedures, the influence of social factors upon the changes in unwritten literature and so on.

¹ Ancient ritual of killing old and disabled persons; according to the traditional custom, parents would be killed by their children.

In the foreword, the author pointed out basic characteristics of this type of oral prose, having accepted its classification in legends (of places and persons) and tradition, where his definition of tradition differs to a certain extent as compared to other researchers and theoreticians that have dealt with this kind of literature.

Emphasizing the diversity of thematic and motivational levels of legends and tradition, R. Radenković has divided legends of places into several thematic circles "for the sake of easier studying": religious and mythical legends, legends of places whose names are related to supernatural beings, legends characteristic of Turkish violence, legends of the defense of maiden virtue, legends of battles and resistance, legends of enchanted treasure, legends of persons whose names or adventures had been given to certain places, legends of romance, humorous legends, etc.

According to the author, such thematic and motivational diversity is not characteristic of the legends about people "that represent a symbiosis of the religious, mythical and historical".

The topics, motives and contents of the material gathered in the closer and wider territory of Svrljig classify these oral creations into the international repertoire of topics and motives. The collection contains the legends of enchanted treasure, miraculous birth, ritual killing of old people, as well as of "the origin of certain things" (*How the Mole Came into Being; A Dog Saved the Wheat; God, Hedgehog and Bee*; etc.). All of them obviously belong to the general national oral-narrative repertoire.

The recordings published in R. Radenković's book *Legends and Tradition* illustrate one genre of the traditional literature in the region of Svrljig and represent a valuable material for various further research to be carried out by different methodological, critical and scientific approaches.

Danijela Popović