

Anghelescu, Mircea

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MIRCEA ANGHELESCU

THE LEGEND OF THE TWELVE DREAMS IN OLD ROMANIAN LITERATURE

Known today in several variants, under different titles (Слово о снехъ Мамери царя, Сказание о 12-ти снахъ Мамера, Слово о последних днехъ etc.), the Slavonic text of the legend of the twelve prophetic dreams of king Sehachi was for the first time dealt with in 1879 by the Russian comparatist A. N. Veselovski. The relatively short text consists of a brief introductory explanation followed by the succinct narration of the twelve dreams and their interpretation as given by the wise Mamer. All are, in essence, premonitory dreams, anticipating the coming of the last day, of the universal end, that will be preceded by a profound alteration of relationships in nature and society, by an overturning of moral values: the seasons will go the other way round, good people will be despised and bad people praised, priests will obtain their parish for money and so on. Veselovski pointed out that the legend spread over a large area — the oldest text known to him dating from the 15th century (probably reproducing an earlier text) — a fact that accounts for the diversity of the variants. According to him one may however discern two branches of manuscripts, one of which emphasized the mystical character of the interpretations and was spread mainly among the sectarian Raskolniks¹. The differentiation of the text goes far beyond variations in title; even the names of the characters (the king and the wiseman) are interchanged. The fact that even the allotting of interpretations given to dreams vary is a proof that the symbolic explanation had little value for the reader as compared to the general image of “the end of the world”. It is therefore useless to seek the compensatory symbolic significance of these dreams which do not represent a “mental collective” (Jung), but an allegory, a pretext for the introduction of the final image of “chaos”, i. e. of the hell on earth. As far as the origin and history of the text is concerned, Veselovski suggests certain thematic parallels to the European legend of Marculphus or to the Byzantine history of Ptocholeontes, indebted to an oriental source not named.

Somewhat later, in 1893, another Russian researcher, Serguei Oldenburg, pointed out convincingly the parallel with some Buddhistic legends that might account for the Slavonic prototype. The epic framework of the legend is similar (the names of the characters and of places are, of course, different), but

there are only ten dreams instead of twelve (however in a later parallel, in the biographic legend of Buddha, *Jataka*, ch. 77, there are sixteen dreams) and their contents has no resemblance whatsoever². Three decades later, dealing again with the same theme, Oldenburg suggested the legend of Keid, king of Kanoudji, as the possible intermediary between the Buddhistic prototype and the Slavonic legend. Incorporated in the history of Iskender (Alexander the Great) of the famous *Book of Kings* of Ferdousi, the legend — which certainly had had an independent circulation before it was introduced in this work — reveals not only the same epic framework, but also a series of resemblances of the dreams themselves with both the Buddhistic original and the Slavonic text. The first of the king's dreams (i. e. the elephant coming through a narrow window) is identical with one contained in the Buddhistic legend, while the seventh (i. e. the two-headed horse) is identical with the one in the Slavonic legend³. But there is indication concerning the area where or the language in which the text known to us in the Slavonic legend got crystalized, or to a possible previous link in case the text had assumed its definitive shape outside of the Slavonic area.

The oldest manuscript of the Romanian translation of the legend dates from the 17th century and its mention precedes Veselovski's study. In his book *Principia de limba și scriptura*, the Romanian philologist Timotei Cipariu refers, among other things, to this manuscript entitled *The Twelve Dreams of Mamer*, part of a miscellany "from about the end of the 17th century". It was accompanied by various religious texts from which it differed by a "more rude" script⁴. The manuscript, about which no other detail is given, disappeared after Cipariu's death in 1887. In the first compendium of Romanian folk literature, including chap books, M. Gaster mentions the manuscript (taking over the information as put forward by Cipariu) and assumes according to the title only a connection with the legend analysed by Veselovski⁵. In 1900, when he acquired a modern copy of a manuscript written down in 1768 by the well-known copist Matei Voileanu of Făgăraș, M. Gaster published a short commentary as well as the text of the legend (entitled in this version *Invățătura la vremea de apoi*, Teaching concerning the End of Days) in Romanian and its English translation⁶. It is, in fact, up to now the one and only edition of the text in the Romanian language.

Two other texts were mentioned in 1923 by N. Drăganu, then professor of old literature at the University of Cluj. The one is part of a miscellany dating from the 18th century, comprising a rich popular and apocryphal material. Among the 48 texts there is one entitled *Invățătura despre visul lui Sihaiću în părată* (Teaching about the dream of king Sehachi) which the author mentions briefly. Another fragmentary manuscript owned by the high-school in Năsăud and containing the "first eight dreams" is mentioned in a page-bottom reference, the author promising to take up the matter later — a promise that has never turned into a fact.⁷ Two more manuscripts have recently been mentioned by us⁸. The one is Ms. 4 390 of the Central University Library at Cluj-Napoca, finished on December 29th, 1761, entitled *Razumnic de toate întrebările și răspunsurile și de alte multe treburi . . . și alte multe istorisiri frumoase* (A Guide to all questions and answers and many other things . . . and many other beautiful stories). Among the various texts copied by cantor Ioan Moldoveanu, besides verses, Christmas Carols and folktales (The history of Solomon

the brave, Emperor Maximian's lament)⁹, we find on pp. 218—220 *Cuvînt de învățătură pentru 12 vise ce au visat un domn anume Sahanču* (The meaning of the twelve dreams dreamt by a certain prince Sahanchou). The second text is part of a fregmentary miscellany that has no title and no copist annotations. It must have been written at the end of the 18th or the beginning of the 19th century. (Ms. 6040 at the Library of the Academy, Bucharest). The text has no head, it begins with the interpretation of the first dream: "de la altul tot ce va ave și cărturarii vor învăța puțin pre lege și eiși lege nu vor ține" and so on. Presumably only one page is missing. From among the texts of the miscellany let us mention *Învățătura lui Archirie prea înțeleptul, cum au învățat pre nepotul lui Anadam* (The way Akihar the wise taught his nephew Nadan), *Veș pentru căderea și greșala lui Adam* (Poem about the fall and sin of Adam), *Învățătură pentru tiutiu* (Warning against tobacco), *Cazanie pentru muncile păcătoșilor* (Book about the torments of the sinners, a variant of the Apocalypse of the Lady Mary).

To these six manuscripts known for certain we may, presumably, add two more. The seventh was also mentioned by Cipariu in his book already referred to. On the same page on which he speaks about *The Twelve Dreams of Mamer*, he mentions a "manuscript without heading and introduction" consisting of a common gathering of folk legends (*Videnia Maicii Precista* "The vision of virgin Mary", *Jitia părintelui Pavel* "The history of father Pavel" etc.) in various handwritings: "cea mai veche însă și cea mai bună aice este dinainte de anul 1678 și între altele cuprinde istoria lui Sichianu împăratul . . ." (the oldest and the best is the one dating from before 1678 that comprises among other tales also the history of emperor Sichianu . . .)¹⁰. This "history of emperor Sichianu" must be Сказание про снi царя Шахаиши. This manuscript, too, disappeared after Cipariu's death. The eighth title appears in a short catalogue of Voileanu manuscripts, sent by some unknown Romanian scholar from Transylvania (presumably the descendant of Voileanu, named also Matei Voileanu, author of a book devoted to his forefather) to M. Gaster before the First World War. This catalogue was found by professor Tappe among Gaster papers at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies in the University of London and published as an appendix of his study about a Romanian manuscript from the private collection of M. Gaster. It is the thirteenth item in this list, a miscellany comprising a "poem to the Virgin beginning: «o, prea milostivă maică», a poem about Adam, beginning: «veniți toți cei din Adam»" and *Învățătură la vremea de apoi*, "Sermon on the last Judgment, 5 folios, written by Vasile Stănilovici of Avrig, 12 March 1787"¹¹. The title is identical to the one known from Gaster article.

We know the titles of seven (out of the eight) manuscripts of the Romanian translation of the twelve dreams. These titles generally differ from one another. One of them probably belongs to the corrupt branch of manuscripts, the second one according to the classification proposed by Veselovski (i. e. *The twelve dreams of Mamer* mentioned by Cipariu), all the other to the first branch which maintains in more or less corrupt forms the name of king Sha-haishi (i. e. Sehaču, Sihaiču, Sehaiči). With one exception (namely the manuscript belonging to the high-school in Năsăud, mentioned by Drăganu, in which the king's name is Shaiku) all the other variants render the king's name with the initial letter S (not Sh), a fact that cannot be accounted for by a con-

fusion since in the Slavonic alphabet that was being used at that time for the Romanian language the two letters are clearly distinct and hardly mistaken: *c* and *ш*. In the article referred to above, Gaster, too, noticed the change, but considered it "due no doubt to a later popular etymology", without detailing or arguing it. A Greek original that might account for the change (there is no sound/letter *sh* in Greek) was not found and the published versions in the South-Slavic area are identical with the Russian ones¹². We can find however two exceptions, both in manuscripts written in Serbian Slavonic¹³, which show us that the "classical" way of access for the Oriental stories in Eastern Europe (i. e. through Byzantines and South Slaves) is still possible in this case also. The fact remains an open question, because this different text is not published yet.

The simple comparison of the Romanian manuscripts at our disposal shows that for the main, the respective texts have had an independent history. They belong to the same branch, but the variants differ and cannot be derived from one another: in the manuscript of Cluj the name of the city is Erihon, while in the manuscript published by Gaster the place is named Vaihon; in the Cluj manuscript the king is named Sahanču, in the Bucharest manuscript it is Sehači, the same as in Gaster's text. The king is referred to as "emperor" (*împărat*) in the last to texts and as "prince" (*domn*) in the Cluj manuscript. But the text published by Gaster differs from the Bucharest manuscript in word order and in details, more numerous in the latter. Compare, for instance (from the explanations to the first dream):

the Gaster ms.

Într-acea vreme, feciori nu
vor cinsti pre părinți săi
și neam aproape să vor lua,
de păcate nu vor gândi . . .

Another example:

Atuncea soarele să va întu-
neca și luna nu-și va da lu-
mina sa, zilele să vor mici
și multe sémne să vor arăta.

the Bucharest ms.

Și întru aceia vreme, feciorii
pre părinții lor nu-i vor mai
cinsti și sămințele [?] se vor
lua și nu se vor căuta . . .
Și întru acele vremeni, soarele nu
va lumina în locul cel bătrîn,
nici stelele nu se vor lumina, ce
să vor întuneca și zilele să vor
micșura și multe semne vor fi.

The Bucharest manuscript continues with a fragment that does not exist in the Gaster manuscript, but which is present in the oldest Slavonic version, i. e. "în stele coade să vor ivi și vor fi trăsnete și cutremure și multe cetăți vor cădea" (the stars will get tails and there will be thunders and earthquakes and many fortresses will surrender).

These differences and some other which we do not name now cannot have resulted from copist modifications but are proof of another prototype of the

translation. That means that the eight romanian texts known to us or the most of them are not issued out from one single original translation, but were independently translated in different times and places. The existence of several translation means that the choice of the text was not done at random and that it responded to certain „patterns“ existing in the respective milieu.

All the texts of the twelve dream legend were found in miscellany manuscripts resembling in contents, writings recirculating traditional topics, apocrypha, and naïve verse-forms of such Christian legends as: *The History of Aki-char and his nephew*, *Warning against tobacco*, *The wiseman's dispute with the world* (a variant of the dialogue between the soul and the body), *The history of Archangel Michael*, *The 72 names of Christ*, *Adam's complaint*, *Maria's lamentation*, magic songs against spells (for getting rid of the Devil, against the plague, against chills etc.). All these circulated until last century (some of them up to the beginning of this century) in a well-defined, very traditionalist milieu in which scribes, copists and rural teachers used to copy and to circulate the respective texts by reading them aloud to the illiterate. This public had a preference for clear-cut moralities and tales, with a dramatic touch, displaying two opposed forces (as good-evil, healthy-sick etc.) that made some scholars erroneously assume the existence in the respective cultural layer of certain Bogomilian reminiscences¹⁴ — and this milieu was in fact receptive of those innovations that could mould themselves on a preexistent pattern. In other words, only those new themes and texts were accepted that could be assimilated to an existent model already in circulation. This was the way in which tales from *Arabian Nights* were taken over in the 18th century¹⁵ and the same was the case with the legend of the twelve dreams which in spite of its extremely oriental origin could be assimilated to a preexistent Christian model in the same way in which it happened with the popular novel *Barlaam and Josaphat*. Its eschatological character, as well as the description of the process of moral degradation of the world acquiring even absurd forms (such as summer becoming winter, children teaching old people etc.) — which offers a popular equivalent to the literary motif of “the up-side-down world”, the device of using the dream as an intermediary instrument of revelation, the same as in so many Christian legends or apocrypha (*The Death of Avraam*, *The second Book of Esdra* etc.) — all these facilitated the spreading of the new text and its acceptance by the milieu. We may assume that these preexistent patterns also imposed various modifications on the text. On what area this happened is not known — we may however hypothesize it was outside of Romanian area as the Romanian texts faithfully follow the Slavonic model. The relevant differences singled out by comparison are probably due to the model followed by each text. The fact that ms. 6 040 of the Academy Library contains the additional details mentioned above is not an innovation produced on Romanian soil since they are to be traced back to the earliest Slavonic manuscripts where also other developments are to be found. But we certainly need, before any conclusion could be pointed out, to have an edition of the texts from the Southern-Slavic area.

- ¹ A. N. Veselovski, *Слово о двенадцати снах Шахаиши*. S. Peterburg 1879, 18.
- ² The article, originally published in the Russian Journal of the Public Instruction Office, was translated into English by H. Wenzel under the title *The Buddhist sources of the (Old Slavic) Legend of the Twelve Dreams of Shahaish*, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society 1893, No 3, 509—516.
- ³ S. Oldenburg, *Сны Кейда, царя Каноджскаго, и сны царя Шахаиши*. In: Историко-литературный сборник, посвященный В. И. Срезневскому. Leningrad 1924, 47—54.
- ⁴ T. Cipariu, *Principia de limba și de scriptura*. Blaj 1866, 114.
- ⁵ M. Gaster, *Literatura populară română*. Bucharest 1883, 58—60.
- ⁶ M. Gaster, *The Twelve Dreams of Sechachi*. Journal of the Rooyal Asiatic Society 1900, No 3, 623—635, reprinted in: M. Gaster, *Studies and Texts in Folklore, Magic, Medieval Romance*, vol. I, London 1925, 226—238.
- ⁷ N. Drăganu, *Pagini de litart literatură veche*. Dacoromania 3, 1923, 246.
- ⁸ Mircea Angheliescu, *Literatura română și Orientul*. Bucharest 1975, 45—48.
- ⁹ About the tales see more in Mircea Popa, *Cărți populare mai puțin cunoscute*. Transilvania 83, 1977, No 10, 40—41.
- ¹⁰ T. Cipariu, *op. cit.*
- ¹¹ E. D. Tappe, *A Rumanian Manuscript Miscellany in the John Rylands Library*. Bulletin of the John Rylands Library 40, 1960, No 2, 492.
- ¹² See J. Polivka, *Opisi i izvodi iz nekoliko jugoslavenskih rukopisa u Pragu. Dvanaest snova cara Šahinšaha*. Starine 21, 1890, 187—194; L. Stojanovič, Каталог рукописа и старих штампаних књига. Beograd 1901, 192; B. Tsonev, Опис на славянските ръкописи и старопечатни книги в пловдивската библиотека. Sofia 1920, 83.
- ¹³ One from the XVIth century, quoted in: B. Anghelov, Из старата българската, руска и српска литература. Sofia 1958, 146, (king's name is Sehachi) and another from the XVIIIth century (king's name Taikisha) in P. Srečković, Нэколико српских споменика. Спонзник 15, 1892, 28 sqq.
- ¹⁴ See, for the whole problem, Emil Turdeanu, *Apocryphes bogomiles et pseudo-bogomiles in his book Apocryphes slaves et roumains de l'Ancien Testament*. Leiden 1981, Leiden 1981, 1—74.
- ¹⁵ Mircea Angheliescu, *Les "Mille et une Nuits" dans la littérature roumaine du XVIIIe siècle*. Etudes arabes et islamiques 2, 1975, vol. I, 13—17.

LEGENDA O DVANÁCTI SNECH VE STARÉ RUMUNSKÉ LITERAURE

Legenda o dvanácti snech krále Shahaishiho, obíhající ve slovanské jazykové oblasti (mezi Rusy na severu a mezi Bulhary a Srby na jihu), kterou A. N. Veselovskij studoval už roku 1879, se vyskytuje také ve staré rumunské literatuře v rukopisech z XVII. a XVIII. století, vedle knížek lidového čtení podobného původu. S výjimkou studie M. Gastera z roku 1900 tento text nesoustředil pozornost specialistů a nebyl zahrnut do žádného rumunského přehledu staré rumunské literatury ani knížek lidového čtení. Studie podává přehled problematiky. Uvádí osm rukopisných verzí textu, s nimiž pracoval autor stati nebo jiní badatelé a jejichž názvy se různí (Dvanáct snů Mamerových, Vyprávění o posledních dnech, Vyprávění o snech krále Sehachiho atd.). Jsou velmi podobné ruským textům známým z prací Veselovského, Polivky, Anguelova a jiných, jen v sedmi verzích z osmi je královo jméno Sahanču nebo Sehaču na rozdíl od textů ruských, kde je Shahaishi. Protože neexistuje přijatelné vysvětlení pro změnu počátečního *sh* v *s*, domníváme se, že jméno v původním rukopise bylo Sehaču se *s*. V jihoslovanském světě takové rukopisy skutečně existují (jeden z nich je zaznamenán v knize B. Anguelova); komparace však nemohla být dosud provedena, protože tento text nebyl nikdy vydán. Dokud k vydání nedojde, je možno předpokládat, že legenda byla do rumunštiny přeložena z textu jihoslovanského, kde tomu uvedené charakteristiky nasvědčují.