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## FROM THE HISTORY OF THE TRANSLATIONS OF EASTERN JOKES INTO EUROPEAN LANGUAGES

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### ABSTRACT

*This article is devoted to the first translations of anecdotes on the eastern European languages. Translations have enabled scientists to compare the customs and traditions, dreams and desires of many people, the role of women and men in family, traditions in educating the younger generation, the people's views on the rulers are very close. These translations reflect the spirit of the time and place. Although the jokes were created and assembled in the East, genesis and laws of integration of these works are in the literature of the peoples of the world, especially in the literature of European nations, which is deeply studied by Western scientists. One of these Orientalists is the famous German Arabist and Turkologist, the head of the Department of Oriental Languages of the University of Berlin, Professor Martin Hartmann (1851-1918). By studying and comparing Turkic anecdotes with humorous stories of the Arabic peoples, the scientist concludes that they have the same roots. Much attention deserves to these works of the first translations of anecdotes from Turkic and Arabic to French and German languages, which serve as a source for transfer to Eastern European languages. The great merits of Rene Basset, who lived among the nomadic peoples of Algerias and collected folk stories and poems, and thus strengthened the friendship between the peoples of Europe and led to a deep respect for oriental motives.*

**KEYWORDS:** *The First Written Information, The Eastern Jokes, Nasreddin Afandi, Si Djeha, Uzbek Jokes, The Catalogue, Jean-Antoine Galland, Translation Into European Languages.*

## INTRODUCTION

The first written information about the translations of Eastern jokes into European languages was initially met in the late XVII century. In 1694, Jean Antoine Galland, French scholar of literature, wrote a collection called “Les paroles remarquables, les bons mots et les maxims des Orientaux. Traduction de leurs ouvrages en arabe, en persen et en turc” (Words of wisdom by Eastern people. Translated from Arabian, Persian and Turkic.). Galland, who introduced European nations with Arabian fairy tales “Thousand and one nights”, presented some anecdotes whose characters were Nasriddin Afandi and Si Jo’ha. He was sent to Turkey by the French king to translate Eastern myths into French. During his life in Turkey, he went to a lot of villages, talked to a lot of well-known scientists together with simple people. Learning eastern languages and literatures, the author gathered not only Turkic folk stories, but also Arabic, Persian and other ones, rewrote the best stories and translated them into French taking into account European, especially French taste and interests. Galland’s collection includes some miniature humorous and satirical stories, such as Khoja Nasriddin’s jokes. Although Nasriddin’s name had never been mentioned in these jokes, Martin Hartman thinks... “that it is so easy to separate this Turkic character from others”. Khoja Nasriddin’s jokes are collected with the name of “Deux recueils de bons Mots eu Turc” (two collections of Turkic jokes). In the introduction, Galland gave information about the book and stories and wrote that he collected them in Turkish cities and towns. So that it would not be difficult for readers to understand some stories, he explains them below text. While a large number of stories are pleasant ones, few of them are “les autres ... etaient trop vulgaires on trop libres et indignes de la curiosite des honnotes-gens” (rude and embarrassing and were noted as the statement of simple people’s curiosities).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

In fact, not everyone can understand eastern stories. Actually in no other eastern genres, rude and awkward stories are seen, because Turkic are respected as authors of great moral books and novels. Impolite and offensive works start not to be used over centuries. But Afandi’s anecdotes are an exception. Anecdotes do not belong to an author, more clearly, the authors create them according to their surroundings, admirers, time and place and to the previous works. Interestingly, this kind of “impolite” stories are not accepted to other nations’ written literature despite the fact that the stories whose meanings are the same with above mentioned ones, can be met in other nations. So, Mr. Galland does not seem to have thought about these aspects of the stories.

Master Nasriddin’s stories exist at the beginning of the book “Words of wisdom by Eastern people”:

One poor person from Sivri Hisor complained to his neighbor of the pain in the eye. And the neighbor answered: „When I had a toothache, I had it pulled out and got rid of the pain. So, you had better follow my advice.”

One man from Sivri Hisor was used to saving his axe in the locked box. One day, his wife was astonished and asked the reason for his actions. And the man replied that he was doing that so the mice could not eat it. The wife went mad hearing it and asked how they could eat an axe. The man said: “They eat our bread that costs just 3 aqcha. How cannot they eat the axe costing 30 aqcha?” (Galland, 1694, p. 16-17)

Since the supply to the work, it was reprinted in 1777-1779 by “d’Herbelots Bibliotique Orientale” in the Hague. When compared the stories with the ones of the XIX-XX centuries, there can be seen nearly no differences among them.

In 1837, 134 anecdotes which were told a lot among public were gathered into one collection and printed out in Turkish. This collection later helped develop the translations of anecdotes into foreign languages. For instance, the collection called “Meister Mesriddins Schwaenke und Rauber und Richter, aus dem Türkischen übersetzt von Camerloher und Prelog” (Master Nasriddin’s anecdotes. About pirates and judges. Translations from Turkish by Kamerloer and Prelog) came out (1857). Former author, William von Camerloer picked up the stories from different books during the research on folklore in Turk. He collected the variations of anecdotes with the same meanings living among the local people. The book was printed with an old Gothic alphabet. Its first part includes the jokes by Nesriddin Afandi while the next involves larger stories translated by Prelog. The stories helped increase people’s spirituality and behavior by using impolite and unfair judges, pirates as the characters. There were 126 jokes in the first part. And there was rather long story in the second one.

As a matter of fact, there were a lot of word games, ironic words, puzzles as cues to historical events, terms which were only known by local people, professional words and other literal arts in anecdotes considered to be precious part of folklore. They are complicated to explain to other nationalities. Inexperienced interpreter is well-known to encounter a lot of difficulties although he has a very rich vocabulary. In order to overcome the difficulties, he translates them freely or adapt them into the rules of his own language. As a result, a very short anecdote becomes a very long story and loses its feature as being brief. Consequently, its immediate effect reduces, and humorous situation deteriorates. Thanks to their great command of world languages,

Camerloer and Prelog did the translations rather successfully. But they adapted the anecdotes to European esthetic and artistic perception. In spite of the fact that the collection was found to be very successful by linguists and printed for so many times, the anecdotes partially lost their Eastern artistic merit and were translated so freely. But it was accepted to the catalogue called “Orient und Occident” (East and West) created by a famous scientist Reinhard Kohler. (1890). The information about best translated anecdotes from the middle ages to the last quarter of XIX th century (till the last years of the author) was given in detail. The valuable catalogue was the basis for creating other catalogues supposed to contrast the relationships of East and West.

After a little time Camerloer and Prelog’s book came out, one more collection of anecdotes was published in French in Paris. The author, Jean-Adolf Decourdemanche created the collection called “Les plaisanteries de Nasreddin hodja” (Words of wisdom by Nasreddin Hodja) fully using the above-mentioned collection in 1876. In 1878, it was enlarged and printed under the name “Sottisier de Nasreddin hodja, bouffon Tamerlan, suivie d’ autres faceties turques trad, sur des manuscrits inedits” (Temur’s joker Nareddin’s anecdotes. Translated from Turkic historic masterpieces) by the author in Brussel. It includes 321 anecdotes showing the author’s skill. Some of them had lack of humor and did not look like Nasreddin’s.

Hodja Nasreddin’s jokes were translated into a lot of Eastern and Western languages repeatedly at the end of XIXth century. The most overwhelming collection among them was published in Paris in 1892. It was added to the world folklore under the name of “Les fourberies de Si Djeha, contes cabylos recuillies et par Moullier. Trad, franc et notes une etude sur Si Djeha, et les

anecdotes qui lui sont attribuees par Rene Basset” (Si Juha’s anecdotes gathered by Mueller, Rene Baset’s explanations and translations to learning Si Juha’s anecdotes.) This book appeared by the research taken by Moullier and particularly, Rene Basset. The book did not include many jokes, more clearly, 60 stories mostly gained from different Arabian people’s spoken works living in Algeria. Moreover, there were some anecdotes from Berberian nations.

The authors not only added the anecdotes into the collection, but they also learned them by comparing. They divided the anecdotes into three types according to the similarities of their plots and motives. The first group was named “Version turque” (Turkish version) and consisted of the Turkish anecdotes gathered by Decourdemanche. The second part was called “Version arabe” (Arabian version) and included some samples from the books printed in Egypt. The last one was “Version berbere” (Berberian version) and there were some stories translated by Moullier. Turkish, Arabian and Berberian anecdotes had quite similar motives but rather different plots. The authors compared these works and announced their own conclusions. There were also given some explanations for the texts. There were some samples to the anecdotes of Eastern Europe and they were contrasted with them.

One of the authors Rene Basset lived in Northern Africa and learned Arabian languages, their literature together with dialect. He wrote down their spoken literature and assembled them into one book by reproducing them. These research gained by Baset not only had value in scientific field, but it also increased the reputation of the French government in Africa. These books by Moullier and Basset produced new hypotheses about the origin of the anecdotes and proved that rapidly developing the research was very crucial in Europe.

Although we mainly talked about the history of the translations of Eastern jokes into European languages in this article, we thought that giving some information about the first anecdotes created in Uzbek was very important. In 1862-1864, there appeared a collection called “Hodja Nasreddin’s anecdotes”. (Nurmurodov,1987) It only included 19 jokes. There was no any information about the author (or collector), the address and the number of the book. It is extraordinary that it existed in Namangan only in one copy (Maybe it was written only once). As we guess, the collection was either created by Uzbek educated people or gathered and reproduced by Turkic people during their Ramadan months and then translated into Uzbek in Turkey (or in Azerbaijan). But we are able to say that the collection was written in Namangan since a lot of other works existed and appeared particularly in Namangan such as “Qutadg’u Bilig” by Yusuf Khos Hojib. This collection was brought to Tashkent by scientist Hodi Zarif and handed in the Fund of manuscripts in 1930.

After this first collection of Central Asia, collections of other anecdotes started to be published in Kazan. From 1882 on, a new collection of Nasreddin Afandi came out in new publishing houses. The book was called “Letaifi Nasriddin Hoja” (Anecdots by Nasreddin Hodja). They were partially translated into Tatar, although a lot of them were left as they were taken from the collection of 137 anecdotes printed in Istanbul. As Turkish scientist Turgut A. Kut, during the years (1882, 1893, 1903, 1904 and 1910) 9 collections with the same themes were published. Naturally, these works were learned by the nations in Central Asia and later used as basis in translations into other languages.

European people liked Eastern jokes so much that a lot of new collections were created during a short period. In 1878 in Berlin, a scientist from Austria, Franz Werner, printed a book named

“Nasreddin Khodja. Ein osmanischer Eulenspiegel” using the previous books. Well-known with the name of Murod Afandi among his European workmates and Turkic people, collected 29 poetic anecdotes in it. After a while, one more collection appeared. “Die Schwänke des Nasreddin und Buadems von Mehemed Tevfik, mit Genehmigung des Verlegers aus dem Türkischen übersetzt von Dr. E. Müllendorf” (Nasreddin and Buadem anecdotes by Mehemed Tevfik. Translated into German by Dr. Müllendorf) was published by the publishing house „Reclamische Universal Bibliothek“. There were 201 anecdotes in it and 71 of them belonged to Nasreddin while 130 did to Buadem. All of them were picked out from others and some were reproduced. Dr. Müllendorf sorted out the stories and translated them while Mehemed Tevfik was responsible for printing. Buadem’s anecdotes in the story were assimilated from Nasreddin’s since they were previously seen as Nasreddin’s jokes in other books. In the introduction of the book, Dr. Müllendorf and Mehemed Tevfik gave brief explanations about the jokes gathered into the book. When they wrote about Buadem, they said that this term fits for the word “bu adem” (this person) in Turkish. It is known that so as not to use the only name to Nasreddin, many other versions were applied by different nations. Later, Buadem started to be used in European languages as it was and increased the number of the characters.

## CONCLUSION

A large part of these translations is the preservation and multiplication of these miniature stories for generations’ future date. These collections were the source for the next ones. Collecting and translating Eastern anecdotes, discussing their variations and versions and comparing are still continuing.

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