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MACEDONIA IN THE WRITINGS OF ANTON KAPPUS

Abstract: Anton Kappus (1895-1959) lived in different areas of Macedonia as a military and civil servant in the period 1923-1941. He has published around 100 scientific and popular articles in Slovenian journals on the ethnography, geography and history of Macedonia, such as articles on hunting and fishing in Macedonia. His articles have a documentary value, while especially interesting are his data on Slovenian migrants living in Macedonia.

Key words: Macedonia, Slovenian migrants, ethnography, geography.

Central and Western Europe started showing interest concerning the situation in Macedonia after the Russian-Turkish war and the Berlin Congress (1878). The countries, which were at the time neighboring, namely Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece, started dividing it, thus motivating religious and ethical separations. These events left a trace in Slovenian history as well. In Pirin Macedonia, the Slovenian volunteer Miroslav Humbarer took part in the rebellion against the Ottoman authority in 1878 and 1879, and was a chief of the Headquarters of the rebellion forces. At the time of the Ilinden uprising (1903) individuals in Slovenia collected assistance and maintained connections with the rebels and with the refugees from Bulgaria. One should also mention the volunteers in Serbia at the time of the Balkan wars, as well as the ones that were active prior to the First World War (the Macedonian front).

At that time the ethnologist and anthropologist Niko Zupanich published his scientific paper on Macedonia (Zupanič 1904: 71–101). He established that this country is inhabited with different Balkan populations which, at the proportionally small space they occupied, created the “most picturesque mosaic in the whole world”. He also noted that the literature on the ethnic composition of Macedonia “is characteristic more by its quantity, than by its value and objectivity”. This situation was a result of the rivalry of the neighboring nations and their appetite for conquest. “There are many publications which are even equipped with a critical apparatus, that should cover the unsupported biasness, but the clear mind can immediately recognize the false light in them, and reject them from an objective point of view” (Zupanič 1904: 71–72). He then described the history, the culture and the ethnic structure of the population; in this sense he leaned, above all, upon the research of the anthropogeographer Jovan Cviic. A special attention was given to Macedonian Slavs, and he discussed them from a point of view of

their physical anthropological features, but also from a linguistic point of view. Finally, he researched and compared statistical data on certain categories of population. Later on the Slovenian public was well informed on the Balkan wars, among others through the books of Anton Bezenshek, as well as the co-authors Anton Suchnik and Vinko Šarabon (Bezenshek 1913, Sušnik, Šarabon 1914).

A proof that besides the political there was an emerging scientific interest on Macedonia was the project of the young Slovenian slavist and linguist Vatroslav Oblak, who in November 1891, with a stipendium of the Vienna University, arrived in Macedonia. His goal was to research Macedonian dialects and support the hypothesis of his professor Vatroslav Jagic, that Slavic dialects from the vicinity of Thessalonica from the middle of the 9th century, presented the base of the old church-Slavic language (Kurkina 1998: 13–21). After the exhausting train trip via Belgrade, in the middle of November, he arrived in Thessalonica. His first impression on this “Aegean pearl” was not so flattering: “There is nothing European, there is no one with whom one could talk to: if I didn’t have a bit of responsibility, I would immediately run away from this tranquil Orient” (Cvirn 2009: 117). He had a negative opinion on the inhabitants of Thessalonica, as well as the population of the neighboring villages. Due to poor security conditions he had to restrain the scope of his planned trips even from the beginning. Before he went to the interior of Macedonia, the Turkish authorities have charged him for spying and for “Pan-Slavic agitation”, thus canceling his further work. At the beginning of March he couldn’t do anything else but to return back to Vienna. The results of his research, in spite of all obstacles, were satisfying and so important that they were published in the reports of the Vienna academy of sciences (Oblak 1896: 1–156).

Before the First World War, there were many Macedonian workers involved during the construction of the railway in the province of Kranj (Sorč 2006), while after the creation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia the conditions changed. Then, the Serbian authorities, due to assimilation and partly due to strategic intentions, have populated Macedonia (at the time “South Serbia”) with colonists from all parts of the state, among whom there were also Slovenians. Their most important settlement was the village of Bistrenci on the Vardar river, in which in the middle of 1932 there were 26 people living there, although their number continuously changed due to migration and the arrival of new settlers. Some of them even accepted Christian Orthodoxy, and changed their family names (Rusić, Novak 1973: 177–202). According to the census of 1931, there were 1493 Slovenians in the Vardar District, that were born in Dravska District, while all others were from other places in Slovenia, above all from the coast (Kržišnik-Bukić 1992: 177). According to the data of the Skopje eparchy from 1939, there were around 4000 living in Macedonia. The eparchy at the time was headed by a Slovenian, Janez Franchishek

Gnidovec, while Slovenian and Croatian Jesuits were running the Gymnasium.

We can thus put the life of Anton Kappus in Macedonia in this historical frame. Kappus was born on the 2nd of June 1895 in an old, noble family, in the village Kamna Gorica in Gorenjsko. He studied law at the Vienna Teresian School, and graduated in Zagreb. As a beginner he worked in the Kochevje court. During First World War, as an Austrian soldier, he was sent to the Italian front. Two volumes of his diary are kept from this period, as well as some photos. He published autobiographical notes from the front line at Rombon in the journal *Lovec*, as well as the weekly supplement of the newspaper *Jutro*. After the war he enrolled in the Yugoslav army, and at the beginning worked in Bosnia. In July 1923 he was moved to Skopje. He didn't know much about Macedonia previously, while he had met "Macedonians" for the first time in Jesenice and Bohinj during the construction of the Bohinj railway. After a year living in the new environment he wrote: "I did not think (...) when I passed the threshold of the town of tsar Dushan, that I would so promptly get used to its Macedonian-Oriental meaning, to the chaotic streets, full of dust and mud, the unbearable heat and other similar inconveniences. What can curiosity for getting to know new situations, new places and the nature do! Although I have traveled worldwide since I was a boy, I was never scared by the first impression, as I was in Skopje" (Kappus 1924a: 336). On another occasion he added: "When I arrived in Skopje, luckily, I still had the Bosnian experience, so that the city did not seem as strange as I, in fact, have expected. But it was different with people. A different psychological profile, a different way of life, distrust towards the 'stranger' and many other things – all of this was hindering the establishing of a closer friendship" (Kappus 1953: 173).

At the beginning he mingled above all with the relatives. Among them he mentions his friend Kovach, who went with him hunting and with whom he knitted nets for crabs, then he mentions someone called Sajovec, the latter Andrej from Domzale, the veterinarian colonel dr. Ivan Kebr and the "famous musician" Emil Adamich. He was also connected to France Mesesnel, the custodian of the Museum of South Serbia in Skopje, who accompanied him while visiting different Macedonian historical monuments, as a photographer. The Slovenians who lived in Skopje gathered in the restaurant "Islahana" in the town's park, where there were few already dried pines and firs, that reminded them of their motherland. Near the town there were no real forests at the time, and the hills were barren. Thus, the first picnics were organized in Tetovo, 50 km following a narrow railway that was built by the Germans, which meant more than five hours of exhausting trip and more than three hours of walking. All of this only to enjoy the forest (Kappus 1953: 173–174).

In August 1924 Kappus was located in Shtip as a “court captain of the 2nd class”, in the Headquarters of the Vardar division. There he met Magdalena/Magda Hadzi Pecova, a girl from an Orthodox Christian, tradesman family, in the “Old Konak”. Her parents dealt with winery, as well as producing cotton and opium for the pharmaceutical industry. Magda’s mother also produced silk and cotton fabric. Besides Magda, there were 14 other children in the family. In only one month Anton engaged her and got married. The wedding was held on the 25th of January 1925 in the Orthodox Church, while the catholic ritual was held later on. There sons Boris (14th of November 1925) and Igor (15th of February 1927) were born in Shtip, while their daughter Jelena (11th of January 1932) was born in Skopje. Anton’s wife often prepared her husband for trips to Macedonian villages, while she stayed at home to take care of the family. While they studied in the Ohrid Gymnasium, Boris and Igor went to boarding school.

In autumn 1926 Anton, due to his illness (malaria, that he got during hunting down the river Bregalnica), came back for a few months holiday in Kamna Gorica. He already had malaria before, according to the memories of his daughter Jelena, since he got it during First World War in the area of the river Pijava. Still, he was sick even after he came back to Shtip, during January, February and March 1927, which most probably was the reason why he returned to Skopje (Kappus 1933: 198). He decided to enter civil service, and thus since 1932 worked as a district counselor in Skopje, while from 1937 he worked in Struga, at the Ohrid lake, and from 23rd December 1939 in Rostushe, at both places as a regional superintendent. During this dynamic period, through his official and hunting trips, he got acquainted with all parts of Macedonia.

In Shtip Kappus got befriended with the Czech dentist Bohush Frich, who was also a hunter, and drove in his Ford his friends through Ovche Pole, down the Zletovo River and to other hunting grounds. A part of the hunting company was the sheik Mustapha, chief of the dervish brotherhood of the “Sharena Tekija” in Shtip. In May 1936 in the dining room of the monastery St. Mary in the village of Shishevo, near river Treska, he accidentally met the hunter, writer, journalist and photographer, count Franz Graf Zedtwitz from Berlin, who had visited before this event the hunting ground of count Born in Slovenia. He worked in the famous publishing house Ullstein, and was preparing a book on the Balkans (Zedtwitz 1937). Invited by Kappus, the next day count Franz Zedtwitz was a guest at the village festivity at the monastery St. Nikola in Shishevo. There he made “a number of extremely beautiful folk photographs” and presented Kappus with few copies (Kappus 1937a: 60).

In a period of a year, Kappus read the book of Franz Zedtwitz and estimated it as follows: “Almost the whole book “Magic Balkans” is full of inaccurate data, but it is still beautifully equipped – first class propaganda,

written by a man who, obviously, still looks at us through the skeptic and critical prism of ‘a high-cultured Scandinavian’” (Kappus 1938a: 69).

Kappus, during his stay in Rostushe, went to the surrounding mountains to hunt. On one such occasion he visited Galicnik again, with his friends from Belgrade. He then wrote down a story of a member of this group, a Slovenian from the coast: her family moved to Bosilegrad in 1923, where her father was transferred as a regional forester, in the Homolje Mountains, at the border between Serbia and Bulgaria. Since he was responsible and strict, he got into a conflict with his hosts and in November 1939 got killed by the hajduk chief Babeic. The widow and the daughter then moved to Belgrade (Kappus 1947: 253). Thus, Kappus kept another document on the destinies of the Slovenian migrants to the south Yugoslav province. Himself, he became a good friend with Macedonians, learnt their language, especially since he had a lot of work in the country side. For example, he knew about Galichnik, which he mentions in the previous article, from the time when they bought Shepard dogs for the army from there (Kappus 1937b: 326). However, Kappus had his conflicts with the local population, and he described a real incident that happened at the beginning of his work in Macedonia. By the end of September 1924, he, together with his friend Kovach and another hunter, went to Skopska Crna Gora for a hunt. In the field there were two big Shepard dogs, and Kappus shot at one of them. Although he did not kill the dog, later on one of the locals shot at Kovach and wounded him, luckily not badly (Kappus 1924a: 338). The shepherds did not like hunters as well, so they often tried to chase them away with the dogs. A Vlach shepard filed a court complaint against Kappus, saying that Kappus shot his dog, but he lost the case since it was concluded that the act was done in self-defense (Kappus 1934a: 379).

Such ‘close encounters’ could be even more entertaining: after finishing the hunt in Ovche Pole, Kappus visited the village of Pavleshenci, in August 1924, together with other hunters from Shtip, among which a veterinarian, a tradesman and a baker. They were surrounded by the villagers, who admired their weapons, clothes and hunting trophies. The regional superintendent explained them the advantages of European culture, on which one of the locals replied: “Oh, Mister superintendent, we are fools, we do not know how to sleep, we do not know how to eat, how to work in our houses, we are barbarians, we are like cattle – and you are our brothers” (Kappus 1927a: 263).

As a great nature lover, Anton Kappus was dedicated to hunt and fishing and thus became member of the Hunters’ Association in Skopje. He wrote for the newspaper Lovec, and in 1924 reported on the activities of the Association that was founded in 1921, which at the time of the article had more than 200 local members. A president of the Association was the lawyer Dimitrievic. Members promoted harmonization of their interests, but also a

surveillance regarding the amount of the hunted animals. Thus, in 1924, they forbade hunting in some areas at the right coast of the river Vardar, since wild animals were almost extinguished there. Kappus disputed the efficiency of the regulation, so he wrote down that “almost every Macedonian villager has a hidden old or new pistol in his hut and sometimes wants game in his pot. The shepherds also regularly put traps for partridges and rock partridges, no matter if there is a ban in that area or not” (Kappus 1924b: 401).

The Association had their own restaurant in Skopje “Casino at the hunter”. Members gathered to talk “accompanied by a cup of black coffee and warm beer”. Every year, during the “pust”^{*} they had a hunters’ party, and when the hunting season opened (after the 25th of July) they organized a ceremony of mutual hunt. There were more than 80 hunters at such a hunt in 1924, among which, according to Kappus, there were members “of all classes, from villagers in rags from the Turkish city settlements, to gentleman and directors of some of the Skopje banks” (Kappus 1924b: 402). Due to excessive hunt (even registered hunters did not have regulated game quota), as well as due to different diseases and the environmental conditions, at the time when Kappus was in Skopje the number of animals to be hunted decreased significantly (Kappus 1934b: 12–14).

In one of his articles published in *Lovec*, Kappus mentions Karl May and his books „In the land of the Shkipetars“, „In the Balkan mountains“ and „Yellow“. Obviously he read them after they were translated in Slovenian (May 1932). In one of the episodes the German author describes how he and his friend and assistant Hallef, caught a bear between the rivers Treska and Vardar. This was surely an inspiration for the adventurous spirit of Kappus, and thus he went all over the country, only to establish that the cartographic data are correct only in the first part of the book. This is why he thought that May did not travel across Vardar and that he described the areas on the other side of the river according to second-hand data (Kappus 1935a: 159–161).

When there was no hunting, during spring and summer, Kappus went fishing. He had interesting experiences in this field as well. He went fishing alone, using a fishing rod, but obviously learned the local specificities of fishing as well. After the war, which lasted from 1912-1928 in Macedonia, there were a lot of bombs and other explosive devices left in the storages, and a huge part of these devices were discovered by the villagers, on the fields where there used to be fighting. This is why there was an excessive use of dynamite, at the smaller springs fish was caught using “fish grass”, while on the river Crni Drim fishing was done using simple partitions called “daljans”.

* The “pust” refers to the period prior to the beginning of the Christian Easter lent, when ritual masked processions are organized, with specific features in different areas of Slovenia. This period includes excessive consumption of alcohol and fatty food (translator’s note).

He wrote about all this on the *Fishing-hunting newspaper (Ribarsko-lovechki vesnik)* (Kappus 1937: 130).

An important part of his manuscripts are dedicated to geographical issues. Most important articles include: *On Ljuboten, the highest pick of Shar Planina, On Solunska Glava, The Lake of Katlanovo, From the Ohrid Lake, On the Shepherds of Shara Mountain, On Drim river* etc. (1928, 1929, 1934a, 1934c, 1938, 1938b). The aim of these articles was, among other things, to increase the interest of the Slovenian tourists, hunters and mountaineers on Macedonia.

He was also interested in historical stories concerning the region. In this sense his contacts with France Mesesnel were very important. France Mesesnel worked as a custodian at the Museum of South Serbia in Skopje from 1928 and studied middle-age art and monuments protection. In 1931-1932 he led the archeological excavation at Suvodol, near Bitola. In 1930 he became an associate member of the “Skopje scientific society” and during the same year an honorary lecturer, while in 1933 he became an Assistant Professor of history of art at the Philosophical Faculty in Skopje. Most probably under his influence Kappus mentions, in the article about Kachanik, Roman tombs and other historical monuments: the Kachanik mosque, the near-by tekiya named after Musa Kesedzija and the ruins of Christian churches. In the same text he included a description of animals and the cultural features of the villages around Kachanik, as well as other economic, educational and folklore issues. He mentioned the irresponsible attitude of the local Albanian villagers towards the environment, for example the forest devastation and goats’ grassing through the forests (Kappus 1931a: 179–184, 214–223). In a more detailed article he discussed the history of Shtip (Kappus 1927b: 933–940).

He published a serial of articles dedicated to the ethnological values of Macedonia, as supplements of the Monday newspaper *Jutro*, titled “Living and the world”. For example, he wrote on the social position of women, pregnancy and giving birth (Kappus 1927c: 964–968). He described the wedding customs in detailed, as well as the custom of ‘kidnapping’ brides, that was still present in the distant mountain villages. He also explained the customs of fraternization and blood revenge (Kappus 1927d: 1000–1005). There are interesting reports on the ritual of circumcision (Kappus 1931b: 255–258), the kurbans (Kappus 1935b: 460–463), the crypto-Catholics in Skopska Crna Gora (Kappus 1936a: 243–245, 259–260), on the “Turkish Gypsies” (Kappus 1936b: 316–318), and on the different festivities around Macedonia (1932, 1938, 1939).

During the hunting and fishing trips he carried with him a camera and a notebook. His published articles were almost always illustrated with his photographs. A major part of the photographic material was kept by his relatives, even the ones made on glass plates. Often those were family

photographs from different family events, but also there were photos of the nature, the village and church architecture, of different hunting trips (often in the company of his two sons) and fishing trips, for example fishing with using nets and partitions on the Ohrid Lake. A part of these photos is possible to identify, through comparison with the ones that are published, which are always accompanied by explanations, In technical sense those are not first-class and very beautiful photos, but they are surely a valuable document of a time passed.

The tranquil life of the Kappus family was interrupted by the Second World War. The first difficulties emerged after the Italian occupation of Greece. The closure of the Greek and of the Albanian border followed, as well as military recruitment, tension and revolts. On the 12th of April 1941, a day before Easter, the Italians crossed the border at Struga, while the German tanks moved on the road from Gostivar to Debar (Kappus 1953: 181). A day after Germans occupied Skopje and gave the area to the Bulgarians. The Yugoslav royal army capitulated and dissolved. Anton was first in captivity in Bitola, and then decided to move with his family to Slovenia. He later on wrote: "In the long periods of living abroad, there were signs of nostalgia for the motherland, I became sad, bemused, in a bad mood. I wanted to go back to the place where I was born, in our dear Gorenjsko" (Kappus 1959: 84).

With the last train transport, and a small part of their property, the members of the Kappus family arrived in Podnart, and then to Kamna Gorica. There, they lived in the house of Kappus during one year, and then, by the end of the war, at the Magushar family in Radovlica. Anton hoped that he well get a job in the court in Radovlica, but obviously due to political reasons, this did not happen. He had a bad reputation with the German authorities, and in 1942 due to a verbal transgression was imprisoned for a certain amount of time. To escape the pressures he got employed as a translator for the journal *Karawanke Bote*, that was published in Celovec (Klagenfurt). After the war he received an apartment in a block on Preshernova Street in Radovlica, which Germans have built for their employees, but had to share his premises with other inhabitants. He changed a number of positions, and finally got employed in the Bureau for social insurance in Jesenice. He died on the 3rd of October 1959. His wife lived much longer (until the 5th of December 1995), and both of them are buried in the cemetery of Kamna Gorica.

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Традициски култури и општества

Traditional cultures and societies