

## TREASURES OF THE BANAT REGION BY VIOLETA TRIPA, ARISTIDA GOLOGAN – A TEXTBOOK

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Many a time we hear in the media that everything related to folklore is presented metaphorically through terms like: ‘thesaurus’, ‘treasure’, ‘pearls’, ‘gems’, etc. The book entitled *Treasures of the Banat* by Violeta Tripa and Aristida Gologan, printed at Europstampa in 2010, explains from the very beginning that the Banat can be associated with a space where hunters of such traditional ‘treasures’ will not be disappointed.

With a content rich in specialized information, the authors have created an ethnography textbook, where they present all the features of the Banat traditional costume, starting with a short history of the region. Structurally, the book is traditional, it brings clear and objective information, not being meant exclusively for the specialized public.

The Banat ethnographic baroque, presenting the component items of the traditional costume and the Banat folklore ornamental elements, is described in the introductory study entitled *Folk art of Romanians in the Banat*. An admiring attitude towards the Banat ethnographic specificity is predominant in this part of the book. This form of author exaltation is extremely discreet textually through the presence of the Banat regional terms. Nevertheless, the phrase remains objective, the two authors carefully controlling this aspect: ‘The waist long shirt is called ‘*spăcel*’ or ‘*ciupag*’ in the Banat. In the Făget area villages, Bocșa, Cărbunari, Valea Bistrei, etc. people also wore, besides the short shirt, the *shirt with the hem sewn on the ‘ciupag*’ or the *long shirt*, described in documents dating back to the 18th century as reaching the ankles’ (p.14). In some cases, the regional terms substitute an explanation or an addition: ‘The colourful wool yarns in the warp make up vertical red and green stripes on the edges, while the middle is dark blue (*vânăt*) or red, according to the age of the wearer’ (p.16). This quotation demonstrates the meticulousness with which the two researchers treat regional features of the Banat. More precisely, the description of the ethnographic ‘treasures’, is the best moment to inform the readers about some terms of the Banat sub dialect.

At the end of the first part, the authors remind the readers what the most important part of any study about the Banat region is. The conclusions contain a short summary of what is called 'multi- and interculturalism' of the Banat, the distinctive aspect of this region compared to other Romanian regions: 'We can conclude that the ornamental thesaurus inherited through tradition has been permanently enriched with influences from the south-eastern European space following the cohabitation with the Serbians, as well as with other influences from the central and western European space due to the cohabitation with the German, Hungarian and Slovak populations whose interest for solar and floral representations is easily identifiable' (p.27).

*The analytical presentation of the collection* explains in a didactic manner the images that illustrate the 'treasures' promised in the title. In the short description of the items we can notice the authors taking distance from their affiliation to the Banat area, and the ecstasy seen in the first part dissolves and leaves room for a neutral view: 'The small rhombuses repeat horizontally, creating the bond between the big ones. At the edges of this ornamental register there are two registers of tiny white seams which repeat towards the extremities of the hems with a blue triangle here and there' (p.30).

The items are classified according to sex, marital status, age, while the fabrics, seams, embroideries and commodities are dealt with in a different part of the book. The authors present the readers with an entire photo album besides the description of the collection items. The game between the image and the text fulfils the didactic function necessary to explain the specialized notions. At the same time, through the 'unmistakable identity of the Banat costume', as the authors call it, a chromatic richness of photos showing the collection items is created. In a subchapter entitled 'Festive clothing ensembles', the women dressed up for the 'hora' (Romanian traditional dance) or the Banat family have the effect of including the reader (metaphorically speaking) in the image, so that bringing him/her closer to the collection should not be doubted.

The book ends with a *Collection of photographic documents* where the visual material is enriched through a set of images that do not limit to a simple aesthetic function, but create the bridge between the book and the places the two authors gathered the photos from. The appreciations can extend due to the visual aid in the book and the influence that photography has on the preservation of memory and interest showed by researchers in this field.

The 'Banat treasures' are thus, something else than the 'treasures' and 'pearls' that the media shows us and we hope that in the future Violeta Tripa's collection be richer and the 'folklore didactics' represent at least one curiosity for the readers.