

# BALTHASAR HACQUET AS A HISTORIAN

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## Izveček

Avtor se ukvarja s Hacquetom kot zgodovinarjem slovanskih ljudstev in navaja tista njegova dela, ki so pomembna za začetek znanstvenega razvoja slovanskih študij.

## Abstract

The author speaks about Hacquet as a historian of the Slavic peoples and refers to those of Hacquet's works which are of a certain importance for the scientific beginnings of Slavic studies.

**Ključne besede:** Balthasar Hacquet, Ukrajina, zgodovina slovanskih ljudstev

**Keywords:** Balthasar Hacquet, Ukraine, history of Slavic peoples

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Balthasar Hacquet (1739/40?–1815) was a well-known Austrian traveller, representative of the European Enlightenment, and a scientist and polymath. As a military surgeon he took part in the Seven Years' War (1756–1763) and reputedly finished his studies in 1764 at the Vienna University. Hacquet was a member of more than 20 European academies of sciences and scientific societies and professor at the Ljubljana *lycaenum* (1773–1787), Lviv (1787–1805) and Krakow (1805–1810) universities.

He spent forty-four years of his life (1766–1810) among the Slavs. He was the first to go on foot or on horseback throughout almost all Central and Southern Europe and visited practically all Slavic lands of the Austrian monarchy. He also visited the south of Ukraine and Crimea, which were incorporated in Russia in the last third of the 18th century. Prior to all his scientific journeys Hacquet prepared himself thoroughly beforehand. He preliminarily read literature about the region he planned to visit, designated a route and the time of the journey, searched for guides, etc. Personal

experience gave him the ability to write instructions for travellers, especially in mountainous areas. These instructions, published in 1796, were very likely the first or one of the first European textbooks for travellers and alpinists.

It is quite possible that he was the first to have studied comprehensively various aspects of life of various Slavic peoples. He was the author of more than hundred works dealing with lands and peoples of Central and Eastern Europe (v. Hacquet's detailed bibliography in: Valjo & Kril 2000). They were written in German, French, Latin and Italian and published in various editions.

Hacquet was a versatile scientist, a real polymath. He studied mineralogy, geology, plant and animal world, explored mineral resources, and worked as surgeon and veterinary. He excelled as military expert, alpinist, ethnographer, historian, sociologist, and expert in cultural and political studies. His works are various in contents, there are many important research procedures among them, but some also remained descriptive and statistical, which include travel notes and stories, written with lots of humour.

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Language skills helped him to investigate unknown lands, their inhabitants, to describe their life in all aspects. He spoke German, French, English, Latin, and also knew some Slavic languages, among which were Czech, Slovenian, and Polish. He delivered his lectures at the “*Studium Ruthenum*” in Lviv using the Ukrainian (Ruthenian) language. Linguistic knowledge enabled him to follow closely European scientific literature of his time. It was also of great help in his contacts with the local population.

## 2. HACQUET AS HISTORIAN OF SLAVIC PEOPLES

History played an important role in Hacquet’s studies. His writing includes statistical information about ethnic and religious structure of a population, elements of history of Slavic peoples, ethnographic and anthropological observations, fragmentary information about language, material and spiritual culture, etc.

Hacquet informed the Emperor Joseph II about the importance of studying history and culture of Slavic peoples, when he met him in Bukovyna in 1788. He also explained him the reasons for his studying Slavic nations. These peoples constituted two thirds of the population of the Habsburg Monarchy and were of vital importance to the Austrian state.

He started collecting evidence on the Slavs, but practically did not analyse them from the scientific point of view. He took special interest in historical problems only at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At that time, he decided to sum up the evidence on the history and culture of Slavic peoples, which were collected by him for a period of about forty years. This evidence provided the basis for his research, which was published in Leipzig from 1801 to 1808 under the general title “*Abbildung und Beschreibung der südwest- und östlichen Wenden, Illyrer und Slaven*” (Hacquet 1801–1808). In Hacquet’s letter to his friend in Munich, baron Karl Ehrenbert von Moll from October 1, 1800, one can read about “*Abbildung*”: “... ils y aura aumoins 10 cahier avec 60 figures in 4: to enluminés ... (there will be at least 10 volumes with 60 pictures, all of which are coloured)” (Hartig 1908: 113; Valjo 1997: 92).

Hacquet’s contemporary, Lviv’s police commissioner Joseph Rohrer (1769–1828) published in 1804 notes about his journey from Vienna to Lviv, where he mentioned that “professor of the Lviv

University B. Hacquet finished his book about Slavs” (Rohrer 1804: 93–95).

In 1996, *Abbildung* was partly translated into Slovenian (Švajgar 1996), unfortunately in a very uncritical manner, which was much criticized by important Slovenian researchers.

Hacquet probably intended to sum up evidence concerning the Western and Eastern Slavs as well. However, he did not do it, for reasons unknown explaining why the “*Abbildung*” examines mainly the Southern Slavs. It can be considered as the first part of a broader scope of work planned. Namely, the total number of illustrations (60) indirectly confirms his plans to write about the history of the Western and Eastern Slavs, since there were only 30 of them incorporated in the book about the Southern Slavs. Hacquet explained that there were three distinct Slavic types on the pictures: a type of *Slavus* represented by Sarmatians from the North Carpathians, a type of *Venedus* – inhabitant of Western Slavic lands and a type of *Illyricus* – inhabitant of Croatia.

Hacquet was interested in many problems of Slavic studies: ethnic origins of the Slavs, history, ethnology, folklore, language, statistics, relations with other peoples, etc. He analysed some of them especially carefully, based on scientific research, statistics, official records. About others he wrote in fragments or he only mentioned them in the light of his own impressions.

In the third part of his work “*Oryctographia Carniolica*” (Hacquet 1784), he outlined a program of his personal research of the Slavs. He wrote, “*Slavic peoples represent the most numerous nation in the world and occupy the largest territory. [...] These peoples have various names; they are located in the area stretching from the Adriatic to the Northern Sea, where the Bering channel divides Asia from America. [...] Slavic language came in Siberia as German came in Ceylon or New York. [...] Russians belong to the most ancient European peoples, and they quickly adopted European manners and culture*” (Švajgar 1996: 39).

At present, all his ideas are important because Hacquet did not only formulate the various problems of Slavic studies but he tried to solve them on the basis of his knowledge and the development of contemporary science. Among other things, Hacquet located the ancient motherland of Slavs in the Southern Europe, namely on the territory of contemporary Slovenia. In his opinion, the process of settling apart of Slavic tribes began from there. He provided the basis for the evidence that small Slavic peoples of the Balkan Peninsula preserved their original linguistic and cultural identity.

The “*Abbildung*” contains interesting information about the territory and old ethnic names of Slavic ethnographic groups in present Slovenia and Croatia and other parts of former Yugoslavia to the South, such as Ziljani, Krayntsi, Istriytsi, Yapodi, Chichi, Dolentsi, Vipavtsi, Kochevari, Liburntsi, Seashore Lahi, Croats, Uskoki, Lichani, Dalmatintsi, Klementintsi, Rashtsi ... In these essays, Hacquet did not confine himself to the description of traditions and ways of life of these peoples, but investigated also their history, ethnic origins, economic activities, linguistic features and religion. He gave detailed description of their houses, customs, spiritual life, etc.

Nowadays, the works of Hacquet represent an important source of ethnographic studies of Slovenians and Croats at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. A description of every mentioned group from the territory of modern Croatia and Slovenia is accompanied by Hacquet’s own coloured sketches of the “*types*” of the inhabitants. The coloured pictures give a clear image of these peoples, ethnic clothes of men and women, etc. Some folk songs of the Southern Slavs are included in the book.

Hacquet focused a considerable attention on the study of the population of the Eastern provinces of the Austrian Monarchy. He summarized his observations in the four volumes of the fundamental research work entitled “*Hacquet’s neueste physikalisch-politische Reisen in den Jahren 1788 bis 1795 durch die Dacischen und Sarmatischen oder Nördlichen Karpathen*” (Hacquet 1790–1796). In this research, Hacquet studied ethnic and religious composition of the population of Galicia and Bukovyna and its ethnographic features. Describing these territories, the scientist made some comments on their history. When his knowledge of the history of Galicia and Bukovyna as well as of Ukraine as a whole is taken into consideration, it is possible to suppose that Hacquet studied special scientific literature, which he found in the library of the Lviv university and in some monastic and private libraries (cf. The State Archives of the Lviv Region, Lviv, Ukraine, Fonds 26, description 5, no. 342, p. 1v).

When writing about the Polish and Ukrainian relationship in Galicia, Hacquet noted that Poland conquered this land in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and paid a special attention to the devastating results of the centuries old domination of the Polish gentry in Galicia. Hacquet thought the Polish gentry’s oppression and the loyalty of Ukrainian peasantry to the Orthodox religious tradition was the main reasons for peasant uprisings, in particular during

the insurrection of 1768. He stated that chaotic politics of the Polish gentry precipitated the fall of Poland as a state.

The most interesting Hacquet’s ethnographic sketches are those about Huzuls, one of the Ukrainian ethnographic groups. He was probably the first to describe the way of life and mentality of Huzuls, their typical habitation, clothing, their wedding and other folk dances.

Hacquet listed vast information about the Ukrainian names of places, rivers, lakes, mountains, plains and mountain passes, cities and towns, clothes, habitations, customs, beliefs, diseases of men and cattle, etc. Besides all these, he described cities, their origins, geographical situation, architecture, downtown churches and houses, social structure and number of townspeople, their way of life, leisure, religious behaviour, city management, educational institutions, markets, etc.

He was also the author of an interesting work under the title “*Reise durch die neu eroberten Provinzen Russlands, von Jahr 1797, mit Rücksicht auf Handel, Manufakturen, Fabriken, Geografie, Statistik, Politik, Ökonomie, Naturgeschichte, Botanik u.s.w.*” (Hacquet 1798; Valjo & Kril 2000: 37 n. 20). This is a description of identifying characteristics of the area, the most important cities (Kamenets-Podilskiy, Uman, Odesa, Kherson, Mykolaiv, Simferopol and others), trade, health institutions, etc.

In his travel notes from the South of the Russian Empire, Hacquet gives information about the measures, which the Russian government implemented with the purpose of preventing penetration of French revolutionary ideas into the country at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Among others, he observed that customs guards on the border, which he passed along the Zbruch River, were mainly interested in searching for letters and books. And if French editions were found, they were confiscated. As to the question why this literature could not enter the territory of the Russian Empire, Hacquet received the following answer: “*All French books are bad and are forbidden*”. Nevertheless, he noticed that this was only a semblance of a customs check up, as the officials did not know any language except for Russian, and they got ideas about books mainly from the answers of their owners.

Hacquet criticized the Russian serfdom system and denounced the discriminatory tsarist politics towards the Crimean Tartars and Ukrainian population, especially peasantry. In the Ukrainian steppe he met a large group of serfs, accompanied by soldiers to Crimea to be affected to their new

owners. Hacquet, who was characteristically intolerant of any despotism, severely criticized the decree of the Empress Catherine II about the introduction of serfdom in Ukraine. He stated that the Russian serfdom was the cruellest in the world. He compared Russia to Austria, the latter being "a free state, where men are not sold, where the government bodies function properly, and where for a small fee one can send letters at one's wish" (Valjo 1997: 72).

Hacquet's observations about the Russian politics towards this area deepened his hate for despotism in any form – aggressive wars, bloody revolutions or political tyrannies. According to him, the mass humiliation of men and labour did not meet the human progress and conflicted with natural evolution laws. This publication by Hacquet in the Leipzig magazine was addressed to the European reader and contributed to a wider and more objective European acquaintance with Russia and its domestic policy.

International relations were another sphere of Hacquet's interest. He was particularly critical about the activities of the Austrian consulate general in Kherson. In his opinion, well-educated and cultured officials should have been working there, because they were sent to represent their state, disseminate information about it, establish cultural and trade relations. However, Hacquet found some pitiful individuals instead, who were neither familiar with the Russian language nor knew anything about their own history and culture.

### 3. CONCLUSION

Hacquet was the first Austrian scientist who investigated territories of Central-Eastern Europe and their population as a whole. In his works he dealt with ethnic origins of Slavic peoples, history of some countries including the Galician-Volhynian State, culture, communications and relations of the Slavs with other peoples. His works are interesting even nowadays, since he visited almost all the lands of the region, collected authentic evidence and conveyed personal impressions. For a contemporary scholar, Hacquet's works have almost the character of a source, unique in many respects.

### 4. POVZETEK

#### Balthasar Hacquet kot zgodovinar

Zgodovina zavzema pomembno mesto v objavi Balthasarja Hacqueta, znanega predstavnika

evropskega razsvetljenstva in znanstvenika-polihistorja. V njegovih spisih najdemo npr. statistične podatke o etnični in verski strukturi, elemente zgodovine slovanskih ljudstev, etnografska in antropološka opažanja, fragmentarne podatke o jeziku, materialni in duhovni kulturi itd. V začetku 19. stoletja se je Hacquet odločil, da bo objavil gradivo o zgodovini in kulturi slovanskih ljudstev, ki ga je bil zbiral približno štirideset let. To gradivo predstavlja jedro nekaterih raziskav, ki so bile objavljene med 1801 in 1808 pod skupnim naslovom "Abbildung und Beschreibung der südwest- und östlichen Wenden, Illyrer und Slaven". V tem delu Hacquet ni le formuliral različnih vprašanj s področja slavistike oz. slovanskih študij, temveč jih je na temelju svojega poznavanja in stopnje tedanjega znanstvenega razvoja skušal tudi reševati: tako je lociral prvotno domovino Slovanov v južno Evropo, namreč na ozemlje sodobne Slovenije.

Hacquet je posvečal precejšnjo pozornost proučevanju prebivalstva vzhodnih predelov Avstrijske monarhije, svoja opažanja in raziskave pa povzel v temeljnem delu z naslovom "Neueste physikalisch-politische Reisen in den Jahren 1788 und 1789 durch die Dacischen und Sarmatischen oder Nördlichen Karpathen". V njem obravnava Hacquet etnično in versko sestavo prebivalstva Galicije in Bukovine ter njihove etnografske značilnosti, v opis teh predelov pa je vključil tudi nekaj zgodovinskega gradiva. V svoji obravnavi poljsko-ukrajinskih odnosov je med drugim zapisal, da je Poljska osvojila ti deželi v 14. stoletju in da je kaotična politika poljskega plemstva pospešila padec in izginotje poljske države.

Hacquet je tudi avtor zanimivega dela z naslovom "Reise durch die neu eroberten Provinzen Russlands, von Jahr 1797", kjer so podatki o diskriminatorski politiki ruskih carjev do krimskih Tatarov in prebivalstva Ukrajine, zlasti do kmetov.

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