BOOK REVIEWS

## TYPE SCENES IN THE HEROIC EPICS OF SIBERIAN PEOPLES

Kuzmina, Evgenia N. 2005. *Ukazatel' tipicheskikh mest geroicheskogo eposa narodov Sibiri (altaitsev, buriat, tuvintsev, khakasov, shortsev, iakutov).* **Eksperimental'noe izdanie / Otv. red. N. A. Alekseev. [Index of Type Scenes in the Heroic Epics of Siberian Peoples (Altai, Buryat, Tuva, Khakass, Shors, Yakut). Experimental edition / Editor-in-chief N. A. Alekseev]. Novosibirsk: Publishing House of Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 1382 pp.**[1]

The reviewed *Index of Type Scenes in the Heroic Epics of Siberian Peoples* of about 1,400 pages was prepared by philologists from Novosibirsk and published as an experimental edition of 300 copies.

A rather large team of authors (E. N. Kuzmina, N. R. Baizhanova, S. M. Orus-ool, N. S. Chistobaeva, Yu. V. Limorenko, L. N. Arbachakova, T. V. Illarionova, and M. N. Petrova) set an ambitious goal: the systematization of the corpus of type scenes in the epic of Mongolian- and Turkic-speaking Siberian peoples'. According to the project leader Evgenia N. Kuzmina, it should, to some extent, contribute to solving the "problem of plot composition, plot context, and ethno-poetic constancy in the Siberian epics" (p. 4).

Type scenes or common scenes are understood by compilers as "a certain narrative scheme", "intertextual repetitions which move from one story to another". Type scene structure essentially contains "content-bearing or key words [...] linked into stable syntagms (*ustoichivie slovosochetaniia*)", which represent "epic formula". "'Type scenes' are closely connected with turns in the plot, as though they mark significance in terms of plot episodes of a heroic narrative" (p. 5). Despite several possible interpretations of the term 'type scenes', suggested in the book, it seems that the analysis of approaches in the studies of epics and problems of terminological system should be considered more thoroughly (see in particular Lord 1994: 83; Reichl 1992: 171–217; and others).

The fact is that it is not only the more or less expanded general/typical passages/scenes that "mark the episodes of the epic narrative important in terms of plot", but also fixed word combinations (minimal in size, just two–three words). It is a formula as such,[2] peculiar to the mythopoetical mind of storytellers, song writers, shamans, medicine men, wisemen and other groups of people, who are both initiated in and affiliated with the knowledge of the sacral world and who work with the 'word' one way or another. Why have not the authors distinguished such minimal 'type scenes' even though these formulas are occasionally present in the *Index*?[3] It appears to me that the answer to this question impacts the most important thing and poses another question:
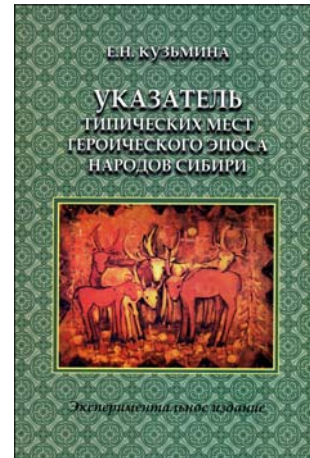
Is the selected composition approach of this *Index* the most optimal? I will revert to this issue below.

To fulfil the assigned objective, the leader of the authors' team has developed the structure of the *Index of Type Scenes* in advance. In the course of the work, the structure was expanded with new categories, set out to reflect the entire variety of the epic language of Turkic and Mongolian peoples of Siberia. The index structure is based on five major categories reflecting the semantic level of data structuring (The Epic World, Epic Characters, Magic Objects, Compositional Insertions, and Storyteller's Remarks). Some of these categories include small sections which could be divided into even smaller – ranging from 2 up to 22. Furthermore, all material is combined into six large groups according to the ethnic origin of the analyzed epic texts.

Both the goal itself and the presented approach on data processing indeed deserve attention and discussion (see, in particular, a recent positive review of this book, which however contains quite a number of critical comments and valuable suggestions in Novikov 2006: 65–68). To continue the discussion, I will try to focus my attention on several other issues which to my opinion are important for a work with this type of indexes.

Text selection principles. 23 epic texts were selected by the team of authors for demonstrating the systematization principles of type scenes. The majority of these texts have already been published in bilingual academic editions. Three texts were published in the series *Epos Narodov SSSR* ('The Epic of the Peoples of the USSR'), ten texts were published recently in the series *Pamiatniki Folklora Narodov Sibiri i Dal'nego Vostoka* ('Folklore Masterpieces of the Peoples of Siberia and the Far East'), four other texts in collections *Shorskii Folklor* ('Shor Folklore') (1 text) and *Folklor Kurumchinskoi Dolini* ('Folklore of Kurumchin Valley') (3 texts). The remaining texts singled out by the compilers have been published by the publishing houses of fiction books (1 Altai and 2 Buryat texts) and also include three unpublished archival texts (Buryat epic stories from the archives of the Institute of Mongolian, Buddhist and Tibetan Studies, the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences). Presenting a selection of specifically published texts, furthermore texts published recently, which are, so to say, "dissected" and largely secondarily published in this book (supposedly with the approval of copyright owners) does not seem to be the most optimal strategy.

Experts on the epic creation of Siberian peoples are quite familiar with all these texts. It would probably be worth clarifying also the selection principles for the texts that were published differently from the academic publishing principles, but which are included in the present edition along with other academic publications. The only positive exceptions are three archival Buryat epic stories which for the first time were brought to the scholars' attention in full scope. One must say that it is the Buryat section of the book reviewed here which was finally presented in a complete and convincing manner. I suppose, it is mainly due to the unique unpublished materials that drew the attention of the book compilers.

Russian scholarship has accumulated a great number of still unpublished, more or less authentic manuscripts and audio/video records of the heroic epic of the Siberian

peoples, which today is stored in thousands of archival units. That is why the presentation of previously unpublished texts to a large community of researchers is a far more significant mission than reprinting the already published examples.

Texts' presentation principles. I find it important to comment on the editing principles of the *Index*. The problem is that some samples of the epic texts have been published earlier using Latin (Roman) alphabet. In case with the Shor epic story *Khan Mergen, having an elder sister Khan Argo* recorded by Nadezhda Dyrenkova, Cyrillic transcription has worsened the reproduction accuracy of the original. In some parts it was probably caused by the intention of the compilers of the Shor section to unify the spelling with the contemporary Shor orthographic system (*kalakpa* instead of *qałaqpa*). But this principle was not applied to the whole work (vowel length pointed in the original text was mainly omitted, but preserved in the title of the epic story *Kaan Mergen*); in some passages obvious interference in the original text could be observed (for instance, *kamispa* instead of *qamyš-pa*, p. 1118).

Unfortunately, in Russian translations of the texts in the same Shor section no clarification and comments have been made, owing to the obviously low-quality translations of the used publications. For instance, Dyrenkova has poorly translated a phrase *"Kara kul at pagda ba?"* as 'Black dun horse, if on the string?' (p. 1172–1173) (instead of 'If the dark roan horse is on the tether?'). Since it is considered to be important, perhaps it would be worth mentioning in the comments?

No comments are provided on the stylistically and meaningfully different translations of the same type scenes (this, in particular, concerns the Khakass and Shor sections of the *Index*). This reveals that the *Index* is involuntarily targeted at specialists able to read Turkic and Mongolian languages, moreover those who are familiar with the original text. Specialists studying, for instance, the epic of the Samoyed or Tungus-Manchurian people find themselves in a situation where they have only the Russian translation to consult, and thus should irrevocably trust the compilers of the reviewed *Index*.

Index data / structure classification issues. The problem of identification of relatively small but meaningful and regularly recurrent structural units of epic stories which are different from the plot (and maybe from the motif) has a long history in Russian science. Already in the 19th century, Russian missionary Vassilii Verbitskii was the first in Russian Turkic studies to approach this problem professionally and with profound knowledge of the material. His paper *Skazka u altaiskikh inorodtsev* ('Tale of Altai Natives', Verbitskii 1882–1883; see also Verbitskii 1893: 139–158), presented the majority of those type scenes. 123 years later, the same method of identification was independently suggested by compilers of the reviewed *Index*. These type scenes include: The Origin of the Epic Hero, Prophesy about the Hero's Birth, Dangers the Hero Encounters While in Mother's Womb, The Birth of Most Heroes from Elderly Parents, The Hero's Height and Childhood Strength, The Hero's Horses, The Hero's Armament, Name-giving, The Hero's Ride, The Hero's Strength, and The Hero's Battles. But this period which exceeded a century was full of discussions and multiple

attempts to identify the thematic range and structure of the heroic epic. For instance, a study of the epic of Mongolian ethnic groups, which was conducted in the 1970s–1980s by Nikolai Poppe, Tamara Bordzhanova, Anatolii Kichikov, and Walther Heissig, presents almost the same structural units (see the review in Nekliudov 1984: 86–94). What did the compilers of the present *Index* decide to use and what was renounced? It appears important to specify this in the introduction to the *Index*.

In general, the structure of the *Index* has been thoroughly developed. It takes into account not only the extensive type scenes which are at times important in terms of plot development, but also those which are insignificant or not featured at the first glance. Even though in each similar index, the material is much more extensive than the scientific scheme. The *Index* features a section entitled The Hero's Ride, while some heroes travel on foot, on staffs, on arrows, on magic stones, inside arrows or cow-parsnips, in barrels, or with the help of other epic objects (sometimes bound, or hung on saddle straps of a powerful rival). In this light it seems that would be practical to introduce such sections as The Hero's Walk, The Hero's Flight, etc. Based on Shor materials I can assert that in all similar cases the whole set of stable type scenes and formulas have been clearly tied to the topic of the narrative.

It is absolutely logical that the section Epic Characters includes a subcategory The Hero's Horse. I would suggest supplementing this section with a part The Hero's Bull because many epic characters, including positive heroes, travelled namely on bulls. However, as in the previous case it is possible to follow certain generalization pattern and not split data in smaller categories. Accordingly, in this case it would be possible to identify the sections The Peculiarities of the Heroes' Travel in Space and/or Means/Ways of Heroes' Travels.

I will now proceed to the more substantial remarks. Incorporating the examples of type scenes into a single rather large group /subgroup and numbering these consecutively is not the strongest structural characteristics of the *Index*. This has led to the situation where the examples of the similar/identical type scenes from different epic texts are very difficult to identify and correlate with each other.

This statement will be clarified by the examples from the Khakass epic. For instance, in part II.A.21. The Feast, a fragment from the epic tale *Ai-Huuchin* ["More than six days / Celebrated and feasted, / More than seven days, / Folk-people enjoyed …"] is numbered as 2 (II.A.21.2), while a fragment from the epic story *Altin-Arig* ["More than six days [people] / Plied and feasted each other, / More than seven days / Gathered people / On a cheerful marriage-feast / Went on the spree, enjoyed"] is numbered as 13 (II.A.21.13). Type scenes numbered as Khak. II.A.21.12 clearly correlate with similar scenes in Shor epic tales, but to find it out a reader has to browse through all the examples included under the category The Feast, because these type scenes are numbered as 2, 5, and 8. Unfortunately, this "principle" is steadfastly preserved throughout the entire *Index*. Here it is appropriate to refer to the "lost" information, mentioned earlier by Yuri Novikov, which may be missing in a correspondent section/subsection but which can be clearly identified during attentive reading of other sections (e.g., in connection with the elements of the epic hero's clothing and armament, which are provided in various sections of the *Index*; Novikov 2006: 67–68).

Problems with working with the available materials. There are two major problems which solving could impact any further work undertaken by the team of the authors of the *Index*.

First of all, it is important to clearly understand the type of material to be selected for analysis. It appears that the era of working with "ethnic epic traditions" has not passed but, more likely, has not yet begun because despite the apparent abundance of recording of epics, the actual number of such texts is negligibly small. Hereby I mean texts that have been recorded in bulk from one story-teller, from story-tellers of the same "story-telling school", and finally from story-tellers of the same "area", which offers, in fact, representative data. As a rule, researchers deal with occasional recordings from different story-tellers made by different people, in different places and times. Sometimes it was a live recording, sometimes a tedious dictation, sometimes the epic story was told to a researcher, sometimes in a large company of kins and relatives, sometimes it was a prosimetrum, sometimes a song. How is it possible to speak about comparative research when specific features of texts created in such situations have not been taken into consideration?

Again, only the Buryat part of the reviewed *Index* follows a completely logical presentation of material, which is divided into Ehkirit-Bulagat, Unga, and Khori texts. As for other "traditions" in which differences including those in type scenes are essential, the compilers have not followed the same principle of data presentation.

The authors could and should have gone further. In regard, for instance, the epics of the Altai, Khakass and Shors the first thing would be to select from at least 300–400 recordings made over time from N. U. Ulagashev, A. G. Kalkin, N. P. Chernoeva, K. Kokpoev and M. Kurtov (Tubalar, Altai-Kizhi and Telengit), from S. P. Kadishev, P. V. Kurbizhekov and A. V. Kurbezhekova (Kizil), from A. I. Abakaev, N. A. Napazakov, M. E. Tokmagasheva, V. E. Tannagashev and S. S. Torbokov (representatives of Mras-Su and Kondoma Shor story-telling areas).

If this was the case, researchers in fact would have (massive) material at hand which would be easier to systematize and, what is more important, would initially provide lucid and completely concrete results which would be important for solving the "problem of plot composition, plot context and ethno-poetical constancy of the Siberian epic". This would make it possible to discuss the essence of type scenes not in general terms but, rather precisely, on the level of story-tellers and "story-telling schools". The "level of story-tellers" is the most important one, because it has to do with personal creative work that includes texts recorded from talented improvisers, contaminators, and common transmitters of epics. The aim of compiling a text publication recorded from the same storyteller was not specifically declared in the *Index*. Whether it was intentional or not, but the Khakass part contains two "prepared" epic tales recorded from P. V. Kurbizhekov, and in the Shor part two out of three texts have been recorded from P. I. Kidiakov. If so, this principle could have been applied to other parts.

Secondly, and this is perhaps the most crucial remark, a declared and initiated work which was unlikely to be completed manually and followed by a publication which does not present so much research but the original materials, apologies for quibble, results in an incomprehensible volume. This is particularly confirmed by obvious drawbacks of "manual processing" of the textual material (though I admit that part of the

work was done by computer, using text-processing with WinWord) such as mentioning of type scenes in one text and omitting these in others. For instance, on pages 1062–1063 (Khakass part) there is a type scene from the epic story *Altin-Arig* marked as Khak. II.A.21.12:

> A herd of roan stallions was brought in,
> All of it was slaughtered and they started the feast.
> A herd of chestnut stallions was brought in,
> All of it was slaughtered and they started the feast.

An absolutely identical type scene from another analyzed Khakass text *Ai-Khuuchin* (see *Ai-Khuuchin* 1997: 158–159, lines 2162–2165) has been left out of the *Index*. In terms of the mentioned type scene, the classification of the material according to storytellers and not even according to their ethnic affiliation is the most important. The point is that the mentioned type scene (exactly in this form) may characterize the creative art of the Kizil storyteller P. V. Kurbizhekov. At the same time, I have not yet found this particular type scene in the texts recorded from another Kizil storyteller, S. P. Kadishev (they were not used in the present *Index*).

Some TS that are clearly definable in the epic texts analyzed by the compilers have not been included in the *Index*. For instance, there is a common scene of evaluation of the quality of an epic hero and his horse, and it is often used in certain situations by Shor storytellers: "If a horse is born, let it be like… / If *alip* (a hero) is born, let it be like…" This is a fixed formula which appears even in these Shor texts that have been selected for the analysis by the authors, but which has not been included in the *Index* (for instance, in the epic tale *Khan Mergen, Who Had an Elder Sister Khan Argo*, recorded by Dyrenkova: "If a horse is to be created, let the black-grey horse be born and grown!/ If a hero is to be created, let his name be Kan Tos Mergen!" (*Shorskii folklor* 1940: 113). However, this leads us back to the question what was decided to be included in the *Index* – type scenes or formulas, or both?

Naturally, some of the ideas and statements expressed in this review are circumstantial and can be optionally considered in the next editions, but I would suggest considering the problem of composing such an index (and the problem of textological analysis of epic texts in general) from a somewhat different perspective. When we speak about the epoch of Vassilii Verbitskii and even about the first third of the 20th century, there were only a few recordings of heroic epics, and when the collectors of epics had an opportunity to record several minutes of live sound on wax rollers at best, then a paper copy of the index of plots, motifs and type scenes would be an absolutely vital and sometimes the only option. However, nowadays when researchers have significant volumes of audio and video recordings available, when there are special computer programs developed for full text databases and for simultaneous processing of various types of quality materials, to set a task of manual text processing and publication of identified type scenes in enormous epitomes does not seem the most efficient use of time, energy, and resources.

With such large volumes of type scenes already included in the *Index* and considered for further analysis, the most efficient way would be to create a single digital database which permits regular addition, and which would be accompanied by an

online analytical device accessible for users via the Internet and capable of answering the research requests in line with the assigned task. This would solve several problems including the categorizing of any type of type scene regardless of its role in plot composition or its volume, a nearly instant selection of any type scene necessary to a researcher from the whole database regardless the initial classification, a search not only by "fixed word combinations" or extended type scene, but also by key (or any other) word, and many other problems. Adding not only texts but also audio- and video-recorded data to this database would enormously expand the future community of users, which would no longer include only experts of epics and textologists, but also ethnologists, psychologists, ethologists, and researchers representing other schools and tendencies.

Without any doubt the job done by the *Index* compilers is worth appreciation and should be certainly continued. I suppose that a digitization of this monumental edition along with changing the approach during selection of material from published samples of "national epic traditions" to the level of epic story-tellers and story-telling schools, considering the types of performers and recording situation, with a special focus on previously unpublished recordings and interactive presentation of the material, would take the initiated research to a whole new level.

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Notes

[1] The *Index* is available online at http://www.ruthenia.ru/folklore/kuzmina28.htm

[2] Cf., for instance, "a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea" by Milman Parry (1930: 80). See also a review of interpretation approaches of the term 'formula' and the analysis of various formula groups, distinguished on their functional basis, in a remarkable book on North-Ostyak epic versification by Anna Widmer (2000).

[3] E.g., "Where the horse stood – a footstep remained, / Where he rushed away – no trace is left" (p. 211), "Best of the best the hero ate / Best of the best he drank" (p. 981), "Like soft leather they crumple / Like pelt they twist" (p. 1173).

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THREE VOLUMES ABOUT SOCIAL POLICY

Romanov, Pavel & Iarskaia-Smirnova, Elena (eds.) 2007. *Sovetskaia sotsial'naia politika 1920-kh–1930-kh godov: ideologiia i povsednevnost'*. [Soviet Social Policy in the 1920s–1930s: Ideology and Everyday Life.] Moscow: Variant, Centre for Social Policy and Gender Studies, 432pp.

Romanov, Pavel & Iarskaia-Smirnova, Elena (eds.) 2008. *Sovetskaia sotsial'naia politika: stseny i deistvuiushchie litsa, 1940–1985*. [Soviet Social Policy in 1940–1985: Scenes and Actors.] Moscow: Variant, Centre for Social Policy and Gender Studies, 376pp.

Romanov, Pavel & Iarskaia-Smirnova, Elena (eds.) 2008. *Sotsial'naia politika v sovremennoi Rossii: reformy i povsednevnost'*. [Social Policy in Contemporary Russia: Reforms and Everyday Life.] Moscow: Variant, Centre for Social Policy and Gender Studies, 456pp.

At the beginning of this century, the Faculty of Social Systems Management was established at the Saratov State Technical University (SSTU) in Russia. This department was founded by uniting the departments of social work and social anthropology. SSTU

is the university in the Volga region which prepared social workers all through the Soviet period. The faculty has not completely shrug off its somewhat negative reputation (as social work tends to be a low prestige subject in Russia, and young people usually study it when they do not qualify for other subjects at the university), but the applied studies is now complete with academic theoretical studies. The social anthropologists at Saratov study the different aspects of social work and, in general, the topic that can be called occupational anthropology (*antropologiia professii* in Russian). This group of social anthropologists also organises various conferences, analysing research into social work. The materials of different studies have been gathered between the covers of three volumes of a publication series, which publishes translated works of West-European scholars next to Russian scholars.

The three books offer an overview of the social work in Russia from the beginning of the Soviet period until the post-Soviet period. The first book *Sovetskaia sotsial'naia politika 1920-kh–1930-kh godov: Ideologiia i povsednevnost'* discusses social work in Soviet Russia between the 1920s and 1930s. Instead of being strictly historical studies, the articles of this book focus on the relations between Soviet social politics with the political and economic situation in post-revolutionary Russia. Perhaps the most interesting articles are those analysing the impact force of ideology on the development of social policies. On the one hand, Soviet Russia was economically struggling with limited and insufficient resources. On the other hand, the period already reflected the euphoria of a new and better world. Anything old and outdated was thrown overboard to make room for the shortly arriving "proletariat paradise". People were expected to eagerly participate in building up the new state, although at the same time it was challenging for the common people to find enthusiasm in the situation in which unemployment rate was high or work was physically demanding. Alexander Morozov focuses in his article on the unemployed in Kazan, and Svetlana Tulaeva describes the forest workers in the Komi Republic. Both groups found it difficult to join in on the general euphoria. The articles show how bolshevist ideology determined the state's attitude towards those who for some reason or another voiced criticism about the view that

work is to be honoured and not necessarily compensated for. This started the later traditional strategy of the Soviet state that people who were too critical and thus not acceptable were declared "ignorant parasites" and became victims of ideologically justified sanctions.

A separate section of this book is dedicated to gender issues. In the Soviet Union, women had a unique position. Within the ideological paradigm, the Socialist society was particularly symbolic for them: they were freed of double suppression (both of men and the capitalist society) and their position in the society was meant to change in radical terms. Artemi Pushkarev and Natalia Pushkareva analyse in their article a particularly provocative taboo – the sexuality of a Soviet woman and its compliance (or non-compliance) with the ideology. The article reveals that the "evolution" of a Soviet woman was not as linear as the ideology prescribed. Natalia Lebina writes intriguingly about how Soviet abortion policy was searching for a compromise between the social reality and the conceptualisation of social work. A Socialist or Komsomol family was not only involved in fulfilling plans, but also had personal interests and needs. This is why at some point abortion had to be legalised and authorised as a solution for dealing with unwanted pregnancies. The sanctioning of abortion served as "a favour to working women" and symbolised a double failure: unwanted children were the result of "morally loose conduct" as well as poverty which struck certain population strata and made having children problematic. The last part of the book tackles a somewhat neglected topic of how children were raised in the Soviet period, introduces the selection criteria for students who needed social benefits at universities, and explores how the scanty resources for survival were allocated for the children in the 1920s' Russia.

The second book in the series, *Sovetskaia sotsial'naia politika: stseny i deistvuiushchie litsa, 1940–1985* ('Soviet Social Policy in 1940–1985: Scenes and Actors'), focuses on a problematic period in the history of Russia. Stalinist terror made the social work which was already based on ideology even more ideological. A remarkable article on this topic is Ekaterina Tchueva's study on war invalids' complaints to party functionaries as a strategy for claiming government benefits. The article analyses the use of ideological rhetoric both by the disabled and the authorities and leaves the impression that the post-Second World War Russia was characterised by the cruel demagogy of the survival of the fittest. The fourth part of the book groups articles about how the ideological boundaries of "us" and "them" were drawn, whereas people on one side of the boundary were "parasites" and against peace. Natalia Lebina describes the construction of socially anomalous groups in the Soviet society in the 1950s and 1960s. Again, the reader is faced with the ideological definition of "good" and "bad" and how it was applied in everyday life. The final section of the book is quite entertaining and discusses the relations of consumerism and ideology (Oksana Zaporozhets, Yana Krupets), alcohol drinking as a form of leisure and conflicts arising from drinking on the party level (Galina Karpova), and also the Soviet cultural codes applied to women behind the wheels (Rostislav Kononenko).

Typically, the number of non-Russian authors is particularly large in the third book of the series, *Sotsial'naia politika v sovremennoi Rossii: reformy i povsednevnost'* ('Social Policy in Contemporary Russia: Reforms and Everyday Life'). Western scholars have had the chance to do research in Russia only since the collapse of the Soviet regime, and are therefore qualified to participate in discussions about mainly contem-

porary Russia. In this book, Western anthropology is represented at its best in the translated article by Hilary Pilkington, sociology professor at the University of Warwick, about the use of heroine among Russian youth. The book is dedicated to the development of social politics in contemporary Russia. The reforms, though liberal in content, did not fulfil the expected function because these took place in Russia under the centralising reorganisation activities by Vladimir Putin in the situation of corrupted buccaneer capitalism. Around this time the country withdrew its connection with socio-economic processes and limited the financing of social work activities. Anastasia Kincharova suggests on the example of rural population in Russia that the state's withdrawal from the social sphere had the greatest impact on the Russian periphery. Traditional ethnography is represented in this book by Irina Kuznetsova-Morenko, whose article introduces making presents and voluntary activities in the everyday life of Muslim Tartars. By contrast, the book contains a theoretical article on the future of sociology and scientific research by Polish anthropologist Michael Burawoy.

Perhaps the most positive thing about the three books under discussion is that all of them tackle topics that have been somewhat neglected so far. In sum, the book series is an interesting source of information not only for local Russian scholars. National social policies are on the one hand an ideological strategy for supporting or ignoring certain societal groups, but on the other hand, reality is often far more complicated, forcing state institutions to compromise. The main contribution of these three books to understanding social processes is precisely the analysis of this versatility. These collections of articles which reflect the different aspects and developments of social politics over tens of years provide an educational read which inspires to think about the versatile nature of other social processes.

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A REPRESENTATIVE SELECTION OF FOLKSONGS OF LATVIANS IN SIBERIA

Sibīrijas Latviešu Dziesmas. **Sound producer: Edgars Jackevičs; Video producer: Aigars Liel-bārdis; Text: Ilmārs Mežs, Lidija Leikuma, Aleksei Andronov, Sandis Laime; Producer Ilmārs Mežs. Mantojums, 2009.**

With combined effort, researchers of expatriate Latvians in Siberia have completed a representative selection of the folksongs, instrumental music and dances and games of Latvians in Siberia. The hard cover book in small format contains the inserted CD and a double DVD; the former featuring 52 pieces and the latter 126 pieces. The entire length of material recorded on the discs exceeds 5.5 hours.

The book has an attractive cover design and a good selection of photographs nicely complements the text. The text is featured in three languages (Latvian, Russian and English). Information in Russian will be hopefully useful for younger Latvians in Siberia, who may find reading the language of their forefathers more challenging. The translations definitely expand the audience who might be interested in the Latvian diaspora in Siberia and peculiarities of their ethnic culture. True, the English translation has been presented in summarised form. If anything, the book could have had page numbers.

According to the authors, the publication was inspired by Estonian Folklore Archives' publication *Songs of Siberian Estonians*, which consists of two CDs and an anthology in three languages. Like the Estonian counterpart, the Latvian publication encompasses as many Latvian communities in Siberia as possible and the Russian songs, which are also sung in villages today, have been deliberately left aside. The compilers have attempted to avoid repetition of the same songs and instrumental pieces, but different performances of single folk songs can be listened to on the discs.

The work of Latvians, however, is far more voluminous – the sound and video material has been made in Latvian communities in Siberia in the period 1975–2009. At the same time, *Songs of Siberian Estonians* are based on material recorded only on the expeditions of Estonian Folklore Archives and does not even include the tradition of the ethnic group of the Seto (hopefully their folksongs will be published as a separate volume in the future). It is commendable that the Latvians have published between the same covers the entire song and music repertoire of both Latvians and Latgalians, collected by different folklore collectors from Latvian expatriates in Siberia. By the way, four songs featured on the CD were recorded on the fieldwork expeditions to Siberia by the Estonian Folklore Archives.

Quite logically, the number of older recordings is smaller, because the study of Siberia used to be more complicated in the Soviet period, especially because recording devices were not commonly used due to the inaccessibility of quality devices. Thus, the

CD contains only one song from 1975: a truly enchanting violin and zither piece recorded by Ingvars Leitis. Recordings from the time some 20 years ago (1989–1990) were made mostly in Lejas Bulāna and Augšbebri (Bobrovka), which are well-known Latvian villages in Siberia, and Kurzemes Ozolaine (Kurlano-Dubovka) near the latter. When in 2004, extensive joint expeditions to Latvian communities in Siberia together with scholars of the neighbouring countries were initiated, recording technology was already widely used on expeditions, but the better folk singers and players of instrumental music had already passed away. The inclusion of earlier recorded material is thus justified, even though compared to modern recordings their quality leaves to be desired. The collection compiled by Latvians features instrumental music, but most of the recorded music has been played on modern instruments – the Russian garmon, accordion or bayan. There are however, few players of instrumental music left in Estonian communities in Siberia.

The DVD offers the spectators a chance to see many singers and players of instrumental music, observe their sincere performance, learn a funny game or a dance step, or use the material as a research source. Quite entertaining are the small visual detours: village scenery, ride along a muddy or snow-covered village road, villagers doing their everyday chores, children playing ball games on the street, taking photos in front of a village club, conversations with the local Latvians. Remarkably, one of the youngest Latgalians in Siberia has been interviewed. The visual material is surprisingly versatile, and enables among other things the viewers to observe a very popular tradition of singing and dancing on the village street.

Of course, most of the video-recorded groups seem to have come together specifically to demonstrate their songs and dances, but their enjoyment of performance is sincere.

In the Latvian publication, the songs and tales have been categorised according to regions/villages; this categorisation enables an overview of the songs and music of a specific region. Latvian scholars also note that the regional variations can be quite remarkable. For example, Suhonoya (Sukinava) used to be a village where every man could play an instrument. And even today the village has its own folk group.

The publication gives an overview of the development and current situation in Latvian settlements in Siberia, the collectors of Siberian material throughout times, the singing tradition of Latvians in Siberia, and the names of folk singers and players. The collection features full song texts with translations and this allows a comparison these with Estonian folk songs. Similarities between these can be noticed in terms of melody and lyrics. Brief information has been provided on villages where the recordings have been made: the year of establishment, the region of origin of the emigrants, language use. Here I disagree with the claims that the Ryzhkovo village has a larger percentage of Estonians than of Latvians (20% and 10–15%, respectively) and that Latvian is used only by the older generation are not entirely correct. During a fieldwork expedition to Ryzhkovo a few years ago I met some young people who spoke Latvian.

The collection of Latvian songs in Siberia definitely offers a joy of recognition. The formation and development of Estonian and Latvian communities have been more or less the same; they often lived in close quarters and maintained active communication with each other. The emigrant communities in Siberia were formed of people from certain regions in homeland; these people also retained their original dialect. Like

Latgalian speakers in Siberia who cannot generally read Latvian literary language, the Seto group in Siberia cannot understand Estonian literary language. The repertoire of Latvians in Siberia includes traditional folk songs (the most popular of which seem to be St John's Day songs) as well as popular early 20th-century author songs. People from regions where the choir singing tradition had well developed by the period of emigration, continued the tradition in Siberia. Scholars have noticed that the choir singing traditions are considerably weaker in the Latgalian region in Siberia, while their old traditional song repertoire has been better preserved. The same seems to apply to the Seto group in Siberia. In Latvia, the best known village of expatriate Latvians in Siberia is Lejas Bulāna (Lower Bulanka), while the Estonians mostly know the village of Upper Suetuk (Verkhnii Suetuk).

Both Latvians and Estonians in Siberia value their traditional song repertoire. Certainly the older generation is more knowledgeable in the tradition. In the past years, scholars have noticed some attempts to revive the ethnic culture and language. The Latvians' winter courses on Latgalian language and culture, organised in Achinsk, definitely help to improve the situation. Estonians, unfortunately have nothing analogous to contribute: Estonian language is taught only in the Upper Suetuk village and at language courses at the Estonian Society in Krasnoyarsk.

Scholars of both countries have a major work cut out for them in introducing and studying the unique language and culture of the expatriates in Siberia. *Sibīrijas Latviešu Dziesmas* is a fine guide on the way. Enjoy the discoveries!

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