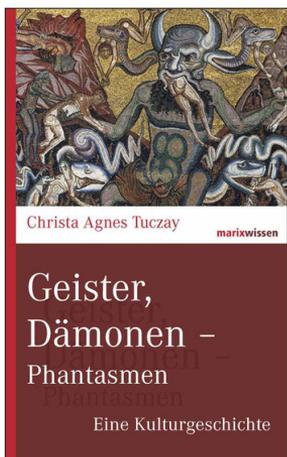


BOOK REVIEWS

A COMPACT OVERVIEW OF THE WORLD OF GHOSTS AND DEMONS



Christa Agnes Tuczay. *Geister, Dämonen – Phantasmen. Eine Kulturgeschichte.* Wiesbaden: Marixverlag, 2015. 252 pp.

The new book by Christa Agnes Tuczay presents a cultural-historic overview of the lore related to ghosts, with an emphasis on German cultural space. When picking up the book, the reader can wonder, for a moment, whether we would need yet another lexicon of ghosts, as many of the kind have already been published, also in German. Nevertheless, the world of ghosts has never ceased to excite people and although many belief creatures (e.g. dragons accumulating treasures) have lost their topicality in today's world, the readership interested in these topics is still large. The author, when writing her book, seems to have born in mind as vast an audience as possible. On the one hand, the text is easy to read for an ordinary reader and the terms have been explained in detail (for example, the author mentions at least on three occasions the connection between the term 'demon' and the verb 'share'). However, on the other hand, at the end of each keyword article researches published about the corresponding creature have been enumerated. This way the book is also helpful for the scholars who need more detailed information about a concrete creature. It is somewhat confusing, though, that there are no references in the text – it is hard to understand whether the presented conclusions come from the author herself or from some source she has cited.

More often than not, the author uses the historic-geographical method, trying to find the place of origin and spread of the beliefs connected with a certain creature. However, in the case of some beliefs it is quite probable that they have emerged simultaneously in several places, which could be due to similar sources of subsistence and social environments – as the author herself also admits (p. 237) when speaking about the development of ghost beliefs.

In some cases the reader is left with a wish that the author had defined more clearly which era she was talking about; for example, on page 74 she discusses, in the present tense, money spirits who in most cases have been deprived of their traditional shape in today's lore. On the other hand, when talking about a belief related to switched children, the author, referring to a lawsuit in 1690, mentions that in the period under discussion they were still viable (p. 89). As there are plenty of belief records and legends about the motif of a switched child dating from even the end of the 19th century, I would dare to assume that this kind of idea was somewhat topical even two centuries later.

In the case of review books covering voluminous material there is always the question of the extent to which a phenomenon is discussed. I would have liked to read more about the plague spirit as plague lore has had a considerable impact on European culture and beliefs in a wider sense; yet, the book mentions the plague spirit only in a few words (p. 104). However, it is most appreciated that the author has also discussed several more recent beliefs (e.g. those related to vanished hitchhikers or aliens) as well as the current features of the still topical creatures (e.g. ghosts, poltergeists, and their depiction in movies). Another advantage of the book is that it focuses not only on belief creatures but also on human beings, describing communication practices used to come into contact with the inhabitants of the afterworld.

As concerns the structure of the book, it is somewhat questionable why the rubric dealing with people's love affairs with demons is placed under the chapter speaking about disease spirits.

In general, however, the book makes a spirited read, suggesting how multifaceted and colourful Europe's religious worldview was in the past times, building a background also to contemporary beliefs. The author's thorough detective work in the world of belief creatures and the extensive research on the topic has brought to light exciting and even surprising cultural connections – for example, a fine network of linkages between Saint Nicholas, water spirits, Santa Claus, and even a crocodile.

Reet Hiimäe

YET ANOTHER COLLECTION OF UDMURT FOLKSONGS

Irina Pchelovodova & Nikolai Anisimov. *Lymshor pal udmurt"eslen kyržan gur"essy / Pesni iuzhnykh udmurtov / Songs of southern Udmurts.* Izhevsk & Tartu, 2015. 374 pp.

Since the 1990s, Udmurt ethnomusicologists have been deeply engaged in the publication of Udmurt musical folklore. They have mainly drawn on the material collected so far; yet, fieldwork has also been ongoing. Even today Udmurtia and its diasporas preserve their folkloric diversity of genres, including in the sphere of folksongs and other folk music; however, the survival of traditional culture cannot be guaranteed for years to come. The influence of mass media can be especially fast and devastating in the case of songs as novel ways of self-expression and registers steamroller in different forms of media and therefore generation exchange can bring about also change of culture, which cannot be hindered even by the reproduction of song repertoire by specially founded singing groups at festivals and other events.



This edition is the fourth one in the series *Udmurt Folklore*. The ones published formerly include songs of southern and central Udmurts (1992, 1999, 2014), northern Udmurts (1996), and those residing in the Vyatsko-Polyansky district of the Kirov region (1995, 2004). Udmurt playing and dance songs have been published separately (1999).

The authors of the current collection also contributed to the publication of a collection of songs from Kiyasovsky district, titled *Melodies of Tygyrmen* (2011). The materials of this region in southern Udmurtia have also been used in this collection, which covers non-ritual repertoire. The collection contains 137 songs and, besides original texts, also translations into Russian and English. A great part of the material was collected during fieldwork in the years 2009–2013, but other recordings have also been published. The introduction to the collection in Russian, English, and Estonian provides an overview of the region, sub-genres, and publication principles. The collection would have deserved an introduction also in the Udmurt language and definitely in the first position. Most of the footnotes, captions for photographs, as well as data about the performers and collectors at the end of the book are presented only in Russian. The language policy followed in the publication could have been somewhat more consistent.

It seems to be ordinary that the repertoire more directly related to calendar and life cycle customs gains the prevalent position in the study and publication of more traditional folklore. It is the collectively more crystallised custom side that creates as if an argument about the presumably greater traditionality of the pertaining folklore. The occasional component in the more individual or entertaining folklore has not added value to it. The more gratifying is the fact that this collection is dedicated to non-ritual repertoire. This gives the reader a better idea about what people have sung (or still sing) in the period between holidays, which constitutes a major part of their lives.

The material originates in six villages of this region, which belong to different kin groups. This creates a different traditional background, which is also pointed out by the authors in the introductory part; however, in non-ritual repertoire it is less noticeable. However, it is namely the context that should be emphasised; ethnomusicology today is far from recording folk melodies and verses only.

The introduction provides clues as to the contextual background of one or another genre or performance, be it personalised manner of performance, some situative details, or the singer's biographical facts. The collection would be richer and more interesting if the published songs were supplemented by relevant excerpts of interviews, researchers' observations, or materials visually enhancing performances. The audio CD accompanying the book does not fully compensate for this shortcoming. The more comprehensive contextual material collected during fieldwork would have turned the book into an anthropological document. It catches the eye that many of the songs (incl. those connected with individuals) have been recorded from ensembles, that is, most probably from secondary tradition. It would have been interesting to learn about the nature and role of local ensembles in upholding tradition nowadays, etc. Hopefully, these remarks could be taken into account in future collection and publication activity.

In the introduction, the songs published in the collection are divided into five groups, considering the popular emic classification:

- lyrical songs;
- chastushkas, dance songs;

- playing songs;
- songs-teasers;
- borrowed songs (Tatar, Russian, Mari).

The introduction provides a more detailed characterisation of these groups and subgroups; further on in the book the groups can be identified, above all, by the headings, and in some cases just surmised. I hereby hold that it is the lyrical songs that include the most interesting functions and features of non-ritual songs, connected with the meaning of songs in an individual's life or his/her personal identity. These songs are often related to personal harrowing experiences. They are functionally close to occasional laments, yet they are still songs. Highlighting this subgroup might be essential also in a comparative perspective: today we can only make assumptions about the performance function of several Estonian (both newer and older) folksongs, especially from the personal point of view.

Another interesting subgroup (quite numerous one) represented in the collection is so-called nominal songs. In these cases songs have come into close contact with the performer and become his/her 'property'. An already existing song might acquire some personal features, and other people are denied the right to perform them at the presence of the 'owner'. Although it is not the same phenomenon, we could draw parallels with personal songs of the Nordic peoples. However, also in Estonia, especially in Setomaa, singers are known by their unique repertoire. Among nominal songs we can also find material borrowed from neighbouring peoples.

A separate subgroup is formed by songs related to local identity, i.e. those that define one or another settlement. At Kiyasovsky Udmurts they can be performed as non-ritual polyfunctional folklore in different situations, above all, at community events.

As might be expected, chastushkas and dance songs represented in the collection are connected with folk dance. Whereas chastushkas are loosely connected with melodies, each dance song has its own melody, which refers to its distribution area or choreography. As compared to other groups, playing songs are less numerous in the given region. A prominent role in the repertoire of Kiyasovsky Udmurts is performed by songs-teasers, which are often accompanied by the melody of a dance or playing song. However, this is an individual situative and improvisational genre.

It is noteworthy that both in collection work and publication attention has been paid to multiethnic relationships and their expression in the song repertoire. Kiyasovsky district is a region on ethnic borders and therefore loans from Russian, Tatar, and Mari traditions can be anticipated. This has been one of the ways to enrich the repertoire, and loans include both melodies and verses, the latter of course in translation. Earlier on, the Udmurts' language skills are said to have been more versatile.

The non-ritual songs under discussion are in most cases strophic. Usually it is the quatrain, more seldom there are two lines in a strophe. Verses occasionally have additional syllables, and the poetics of songs features characteristic poetic means: dual form word pairs, epithets, different kinds of parallelism. The songs are based on anhemitonic and hemitonic scales. The former prevails due to closeness of Tatar music culture; the newer repertoire also features some Russian intonations. When an ensemble performs, the first verse is sung by the leading singer – the one who sings better than the others or knows the melody and words.

The collection is compiled by the repertoire of different villages; so, it can include different versions of the same song, which contributes to the observation of variability and enhances the general idea. As a rule, only one strophe is notated. Text transcriptions try to preserve the dialectal peculiarities and therefore the norms of the Udmurt literary language have not been followed. As mentioned above, information about the collection process and the performers is presented in Russian at the end of the book. Maybe it would have been a good idea to put it together with the songs to avoid undue leafing.

Despite all the remarks, the Udmurt ethnomusicologists who have collected the songs as well as the compilers of the collection deserve high praise. A published edition is much more than the material in the archives or private collections, both for research and singing. This collection was published with the support of the Kindred Peoples' Programme. It is good to know that we have been able to contribute to the recording, preservation, and research of the culture of our eastern kindred peoples.

Madis Arukask