

Senni Timonen

MINÄ, TILA, TUNNE. NÄKÖKULMIA KALEVALAMITTAISEEN KANSANLYRIIKKAAN (*Self, space, emotion. Aspects of Kalevala-metre folk lyric*).
Doctoral thesis. Helsinki 2004. In Finnish

Senni Timonen's thesis *Minä, tila, tunne. Näkökulmia kalevalamittaiseen kansanlyriikkaan* 'Self, space, emotion. Aspects of Kalevala-metre folk lyric' defence was held in the small hall of the University of Helsinki, in front of nearly 300 listeners – unusually many even in this context.

In Finnish universities, defence meetings follow a considerably stricter procedure than those in Tartu: this regards speaking, debate, as well as clothing. This particular defence offered surprises in presentation even regardless of the strict framework – for instance, the defence speech included the performance of an older Russian folk song by three young women. This formed a harmonious part of the defender's approach, introducing her years of scholarly work from reading archival texts to the imaginative hearing of these songs in the archives. One of the main characteristics of Senni Timonen's ethnomusicological research is the viability of these songs from the viewpoint of both performers' and researcher's self-image.

The thesis was impressively copious – the total of 580 pages. Professor Satu Apo, the thesis opponent, admitted that upon receiving this voluminous thesis, he thought that there were three theses instead of a single one. Reading and discussion revealed that as such the thesis was very cohesive and well considered. In her study the author focuses on the old folk songs of two regions in Finland – Northern Karelia and Ingermanland, conceptualising these regions as geographical as well as residential-cultural areas. Senni Timonen proceeds from the earlier, over century-long tradition of runo song research, approaching it from the perspective of women's studies adopted in folkloristics in the 1980s–1990s. The songs first and foremost reveal themselves to the researcher as a part of the 19th century women's tradition: what mothers taught their sons (*find the right daughter-in-law*) and their daughters (*marry the right husband*) in these songs, why did young girls see their future connected with marriage and finding husband, while men's lives were not centred on marriage and wife (chapters: The role of a woman: Husband. The role of a man: Road), and how did a married woman feel in her marriage, did her life depend on her husband or her mother-in-law? These topics emerge in the studied songs, and are followed by Senni Timonen's insights into the social status and self-identity of women in the 19th century Finnish society. Unlike the course of a man's life, that of a woman consisted of waiting, though it does not necessarily mean that the woman had no chances whatsoever to have a say in her future. Her power may have been concentrated into words –

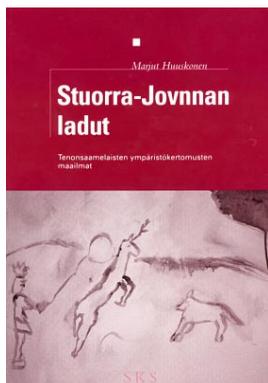
spells. Generally speaking, these are the biographies of women: runo songs, which were not merely something close to the women, the songs were a part of singers. Here we might ask – how these songs link the past (the long tradition of folk songs in Kalevala metre) and the present (the life of an individual singer)? Who is the first person narrator in these songs? This question has been widely discussed – explicating the relation between the individual and the collective, Senni Timonen proceeds from the argument that in these songs “I” and “we” do not stand in opposition, but “we” (the group level) is expressed through “I” (the individual). The presence of these songs in time, space and singer manifests in the title of the book: “Self, space, emotion”.

Tiiu Jaago

Marjut Huuskonen

STUORRA-JOVNNAN LADUT. TENONSAAMELAISTEN YMPÄRIS-TÖKERTOMUSTEN MAAILMAT (*Stuorra-Jovnna Ski Traces. The Environmental lore of Teno Samis*). Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran Toimituksia 986. Helsinki 2004. 322 pp. In Finnish.

Last year was prolific in PhD-s in the field of folklore studies both in Estonia and Finland. For the most part, the new PhD-s were not the so-called “early harvest”, or students who have passed the tertiary education and received the degrees one after another – instead, they were mostly middle-aged people with mature scholarly interests and results. One of the latter was Marjut Huuskonen, who defended her doctor’s thesis on June 5, 2004 at the University of Turku, and whose published thesis will be discussed in the following. Her opponent Lassi Saressalo also argued that taking the degrees in “the slow mode” has often proved more useful, at least in folklore studies.



Marjut Huuskonen has made a name in far north – on the banks of Teno, the Finnish-Norwegian border river, in Lapland. In 1967, after preliminary research (including some shorter collection expeditions), an extensive research project was initiated in the villages of Talvadas and Nuvvus. The aim of the project was to record and learn the religious lore and folklore of these villages as comprehensibly as possible in various group collection expeditions. In the preface to the book the author recollects that the total of 6 extensive collection expeditions was conducted, with ten collectors participating, whereas not all of them participated in all the expeditions. During writing the book Marjut Huuskonen interviewed several of the then collectors, providing a truly interesting reading mate-

rial of recollections 35 years later. Marjut Huuskonen joined the so-called Talvadas Project (led by Lauri Honko) only in 1975, which was the last year of extensive fieldwork in the course of this project. The book *Stuorra-Jovnnan ladut* was published in 2004, leaving enough time to settle the impressions and thoughts gathered on these journeys, pose new questions, and revise results on another field trip to Lapland.

The Sami, who Marjut Huuskonen tells about and whom she interviewed, are by no means the *show*-Laplanders, who play drums and chant; instead they are European villagers, citizens of Finland, literate Christians, who have lived and worked in a unique communal economy (including herding, fishing, harvesting berries, handicrafts) for the past few centuries. In short: of not particular interest for average tourists.

The title of the published thesis prompts a question “Who is Stuorra-Jovvna?” The answer is readily provided in the beginning of the book: Stuorra-Jovvna (1794-1874) was a historical figure, a man, who appears in church registers as Jouni Jomppanen. His ski tracks are discussed in the book from the aspect of environmental narratives and also from the aspect of personal narratives.

Interviewees of the last collection expedition have expressed varied opinions about Stuorra-Jovvna in literature, and Marjut Huuskonen distinguishes them by using emic terms in the Sami language, like *mainnas*, *muitalus* and *cuvccas* and related verbs. For storytellers of the last generations the terms like *muitalus* and *mainnas* were considered definitely truthful, although the latter term may have already included elements of exaggeration, whereas *cuvccas* stood clearly for tall tales or outright lies. A historical overview of the past distribution and analysis of these tales is monumentally consequential. Marjut Huuskonen also indicates that in regard to synchronism the emic terms are of varied meaning, and that it is important to consider a possibility of their change in time. An important aspect here is the changing mentality and ethnic identity – the narratives reveal that the respondents often feared that the stories related to Stuorra-Jovvna may not help in advancing the Sami cause, and this, no doubt, has influenced the choice of terminology.

Judging by what has been told about him, Stuorra-Jovvna was known to be remarkable both in story-telling and other aspects. For example, hunting for wild reindeer was by then an already abandoned means of subsistence. Stories about him, which may have been spread by himself, depict him pursuing reindeer and travelling in tundra, where he encountered what we consider natural elemental forces (storm) as well as supernatural creatures (the Underground Maiden).

Huuskonen has also drawn intriguing parallels between accounts about gales and snow storms by late twentieth century narrators of the Talvadas

village and by pastor J. Fellman from the beginning of the nineteenth century. Apparently, the environment is largely spiritual – both accounts come from the same Lapland, but the environment differs depending on the cultural background of the narrator.

The accounts definitely include the tale about how Stuorra-Jovvna, who had bound himself to a rock, was torn from the ground in the storm and fluttered in the air holding his reindeer lasso, or how the storm tore him loose and flew him (or, his hat, in the accounts of the villagers) to the roof of his friends' house.

The tales of Stuorra-Jovvna are often associated with various natural objects, the number of which may even grow, as in the course of time Stuorra-Jovvna has replaced the original heroes in various stories and assumed the dominant position. Stuorra-Jovvna's ski tracks, mentioned in the title, are two streaks, bare of vegetation and soil, running down the slope of a tundra hillock, which somewhat resemble Kalevipoeg's swaths of hay in the Estonian folklore. Formerly, such objects were known as the tracks of *staalo* (an ogre in the Sami tradition), and the ultimately boring scientific explanation defines the streaks as the result of snow and earth avalanches.

Several accounts mention birch and pine as the trees of Stuorra-Jovvna. While pine is described only as a natural object, which Stuorra-Jovvna passed in his travels, then birch is the subject of an intriguing motif: having slid down a slope in great speed, Stuorra-Jovvna had bumped against a birch, and the same birch was later used for making him three pairs of skis. Stuorra-Jovvna's name has also been associated with stones and rocks, symbolising petrified people of the Underground and their reindeer.

There are also stories associated with certain natural objects, describing how Stuorra-Jovvna escapes the flood, catches a strong male reindeer with his bare hands, etc. It is worth noting that while the prototype of these stories was known to have herded cattle and sheep (a customary means of subsistence in the valley of the Teno River), in narratives he is always depicted as a hunter.

In yet other stories Stuorra-Jovvna is described as a werewolf, who ravaged the herds of domesticated reindeer. Marjut Huuskonen has noted that while the stories about the anthropomorphic Stuorra-Jovvna include very many toponyms, the accounts about him as a werewolf character include none.

Wolves are also mentioned in the story where Stuorra-Jovvna hunted for wolves and, among other things, harnessed a wild wolf to his sledge in order to hunt for a pack of wolves. The story, which sounds impossible, reportedly originates from Stuorra-Jovvna himself, with a confirmation that although the story might sound incredible, it is true.

This is not the only story where Stuorra-Jovvna is depicted as a wolf hunter, a role standing in opposition with Stuorra-Jovvna, the werewolf. In fact, this is not even a proper opposition, as the skilful wolf-hunter and the werewolf are operating in different worlds. Marjut Huuskonen values the character's close affinity to wolves, depicted in such different ways, and the fact that the scene of the hunting stories is often the sacred Rastegaisa Tundra. According to her, the surroundings form a mythical scene for the stories. In some narratives elements of belief are no longer allusive but have become evident. An old story, recorded more than once, describes Stuorra-Jovvna's relationship with *gufhtar*, the Underground Maiden. In return of the three days (and nights) they spend together, Stuorra-Jovvna is rewarded a large reindeer herd of the Underground People. In previous elaborations of the story, the Underground People turn into stone after Stuorra-Jovvna utters the name of Christ on the Easter morning.

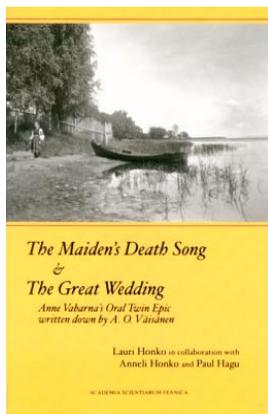
Interestingly, the thesis reveals that an authentic folktale is almost a natural phenomenon, whereas an archived piece of lore is an aesthetic phenomenon. In this respect it is worth noting the remarkable differences in the written records of the 20th century by Pedar Jalvi and the audio recordings made more than half a century later. In recordings, P. Jalvi has obviously attempted to form an aesthetic whole with the required elements of composition by attaching an introduction and conclusion to each story, probably as a result of the influence of literary theory. The openings of recorded audio materials, however, differ: e.g. with an argument whether the tales of Stuorra-Jovvna have been heard from reliable people, so that the narrator would not come across as a liar, or, turning to the topic of Stuorra-Jovvna in the middle of a sentence, or some other way. Similarly, the recordings may end with rambling about the old stories falling into oblivion, recollecting past experience even remotely associated with Stuorra-Jovvna of the previous narrator or oneself, etc.

Towards the end of the publication the reader can find references, a very extensive list of used sources, registers of used archival materials, etc. and summaries in the Sami language, conditioned by the theme of the work, and, as already customary, in English. In this book it seems that unlike the works of some other authors, the summaries here have not been added out of political correctness. I am certain that Marjut Huuskonen is such a nice person that her intention to include a summary in the Sami language was prompted by her sincere respect for the narrators, consultants and contributors of Sami origin. To conclude, I, in turn, would like to express my thanks to everyone concerned, starting from Stuorra-Jovvna himself and the brilliant author, for a wonderful and substantial book. We will wait impatiently for the next one.

Kristi Salve

Lauri Honko, Anneli Honko, Paul Hagu

THE MAIDEN'S DEATH SONG & THE GREAT WEDDING. ANNE VABARNA'S ORAL TWIN EPIC WRITTEN DOWN BY A. O. VÄISÄNEN. FFC 281. Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2003. 529 pp.



The academic publication of Setu singer Anne Vabarna's twin epic (*The Maiden's Death Song and The Great Wedding*), published in the reputable Folklore Fellow's Communication series, became unexpectedly, though quite symbolically, Lauri Honko's final tribute to the Balto-Finnic Kalevala-metric epic song tradition. This was undoubtedly his favourite research topic, especially in the recent past, and resulted in initiating the international project *Traditional Epics in the Eastern Baltic Sea Region* in 1999. The publication is particularly important in introducing Setu folklore to the international audience. Anne Vabarna's repertoire as the "most traditional" example of *leelo*, the Setu chant is

somewhat questionable, but I will not go into it at this point. The *epic* sounds grand enough.

The prologue of the publication (pp. 16–18) is the translation of the article by Armas Otto Väisänen, the Finnish folklorist who "discovered" Anne Vabarna. The article was first published in a daily newspaper in November 1923, and introduced the Estonian readers the singer and how the epic came into being. The issue of "a new Estonian epic" in Estonia at the time implied, no doubt, to *Kalevipoeg*, which by this time had already survived its first inspirational role in creating the nation, and criticism by those who wished for "greater" authenticity and more eloquent poetic language. Väisänen's article reflects the paradox of Anne Vabarna, who chose the "long format" not because of a wish to attribute the Setu a modern identity, but rather because of her personal aspirations to be known. It is possible that such personal perspective – both in the reason for singing and in her feminine choice of topics – is one of the main features of "the feminine epic", emphasised by Lauri Honko, and as such differs from other, more famous and mostly heroic identity texts.

The academic presentation of the original texts with parallel English translation of the twin epic (Anne Vabarna's story with two similar plots but different denouement) is preceded by an extensive introduction. Foreign readership is provided a concise historical overview (pp. 21–36) of the Setu County, people and history, and their cultural identity in the Estonia-Russia border region in the distant and the more recent past. Anne Vabarna's Setu identity becomes evident mostly in the poetic aspect reflected in and

intensified by the work of foreign folklore collectors. As an illiterate local woman Anne Vabarna could perceive “the call of the era” – the exotic Setu tradition, which is beginning to mean more to the wider public in Estonia.

Following the introduction a reader can find out about the genre classification of Setu Kalevala-metric folksongs, briefly about the three volumes of *The Songs of the Setu*, the most presentable collection of Setu folksongs to date, compiled by Jakob Hurt and published in 1904–1907, and about the history of Setu folklore research (pp. 37–59).

The last chapter, as well as the chapters on pages 60–77, discuss other longer format song creation by Anne Vabarna, including the “authentic” Setu epic *Peko* composed in cooperation with Paulopriit Voolaine, as well as Anne Vabarna’s personality and her cooperation with collectors. Archival photos towards the end of the book depict the creators of the twin epics and the contemporary situation in the Setu country surrounding the epic.

The theoretical part of the introduction (pp. 78–162) reveals Lauri Honko’s recent view on the composition process of the epic, which is more extensively discussed in his earlier articles and the first part of the treatment of the South Indian epic *Siri* (FCC 265). Since the thematic outline of Anne Vabarna’s epics discussed here is based on ethnographical accounts of the Setu weddings, where lamenting has an important role in the tradition, the publication also examines the Setu and Balto-Finnic lamenting tradition (a topic which has been studied by Anneli Honko and Paul Hagu, co-authors of the book). The relationship of epic as an umbrella genre and lamenting is studied largely because the epic *Great Wedding* includes 16 wedding laments, constituting 10.1 % of the whole text.

An extensive work has been done in textualizing the translation of epics. The preparation and compilation of the translation reveals Lauri and Anneli Honko’s previous experience in editing the text of the *Siri* epic. In translating poetic texts the translator has to choose between two approaches, the first being more true and subject to the source text, and the second being a poetic elaboration/reconstruction of the source text. The translation of this epic, we may agree with confidence, follows the first approach, attempting to determine the nature and order of sequence of the poetic units of formulaic language and their exact reflection in the translation (see also pp. 149–150). The translation thus also emphasises Anne Vabarna’s creative personality and the poetic idiosyncrasies of folksong in Kalevala metre. Parallel texts (original and translation) on two consecutive pages are complemented with marginal notes: commenting notations from the recordings of Armas Otto Väisänen on the left, and Lauri Honko’s summarizing comments on content structure on the right, which considerably facilitate the understanding of the total 6,621 verses of the text.

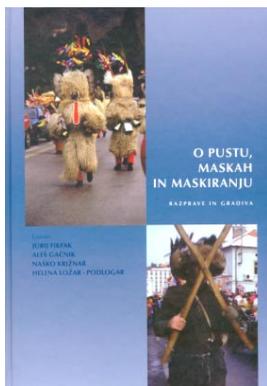
To which extent is it possible to perceive Anne Vabarna’s and Armas Otto Väisänen’s compilations, which are far lengthier than common Setu lyroepic

songs, as a revival of the authentic long format (see p. 156, ff) in Balto-Finnic singing culture? To which extent is it possible to associate Anne Vabarna's personal ambition with the nationally strategic ideals of the authors of *Kalevala* or *Kalevipoeg*? Anne Vabarna's repertoire is long in format, but a little too modern even in the Setu song context. It seems that while we agree that the millennia-long tradition in Kalevala metre, as presented by Lauri Honko, still persists, we can also agree that Anne Vabarna's epics are curiosities, a Modernist shock which upset the early 20th century village culture. The context of nuances like that will probably remain incomprehensible for foreign readers. In addition to the excellent textualization of Anne Vabarna's creation, the book also symbolises Lauri Honko's monumentally epic passion towards the folklore of small ethnic groups.

Madis Arukask

***Jurij Fikfak, Aleš Gačnik, Naško Križnar,
Helena Ložar-Podlogar***

O PUSTU, MASKAH IN MASKIRANJU: RAZPRAVE IN GRADIVA (*About Communities and Masks in Masquerade*). Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, ZRC SAZU, 2003. 348 pp.



The hardcover collection of articles from 29 authors, illustrated with many photos, analyses the tradition of masking in different regions of Slovenia. The tradition has been observed mostly in the 1990s, though parallel traditions have been found since the beginning of the twentieth century, and especially in the period following the World War II. The publication provides an overview of the shift in traditional customs from villages to towns, from adult repertoire to that of children and senior citizens, from spontaneous celebration of calendar holidays to institution-driven events, and observes the process and motivation behind reconstructing

the tradition. The list of authors include reputed ethnologists and workers of regional museums, who have made available material from peripheral and mountain regions.

The once large-scale masking tradition has survived mostly in the form of Easter mummers, and the wide variety of mask types has become more uniform. There are, of course, masks and costumes constructed impromptu of paper or cloth in Slovenia, too, but the fur masks displayed on photos taken in 2001 are truly impressive and the living tradition has been versatile even in the last decade. Slovenes living in Porabie, Hungary, mask

themselves around New Year (young men at the age of 15-25, exclusively) and at Eastertide (children of kindergarten and elementary school). In terms of adult tradition, masking and mumming is limited to certain minorities and old age pensionaries. Masking was more common on St. Nicholas' Day, when Nicholases (*mikoloouštje*), jesters (*kloni, pajaci*) and others known in many countries, went around as mummers. The mummers danced, sang songs, blessed fields and herd in their songs, and received treats in return. They moved around in noisy groups, ringing bells and playing pranks. By now, the original meanings of this tradition have largely disappeared, and fraternities, societies of young men, and other national organisations encourage the mumming tradition as a characteristically ethnic tradition.

The most interesting among the Slovenian Easter masks are those depicting different animals. There is, for example, a mask of a biped or quadruped horse, sometimes accompanied by an unmasked musician. Often there is also a "horseman" on the back of the "horse", moving the "horse's" head with his hands. The mummers usually go around in a group and try to sell the wild "horse". The horse's head is usually made of wood and covered with goat or sheep skin. It has eyes, a tongue, moving jaws – this is all very typical of larger animal masks. Other well-known types of masks are those of bear, buck, ox, or a devil, who may have several local names (*korant, kurent*) and often wears a wooden mask, a white fur coat and who goes around ringing bells, but there are also sowers, fairies, and other magical beings. In rural areas, in villages, mummers started going around with baskets for treats already a few days before Easter. After the visited family is blessed, the mummers are offered wine and sausages; in modern days, however, the most typical treat is money.

The number of mask-makers has become smaller everywhere, thus threatening the survival of the custom and favouring the use of ready-made store masks and costumes. Perhaps this is why the mumming custom has died out in Western Estonia and on the islands of Saaremaa and Muhu, where mummers wearing animal masks were going around as late as in the mid-twentieth century. This is, perhaps, also why some mask-makers keep the masks until someone uses them, and may give them out to other people. Mask-makers are either local shoemakers or tanners, some reconstructions have been made at local youth centres. The mummers have sometimes performed short plays, analogous to certain Irish verse plays with set characters.

Even the most insignificant custom reflects the changes in official history. In border areas belonging to Italy, for example, mumming was strictly prohibited. In several regions the tradition withered as a result of urbanisation and abandonment of mountain areas, and its revival and reconstruction has been discussed in several articles. Especially in the 1960s

and 1970s people began to revive local customs, make masks, and learn regional oral history from ethnologists. A well-known figure from this period is Niko Kuret, who specialises in Slovenian popular calendar. His role, and the contribution of other Slovenian scholars in introducing and reviving folk traditions, has been invaluable, especially if we consider the time and energy it must have taken next to their academic activities.

Several accounts reveal that mumming was a festive popular event for townspeople, where mummers walked through the town in a carnival procession, clad in modernised costumes and accompanied by a brass band. The importance of mumming, no doubt, varied among the local population. In some places people made preparations for the festivities, tidying the area, serving festive foods at local restaurants, organising masked processions through the village or town. In modern times, a carnival tent is set up in the centres of some towns, suggestive of the disappearance of the spontaneous custom and the overall commercialisation of the tradition. In recent decades, the masking festivals in towns have developed into international events where foreigners are invited to introduce their ethnic culture. Now the towns and villages even compete in that the more self-conscious tradition carriers wish to perform the custom in their home village, rather than be invited to perform in towns.

The tradition of masking as a way of expressing one's identity and sense of unity is no longer important only for Slovenian immigrants abroad, but also for native Slovenes in Slovenia, as the masks, their names and customs vary in different regions, providing thus a good opportunity to emphasise regional identity. It is worth noting, and very characteristic of modern times, that masking is performed by societies of young men. Such groups are often very stable, some even have their own Web pages. Analogous undertakings, however, often depend on the charismatic leaders and mask-makers as well as on local municipal authorities, and their attitude towards it. Authors of this book agree that local governments regard the tradition as a source of additional income and a tourist attraction. Another sign of modern times is that the locals have started to consider their moral and actual authorship rights for the masks and the whole event; at the same time the participants and mask-makers continue to follow the custom according to the tradition and without thinking about the legal aspect. Acquiring a patent and establishing authorship rights is a complicated process, but protecting cultural heritage in its authentic environment is also important. In many places people still wait the visit of mummers, it is an indispensable social event, and also brings joy to the participants.

Compilers of the collection agree that this may be a counter-phenomenon of globalisation, which is also a commonly acceptable way of seeing it, even though the general tendency to value a place, coherent with cultural phe-

nomena, and conscious development of tourist patterns are effective ways of explanation as well. In addition to an intriguing and varied overview the book also contains a list of references and sources, filmography and videography from the collection of the Audiovisual Laboratory of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. As such the publication is one of the most comprehensive overviews of contemporary tradition, an enjoyable studies, offering food for thought and enabling associations.

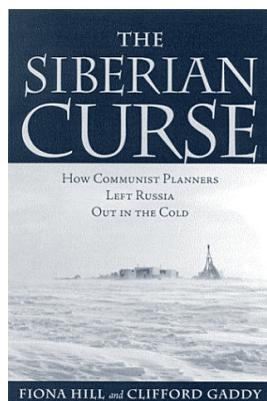
Mare Kõiva

Fiona Hill, Clifford Gaddy

THE SIBERIAN CURSE. HOW COMMUNIST PLANNERS LEFT RUSSIA OUT IN THE COLD. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2003. 304 pp.

A highly controversial book on the political geography of Russia. Hill and Gaddy analyse the development of the Tsarist Russia and USSR and convincingly demonstrate why today's Russia will not stand up to comparison with other leading countries. The main arguments are that Russia is too cold and overwhelming in size. In the Soviet period the reconstruction of economy and infrastructures served ideological rather than economic purposes, resulting in the relocation of vast numbers of people in Siberian cities, far too large from the economical point of view. The result was the freezing of Primorsk krai: the majority of Siberian cities are too costly to maintain. With unstable infrastructure, expensive transport costs, and the fact that cities as social networks are underdeveloped, the only way to maintain urban settlements have been and still is through subsidising.

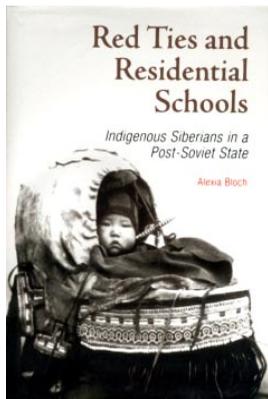
The authors demonstrate that a modern empire cannot exist according to the 19th century categories. While in the 19th century a huge territory automatically stood for power, then a prerequisite of today's powerful country is a territory small enough to have raw material, industry and markets as close as possible and as low border defence costs as possible. The study explains why Russia, one of the richest countries in natural resources, has a life standard of a third world country. The book by Hill and Gaddy is invaluable for any scholar of different fields discussing the topic of Russia, but also for human geographers, researchers of economic and social studies, etc.



Aimar Ventsel

Alexia Bloch

RED TIES AND RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS. INDIGENOUS SIBERIANS IN A POST-SOVIET STATE. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003. 264 pp.



Gender issue is an underdeveloped field in Siberian studies. Reading modern anthropological work on the indigenous people of Siberia leaves the impression that Siberia is a vast taiga and tundra area, inhabited by men (hunters, fishermen, reindeer breeders) who do whatever it takes to preserve their traditional way of life.

Gender issues were brought to Siberian anthropology by Petra Rethman (2001), who studied the role of women in traditional way of life. Alexia Bloch has taken a step further in her study on residential schools and their role in the formation of modern Evenk identity.

Residential schools are a controversial topic for the activists of many indigenous people as well as for anthropologists, who see them as destructive to traditional culture. Bloch demonstrates that the role of residential schools in the lives of Siberian indigenous people is far more versatile. Her study is based on the biographies of women of different social class, raising questions that are widely known, though usually avoided by scholars of Siberian studies: Why is the Siberian “national” intelligentsia embodied mostly by women? Why do mothers, regardless of all, enter their children in residential schools rather than in Russian day schools? Why do many still miss the “good old” residential school as a place of strict discipline and high morals? Why do socially marginalised women (the newly rich, for example) so strongly object to residential schools? Where do the categories of “authentic” culture originate in? Bloch demonstrates how the Soviet ethnic policy formed the residential school phenomenon into an institution which functions as the creator and transmitter of an indigenous institution. The residential school provided its students a shelter from the prejudices of the racist world outside, and also served as a threshold to higher education, to mention only a few aspects of this study.

This is a book which explicates several myths about the indigenous people of Siberia. It also examines how a state has used its educational system to bind former nomadic people to the state and to a specific region. Alexia Bloch’s book should be an interesting reading material for scholars of Siberian studies, people interested in the analysing the process of “making of the nation”, as well as to people interested in gender issues.

Aimar Ventsel

Dieter Harmening

GOLDRAUSCH. ABENTEUER IN ALASKA UM 1900 (*Goldrush – Life of the Adventures in Alaska in about 1900*). Stuttgart: Thorbecke, 2002. 126 pp.

“Gold Rush: Hundreds of thousands gave in to the magic of these words in the mid-19th century and went to Alaska. They gave up their ordinary lives for the search of adventures, fortune and happiness. Most of them failed and many died of exposure, diseases and as a result of crime.” This is how Dieter Harmening, German professor of folklore studies, sums up the expectations and reality of the migrants. In a book illustrated with numerous historical photographs



Harmening gives a credible picture of the life of gold-seekers in Alaska. His work is all the more consequential because of the extensive use of archival materials, including the travel account of Berliner Alexander Baethke. Baethke was among the first gold-rushers to arrive at Klondike, endured numerous hardships on his way, without finding his fortune, and almost lost his life in storm on the way back home. Harmening provides an abbreviated version of Baethke’s itinerary, followed by a gripping account of the author’s own kayak journey in Alaska tracing the tracks of gold diggers a century later.

Travelling to the sites where gold was found took months. A dangerous and stormy steam-ship voyage to cross the ocean, followed by a train journey disrupted by avalanches, train robberies and earthslides, a winter journey on foot over mountain passes, suffering from forest fires and mosquitoes in summers, paddling a boat on the rapids – owing to such conditions, for many fortune-seekers the adventure was over before they had even arrived. During Harmening’s own kayak trip he had the opportunity to see entire villages and abandoned shacks with crudely constructed inventory, but also hear the recollections of local inhabitants, making his account extremely authentic. From the ethnological aspect it is very interesting to observe, in retrospect, the establishment of the community and the necessary infrastructure from the mosaic of people of different backgrounds. Laundry women, makers of working clothes and other manual labourers, prostitutes, inn-keepers, and others who satisfied the needs of the constantly arriving fortune-seekers, were more successful in this new environment than most gold-diggers. They had a regular income, whereas the gold-diggers depended more on luck, also, they were at risk of being robbed. Crime was an everyday occurrence – many gold-rushers were also

criminals evading law. The town of Nome, for example, became notorious for its wild reputation, prompting the expression “A corpse for breakfast”. Here the Wild West stereotypes were formed, which were later exploited in westerns. Photographs of the period include rare images of the indigenous people of Alaska, as even the photographers focused on the Gold Rush, and the natives – after some cautioning encounters – tended to avoid contacts with the immigrants. Similarly, literary sources include only passing allusions to the natives as suppliers of meat or fish, and sometimes life savers of the gold-seekers.

The spread of information was limited: newspapers and letters travelled for several weeks and were in great demand. Owing to the lack of written media, an important source of information was hearsay. “News” of places, where chunks of gold were said to be lying on the ground, always triggered feverish hustle. Reports from faraway homeland about wars, working conditions and other events were also fragmentary. It is surprising, then, that in such a chaotically developed society established mores and norms were still observed. Primitive legal system existed, although often in the form of lynch law, and instead of justice the dominant motif behind lawmaking was often revenge or control interests.

The end of the Gold Rush, lasting only for few decades, arrived with the beginning of industrial mining by larger enterprises. Harmening still notes that the century-old European dream of America, fuelled by fantastic images from fictional travel literature, is still there. Inspired by romantic American Indian tales, people still go there to find the real Wild West and noble natives living in harmony with their ancestral wisdom, or escape in dreams or in reality to America, the land of endless opportunities.

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