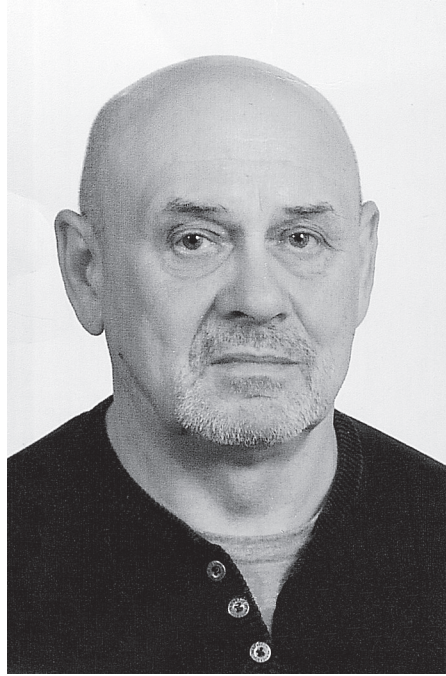


NEWS IN BRIEF

PAVEL LIMEROV DEFENDED HIS DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

On 3 February 2021, Pavel Limerov, a well-known Komi folklorist, defended his doctoral dissertation “Narratives of Christianization in the Formation of the Komi Literary Tradition in the Context of the Russian Written Word (14th Century – Early 20th Century)” at the M. Gorky Institute of World Literature. His 500-page dissertation includes an introduction, four chapters divided into fifteen subchapters, and a summary, followed by a list of sources and 384 titles of references.

P. Limerov’s work builds on the observation of the dialogue between Christianization and Komi paganism, taking into account the influence of N. Kuratov’s and K. Zhakov’s literary works, but also the results of research work of the 1990s in analysing Komi Christian motifs (O. Uljashev, G. Yushkov, A. Tomin, and others). The 1990s brought a new wave of interest in mythology, the content of religious motifs, and especially folklore influenced by biblical literature in Russian folklore. In almost thirty years, numerous research results and commented text collections have been published and an impressive school has emerged. The dissertation of P. Limerov, a mature and well-known researcher, also falls within this framework. However, his approach is different, namely he looks at the unique processes that have taken place in the Komi Republic and compares them with the wider Slavic material. A good opportunity for this is provided by the powerful figure of Stephen of Perm, who, in addition to the Christianization of the Komi, was the creator of the original Komi written word and an important church figure. Over the centuries, layers of legends have formed around his personality and an interesting process of mythologization has taken place. However, the genesis of the Komi written word and literary tradition, based on the synthesis of various sources (hagiographies, biographies of saints, historical sources, literature, documents, folklore) is important.



Two chapters of the dissertation deal with various mythological narratives and beliefs, including well-known narratives about the Chudes, human creation, and much more. The proportion of the Apocrypha and ecclesiastical literature has always been observed in folk myths. Once again, Limerov has paid attention to the folk versions of the Christianization of the Komi, the intertwining of history and folklore connected with the figure of Stephen of Perm, or Stephen-Baptist.

The second and third chapter are especially interesting for the researchers of religious material. The second chapter, “Scenes and Characters of the Pre-Christian Komi Myths”, provides an overview of Komi mythology research, and a closer look at the image of the Mother Goddess, Komi eschatological motifs, and dualistic legends. The results are as could be expected: God and Devil work together in creation stories, and the symbioses of legends, spiritual verses, and beliefs occur in eschatology tradition; however, above all, these chapters are valuable as a complement to comparative religious research.

The following chapter also discusses universal ancient motifs: the subject of saints and sorcerers, Stephen the Wonderworker’s journeys (sailing on a rock along a river, naming places, his prophecies), the fate of the Chudes, their treasures, self-burials, and other motifs that have been offered many explanations during the 20th century, including exciting debates on the ethnicity of the white-eyed (Beloglazye) Chudes are under examination.

Quite an interesting view is provided by insights into the scholarly and literary work published on Stephen of Perm and, of course, studies concerning him that have been published in different periods of the 20th century, including studies from the 1970s and 1980s. It is here that we see the influences of different schools, the motivators of authors and researchers in shaping their work, as well as the influence of ideology, or rather politicization, on researchers and the results of their work.

Undoubtedly, the study will significantly increase the awareness of Komi folklore and research positions among Russian-speaking researchers and thus assist the international scholarship of the humanities.

Mare Kõiva