

Кузнецова, В.С., О.Н. Лагута и А.М. Лаврентьев (ред.). *Русские простонародные легенды и рассказы. Сборник 1861 г.* [Kuznetsova, V. S., O. N. Laguta, and A. M. Lavrent'ev (eds.). *Russian Folk Legends and Stories. A Collection of 1861*]. Новосибирск: Наука. 320 pp. ISBN 5-02-032364-0.

In 1861 an anonymous collection of Russian folk narratives was published in St. Petersburg, entitled *Легенды русского народа* [Legends of the Russian People] (consisting of two series, *Русские простонародные легенды* [Legends of the Russian Common People] and *Дополнение к русским простонародным легендам и рассказам* [Supplement to Legends and Stories of the Russian Common People]). Due to its anonymity and appearance soon after A. N. Afanas'ev's collection (*Народные русские легенды* [Russian Folk Legends], Moscow 1859), a few critics at the time considered it a falsification or forgery. The book became a bibliographic rarity and is now appearing in print again for the first time. The editors of this new edition (linguists and a folklorist affiliated with the Institute of Philology, Siberian branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences) have carried out a very detailed linguistic analysis to establish the authenticity of the texts and provide a profile of their compiler/narrator. One of the editorial team is V. S. Kuznetsova, the author of an excellent book on the Earth Diver myth in East Slavic tradition (*Дуалистические легенды о сотворении мира в восточнославянской фольклорной традиции* [Dualistic Legends about the Creation of the World in the East Slavic Folklore Tradition], Novosibirsk 1998).

The collection contains twenty-four texts. Most are recognizable international folktale types listed in the Aarne-Thompson index. They include "religious tales" (AT 750-849, *legendarnye skazki* [legendary folktales] in the East Slavic tale-type index) such as no. 18, a unique subtype of AT 750, in which a traveling wise man appears to do harm to the people encountered during his travels with a companion, and then explains his actions at the end. Others are "novelle" or "romantic tales" (AT 850-999), such as no. 10, a version of the Oedipus tale (AT 931). There are a few fairy tales proper (*volshebnye skazki*, wondertales). No. 21 is a version of AT 555 (The fisher and his wife) in which a man's wishes are granted by a tree. When he finally wishes to become tsar, he is turned into a bear. Finally, there are a few texts the AT index categorizes as "jokes and anecdotes" or "tales of the stupid ogre."

Some of the texts are legendary narratives about encounters with supernatural beings (*bylichka* and *byval'shchina* in Russian folklore scholarship, memorate or fabulate in the West). Of these fabulates or *bylichki*, a few appear to be anomalous or unique recordings, not published anywhere else in quite the same form: a man is frustrated by his inability to learn to play the violin. He makes a bargain with a mysterious old man who provides him with a magic violin, but the old man disappears and the protagonist ends up lame in one leg (no. 7). A drunken tailor is deceived and led astray in the forest by the forest spirit (*leshii*) and finds he has cut his own coat to pieces (no. 8). A poor man goes to a sorcerer for help and becomes wealthy through gambling. He takes advantage of what appears to be an opportunity to cheat another man at cards, but is taken off by two devils instead (no. 12). A man asks a swarm of gnats to sing for him (no. 16). One text (no. 14) is a brief description of Russian folk beliefs about various animals, the aspen tree and the house spirit (*domovoi*). There are extensive notes to the texts, often providing other versions of the same tale type (from the Afanas'ev collection and other sources), and references to relevant articles on specific tale types, legends, and motifs.

The bulk of the book is made up of folkloristic and linguistic appendices. There are listings of tale types and motifs, names of characters in this collection and in the Afanas'ev legend collection, and a listing of the collectors of the Afanas'ev legends and the places where the Afanas'ev legends were recorded. The linguistic appendices are based on a computer-aided study. There is a frequency listing of lexical items and an alphabetical glossary comparing the frequency of lexical items in this and the Afanas'ev collections. Referring to these data, the editors discuss the appearances of verbs, animate and inanimate nouns, adjectives, and adverbs. These sections of the book will be of interest to linguists and specialists studying the language of Russian folklore; readers with a more general interest in folklore may still wish to note the discussion of the description and attributes of the devil, heavenly beings, and the clergy. For the editors, this painstaking analysis serves to demonstrate the authenticity of this anonymous collection. While the texts certainly have been edited and "smoothed" by their compiler, they exhibit the characteristics of Russian oral literature, are clearly aligned with the Afanas'ev legends, and distinct from Russian epic and lyric genres. Citing linguistic features as well as certain motifs in the texts, they conclude that the narratives probably originated in northern or northwestern Russia. They surmise that the narrator/compiler was a

resident of Petersburg, a semi-educated man who might have attended a seminary or been a member of the lower clergy. He may have presented his own versions of these narratives, or recorded and edited them. In the final two appendices they analyze the narrator/compiler's own idiolect and the language of the nineteenth-century Russian legend in general, providing dictionary-style entries for 62 especially relevant lexical items.

Like other folk narratives, the tales and legends in this collection offer insight into the mentality, worldview and values of the communities from which they came. Cleverness is often valued above honesty. The hero repeatedly lies to his traveling companion, a saint-like old man, and only tells the truth at the end, when he can gain material advantage from doing so (no. 1). A peasant learns to cheat from a wealthy warrior and then steals the latter's golden stirrup (no. 19). But genuine kindness is also rewarded. When the hero pays a return visit to two old men he had welcomed, he is given charge of their house and the keys to three rooms. In the first two rooms he sees the punishments that await his stingy, unkind brothers, while in the third forbidden room he sees the reward for his kind and virtuous wife (no. 3). The recovery of this anonymous collection is a valuable addition to the available literature on Russian folktales and legendary narratives, enhanced by an outstanding scholarly commentary. The editors of this new edition have given us a book that is both instructive and entertaining.

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