

Фиалков, Лев и Лариса Фиалкова (сост.). *Народы мира о жизни и смерти, здоровье и болезнях, больных и врачах. Пословицы и поговорки*. [Fialkov, Lev and Larisa Fialkova (compilers). *Peoples of the World on Life and Death, Health and Illness, Patients and Physicians. Proverbs and Sayings*]. Haifa: JKDesign, 2009. Bibliography. 166 pp. ISBN 978-965-7391-08-2.

Proverbs and sayings are the smallest genre of oral narrative. People the world over employ them in the most varied situations. Proverbs and sayings are used at work and during leisure and they reflect both happiness and sorrow. Proverbial performance is accepted by every social group, in both urban and rural settings, and in every part of the world. Proverbs and sayings help establish a connection to ancient folk wisdom and this helps us to come to terms with everyday troubles and misfortunes, to accept our destiny, or to find a solution in tragic circumstances. The folk philosophy that was transmitted from generation to generation has been augmented via expressions that arose in more modern times, right up to and including the folkloric visions of the twentieth and twenty first centuries.

Proverbs tend to reflect humankind's concern with fundamental issues such as life and death and the ephemeral nature of objective reality. They mirror the folk philosophy of rational thinking, optimism, and commonsense. In this sense they are the opposite of fairytales and legends, which tend to allow for fantasy and irrationality. The present anthology of folkloric expressions collected by two authors, a physician father and folklorist daughter, represent a thematic compilation of proverbs and sayings devoted to human health, life and death, and texts dedicated to medicine. This method of presentation is rather atypical: the authors do not arrange the pronouncements on human life, death, and illness that they have collected according to geographic origin. Rather they organize the collected texts from different ethnic regions according to common themes and articulated visions on life and health. This allows them to celebrate the similarity of folk wisdom in its global diversity.

The book contains ten chapters, each divided into several thematic sections. The first chapters present proverbs that deal with the nature of life. There are assorted proverbs that express the fact that human life is fleeting while the world remains eternal. There are proverbs about love of life and work, proverbs that counsel patience in sorrow, and proverbs that remind us of the inevitability of death. Proverbs presented in this section reflect the folklore about the different characteristics of the

phenomenon of human existence from birth through death. We, of course, find the old insight that “смерть не выбирает” [death is not choosey (or picky)] and that “перед смертью все равны” [everybody is equal before death]. The chapter devoted to age contrasts old age and youth.

The largest part of the book is a collection of proverbs that reflect different aspects of human health, illnesses, healing, doctors, and patients. In every culture people appreciate good health, strength of the body, and longevity and notice the connection between the health of the body and the health of the soul. The authors observe that the famous Latin expression “A healthy spirit in a healthy body” (*V zdorovom tele zdorovyi dukh*) is often held to be a local saying by many nations (58). Moreover, the proverbs from this section emphasize the universality of health as a foremost human value. In this section, proverbs articulate folk understandings of the etiology of illness and outline the mental and physical conditions of being ill. Appreciation of healing and various aspects of medical ethics is the subject of the chapter devoted to doctors. All cultures teach us to respect the skills of the healer and to pay homage to the physician. There is, however, a special section dedicated to quack doctors and sorcerers who, in many cultures, are represented by negative characterizations. Patient behavior is another aspect of folklore covered in the texts presented, along with the process of curing and the use of remedies.

The two last chapters are connected to health indirectly: good sleep is a synonym of good health for many peoples, while the use of alcohol is associated with mental ill health. For all cultures represented in the book, alcohol and drunkenness reveal the blemishes of human nature. Alcohol also leads to losing one’s mental and one’s physical health and, eventually, to an untimely death. According to the authors, the saying “More people drown in glasses than in rivers” has many international counterparts (157-8).

The book ends with a bibliography, giving the sources of the proverbs and sayings from many countries that are presented in the book. The list itself can be a valuable starting point for those researchers of popular culture, social customs, and folk medicine, who are interested in learning more about the smallest genre of oral narrative. The general reader who is interested in folklore will find resources for further reading as well. Unfortunately, the bibliography is not complete. The authors miss, for example, a thematic compilation of proverbs and aphorisms by Gavrikov V. A. and N. A. Gavrikov. *Мудрое слово о здоровье и*

долголетия: изречения, афоризмы, пословицы, поговорки (Krasnodar: Krasnodarskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1984). This collection would have added many topical proverbs to their texts and enriched the spectrum of books listed in the bibliography.

Finally, as a thematic compilation of proverbs that is addressed predominantly to the general reader, the book lacks explanatory material. There is only a short foreword. Extended introductory articles, or introductions to each of the chapters, are missing. Such introductory material could have served to better outline the authors' approach and to help the reader situate the texts. Also, researchers of oral narrative will find that all ethnic proverbs and sayings have been translated from their original languages into Russian, thus likely losing some elements of their authenticity. To be sure, if one were to conduct further research on this subject, one would need to go directly to the primary sources and not rely on a translated compilation such as this. In so far as the anthology relies on translated texts, whose originals were meant to convey the proverbs' authentic meaning, it does not necessarily provide the firmest ground for scholarly research. It does, however, supply much in the way of furnishing the general reader with an expanded global vision and a broad understanding.

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