

Vashchenko, Alexander and Claude Clayton Smith, editor and translator, with a foreword by N. Scott Momaday. *The Way of Kinship: An Anthology of Native Siberian Literature* (First Peoples, New Directions in Indigenous Studies). Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010. Map. Suggestions for Further Reading. xxiii + 250. \$19.95 (paper). ISBN 978-0-8166-7081-9.

This anthology of native Siberian literature is the result of twenty years of cooperative planning by the people involved in its creation. They are Alexander Vashchenko, who chairs the Department of Comparative Literature and Culture at Moscow State University; Claude Clayton Smith, Professor Emeritus at Ohio Northern University; and N. Scott Momaday, the well-known Native American writer and 1969 Pulitzer Prize winner for his novel, *House Made of Dawn*. The reader is taken on a journey through uncharted territory that both broadens his/her knowledge of indigenous peoples and preserves in print information concerning their disappearing traditions. In his "Foreword," Momaday argues that indigenous peoples everywhere are being robbed of their traditions (xi).

The "Introduction" by Alexander Vaschenko gives a brief sketch of tsarist and Soviet influences on the native peoples of Siberia. History is fraught with a clash of worldviews and the resultant abuses perpetrated on indigenous Siberians. Underlying the poetry, art, and prose of the native writers and artists represented in the anthology is the idea, even the ideal, of familial, tribal, and universal kinship. The editors offer *The Way of Kinship* for use in courses in cross-cultural and ethnic studies (xxiii).

The volume is framed by an "Evenk Invocation for Good Fortune." "To Nature When the Earth Turns Green," in which the Evenk request nourishment, is placed at the beginning of the volume, and "To Nature, When the Green Recedes," in which the Evenk thank Mother Nature for the autumn bounty, closes the anthology.

Writers represented come from hunting, fishing, and reindeer tending cultures. The destruction of native livelihood and the native way of life through the industrial rape of the land, which is driven by greed, is a major theme. At times the theme has political overtones, as it does in the works of Khanty Yeremei Apin, who has supported Khanty interests in the Writer's Union, of which he is a member. In "The Earth's Pain," a mother teaches her son that if he hurts the Earth, he must heal her wound immediately because without Earth there is no life. Khanty poet and storyteller Maria Vagatova echoes Apin's complaint in a poem titled "Dirge for the Land of the Khanty," in which Mother Earth wails and there is nowhere for the Khanty to go. In Apin's "Selections from *Morning Twilight: A Novel of the Khanty*," the author laments the destruction of villages, deer, and the food supply by oilmen who exploit the land and leave it in ruins.

Apin's bleak picture is softened by the humor of Taiga Nenets Yuri Vaella, who relates the story of two old men, a Nenets and a Khanty, who are so absorbed in their storytelling that they loop around a river several times in their boat, making no progress. In his poetry, however, Vaella ruminates over his "lost people" (83). In "News from Vatyegan Camp," he tells about an old man who fell through the ice into an oil spill with his reindeer. The reindeer died, and the old man went blind.

The persecution of shamans, native religious leaders, and well-to-do native people is chronicled by Apin in a fragment from *Morning Twilight*. A government official nicknamed Bloody Eye, believing that a local shaman is hoarding gold, threatens his family until the shaman commits suicide. Evenk Galina Keptuke illustrates the cleverness of a persecuted shaman in "A Discovery" from her novella, *On the Banks of the Jeltula*. The shaman Sodorchan is imprisoned

by the official whose life he once saved. In addition, even after his drum is taken away several times in a sack, mysteriously the sack always is empty when it reaches headquarters.

Tundra Nenets Anna Nerkagi, collector of Yamal Peninsula folklore, is represented by a fragment from her apocalyptic novel, *The Horde*. She paints a picture of a bleak future for indigenous Siberians, whose souls have “begun to rot inside” because they have abandoned tradition for greed (202). Negatives are the loss of what she refers to as deer brother, imprisonment in houses she calls coffins, a life of slavery, and the death of nature. She foresees the final debacle. The damage done by the outside world is recorded in Galina Keptuke’s story, “Little America,” the saga of a woman who married a Ukrainian man and returns home after he abandons her for another woman to a village of drunken people who have no work or purpose in life.

In a letter of appeal to the government, titled “And So Dies My Clan,” Apin writes of tribal lands decimated by oilmen who have polluted, stolen, and even plundered graves. He writes of alcoholism, domestic violence, and drugs that now plague the native people. He complains that their children have forgotten traditions and are without training to cope with the modern world. In a desperate cry for the preservation of their identity, he asks that the native lands be designated national parks.

Other selections illustrate the traditions and rituals of native peoples and chronicle the challenges to those traditions and rituals. In *Morning Twilight* Apin’s character, Demyan, explains the ritual of the Sacred Dance and Bear Feast. Khanty poet and folklorist Leonty Taragupta is restoring the Bear Feast epic, fragments of which are included in the anthology. The Khanty artists, Nadezhda Taligina and Gennady Raishev, display their traditions in a favorable light, Taligina through her transparent figures that portray spiritual ideals and Raishev through his prints in praise of Khanty traditions.

Yukaghir Gennady Dyachkov highlights generational conflict in his play “The Hunter’s Son.” Nivkh Vladimir Sangi addresses a boy’s pride in shooting his first duck for his starving family in “My First Shot.” The famous pioneering Chukchee writer Yuri Rytkeu is represented by his short story titled “Kakot’s Numbers” (1970), in which Kakot, a native cook taken on by Roald Amundsen, becomes so obsessed and befuddled by numbers and their philosophical implications that he finally gives up contemplating them to return to his simple native ways.

Both Udegeh Jansi Kimoko and Evenk Galina Keptuke make attempts to explain the meaning of their traditions to readers. Kimoko’s fragment from the unfinished novel *Where the Sukpai Rushes Along* praises the beauty of the Sukpai River and surroundings. Kimoko never finished his novel because he was killed by a bear. Galina Keptuke undertakes a recounting of the procedure for accepting one’s destiny to become a storyteller in “The Unexpected Guest.” The family in question is guided by nature in this and in all matters. The narrator’s father is visited by a goose, the father’s spirit helper. The man’s search for the path to his destiny results in behavior seen as irrational by western standards and referred to as “the circling illness” (118). When he returns from his spiritual odyssey, the narrator’s father accepts his destiny and becomes a storyteller.

At the end of the volume, Claude Clayton Smith offers “A Note on Translation.” “Acknowledgments” and “Suggestions for Further Reading” also are found here.

The knowledge obtained within the pages of this anthology is much more than academic. The collection features a universal appeal for maintenance of innocence and for the preservation of tried and true values and traditions. It also sounds a warning with regard to the dire consequences of ignoring and/or destroying native traditions and beliefs.

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