

Peter P. Schweitzer. Siberia and Anthropology:
National Tradition and Transnational Moments in
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Rewieved by Nikolai Vakhtin

DISCOVERING THE NORTH

'Books about the history of anthropology are notoriously dull to write and read,' states Peter Schweitzer in the foreword to his dissertation (p.16). It is hard to judge how much the author enjoyed writing this text, but I can offer an assurance that it is certainly not boring to read. Siberia and Anthropology makes for excellent reading; it is absorbing, clear, and full of interesting facts: a veritable encyclopaedia of information about the history of ethnographical research on Siberia.

What is the work about? The author sets out the theoretical and analytical aims of his research in the opening pages of the foreword (p.13 ff.), and in the course of his exposition he gives detailed answers to the conceptual questions he poses, among them questions such as: Is the anthropology of Siberia a national or a trans-national phenomenon? Does the development of research over the past fifteen years attest to any larger trends within the history of Siberian an-

thropology? But the text contains much more besides answers to these questions.

I must beg to differ with the author when he modestly claims that his work is not 'a well-rounded picture of general developments in Siberian anthropology over the last three centuries'. To my mind, this is precisely what it is. It is a substantial, detailed and intelligently written history of the ethnographical study of Siberia, starting from the earliest endeavours in the seventeenth century, and covering the great expeditions in the age of the Enlightenment, the Romantic nationalism of the nineteenth century, the development of Siberian Studies as an independent, complex discipline at the start of the twentieth century, and the upheavals of the 1920s and 1930s and of the late Soviet- and post-Soviet period. The broad sweep of the material, the depth of the analysis, and the accuracy of the facts make Schweitzer's work an outstanding piece of research.

Its central analytical concept is that of the national and the interor trans-national academic tradition. Schweitzer applies this concept with due caution and is fully aware of its elusiveness, demonstrating convincingly how difficult it is to determine whether particular historical periods have a 'national' or a 'trans-national' tradition. For example, many people have been led astray by the 'non-Slavonic', usually German, surnames of many scholars specialising in Siberia in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, superficially interpreting this period in the history of Russian research on Siberia as 'German'. Schweitzer shows that the 'seeming absence of the Russian state and the dominance of foreign actors should not lead to the misconception that the study of Siberia was conducted independently from the Russian state' (p. 81), and he demonstrates how easy it is to confuse appearance and substance (p. 133); yet although he recognises that it was indeed Russia's national interests which stimulated the quest for new information about Siberia (p. 80), he acknowledges that these interests were not unique to Russia; the diplomatic and economic interests of Germany, the Netherlands and England also encouraged, amongst other things, the study of the cultural anthropology of Siberia (p. 81).

One feature of the dissertation sets it apart from other works on the history of Siberian anthropology. Throughout the text Schweitzer gives an international, 'stereoscopic' view of the creation and development of Siberian Studies, providing biographical and bibliographical information about hundreds of Russian, German, Dutch, Swedish, Hungarian, Finnish, English, French and American scholars who have worked in Siberia. Furthermore, the dissertation does not simply draw together facts about international anthropological studies of Siberia: the author is able to view them from a different perspective. For biographical reasons, Schweitzer is more or less the

ideal author for a work of this type: he belongs to three academic traditions at once, and as well as having a fluent command of German, English and Russian, he also has first-hand knowledge of all three national schools of anthropological research: upon graduating from the University of Vienna, he spent many years conducting fieldwork in Siberia and Central Asia, and for the last ten years he has taught cultural anthropology at the University of Alaska at Fairbanks. Thus he has an excellent knowledge of literature on Siberia in German, English and Russian, and he is familiar with the distinctive features of all three national schools.

For these reasons Schweitzer's dissertation is full of pleasant surprises for any specialist in Siberian Studies. An American studying Siberian anthropology is likely to be acquainted with the work of his English-speaking predecessors, but some of the work done by Russian or Hungarian scholars may be less familiar to him. The average Russian, on the other hand, is likely to know the names of the many Russian researchers of whom Schweitzer writes, but some of the German, Finnish or French works may have escaped his notice. Schweitzer feels at home in all these traditions, regardless of the language, theoretical approach or nationality of the scholar. So far as I was concerned, for example, all of Sections 4.2.2. 'European Contributions during the Inter-war Years' and 4.2.3 'US Anthropology and Siberia' was completely new: I knew nothing about their work and am very grateful to Schweitzer for the details. I am sure that other readers, too, even experts in the subject, will find much new and useful information in the dissertation; English-speaking researchers are most likely to find Chapter 2 useful, for there early Russian work on Siberia is presented and analysed; this chapter could stand alone as a detailed and valuable textbook on the history of Siberian ethnography in Russia.

The dissertation is not only convincing from the theoretical, analytical point of view, but it is also an excellent source of reference material: if the author were to take on the task of getting it published, it would be the reference work for which specialists on Siberia have long been waiting, a sort of *Who's Who in Siberian Anthropology*. Such a book would be very useful for everyone in the discipline, and especially for those just starting out in this most interesting area of anthropology.

Of the smaller but no less pleasant virtues of the work, the quality and accuracy of the list of indigenous peoples (p. 296) deserves a special mention: the author has successfully avoided the confusion which typically accompanies the selection and transliteration of their names; this list, unlike many similar ones, has been compiled with consistency and care, and it could set a standard for future work on the indigenous population of Siberia published in English.

The dissertation is organised chronologically, although the author is aware of the artificiality of presenting the material in this way: he acknowledges that 'the division of the full chronological range covered in this study into periods is a problematic undertaking' (p. 33). This is especially true of the complex problem of synchronising (or rather desynchronising) changes in the academic paradigm with major political events in Russian history. These two processes, the political and the academic, often move at different speeds, and turning-points in them are frequently unconnected. An additional difficulty for the researcher is the unavoidable risk of interpreting events of the past from a present-day perspective, from the point of someone who already knows what has happened. Take, for instance, the first three decades of the twentieth century, which saw enormous political changes in Russia; it is easy to fall into the trap of dividing the history of science into two periods, pre- and post-1917, on political grounds. Yet the scholars working at the time might have seen matters differently: for many of them, the revolutions of 1917, particularly the February Revolution, were the natural and long-awaited outcome of half a century of struggle against autocracy. It is very likely that many of them regarded the liberal scholarship of the 1900s and 1910s and Soviet scholarship of the 1920s as a single academic paradigm, an uninterrupted process, and that they saw the Bolsheviks as a temporary extremist diversion from the highway of Russia's historical development, from the liberal revolution. This era ought perhaps to be treated as a single period in the development of the discipline, starting in around 1905 and finishing around 1927, when it became obvious that the Bolsheviks had succeeded in suppressing liberal thought and academic freedom, and that there had been a political change of direction towards a totalitarian state and totalitarian scholarship.

Another issue concerning periodisation is whether studies of the Russian north made at the end of the eighteenth century and the start of the nineteenth century should be classified in different periods. Despite the obvious differences in the political, public and cultural life of the country under Paul and under Alexander I, Schweitzer has not convinced me that the paradigm for the academic study of Siberia differs radically before and after 1801. In the 1810s, as in the 1790s, research into Siberia was organised and supported primarily by the State and took the form of complex, multi-purpose expeditions in which foreign scholars played a significant role. The conceptual differences of which Schweitzer writes certainly existed in Europe in these periods; important changes in philosophical and academic paradigms had taken place there. But it seems to me that in Russia this change took place several decades later. The real boundary between periods in Siberian Studies, as Schweitzer later discusses, falls between 1845 and 1851, when the Imperial Russian

Geographical Society was founded; its foundation fundamentally changed the nature of research in Siberian Studies.

A third comment on periodisation. Although Schweitzer explains his decision in some detail, it still seems strange to me that he treats both the 1960s to the 1980s and the 1990s as a single period in the history of Siberian Studies. The end of the 1980s, after all, was a major turning-point, and not only politically. Schweitzer rightly says that in the 1960s and 1970s, the 'factor "politics" had more weight than usual', and he emphasises the all-encompassing state control over academic research in the period; however, these claims would have quite different implications if made in relation to the early- and midnineties. The periods before and after 1988/1989 differ in precisely that parameter according to which the study is structured — the national or trans-national character of academic research in Siberia: if before 1989 western anthropologists were a rare sight in Siberia, thereafter Siberian Studies, and especially fieldwork, once again acquired the international dimension which it had had at the beginning of the twentieth century and of which it had been deprived in the Soviet era [Vakhtin, Sirina 2003]. The only justification for treating these periods as one would seem to be the author's desire to ensure that the sections of the study are of approximately equal length.

A work of this scope, which takes in more than three hundred years, hundreds of names and titles, and an enormous area, must inevitably omit some details, or else grow to occupy many volumes. Schweitzer is aware of this problem and warns that reader (pp. 16-17) that his aim is to produce an outline of intellectual history, not a detailed exposition of the facts. In most cases he succeeds in maintaining a balance between setting out a reasonable number of facts and details on the one hand, and keeping to a necessarily limited scale on the other. However, there are two points at which the factual aspect seems to me to be unjustifiably narrow. The first is the section (pp. 26-34) in which the author describes the development and transformation of intellectual approaches, the theoretical paradigms which underlie the study of Siberia. The review of the literature upon which these approaches are based is particularly brief; some of the publications mentioned deserve more than a single line of text. The second section is the one on missionaries as ethnographers (pp. 44– 45): this topic is dealt with in just one page, yet this aspect of the study of Siberian ethnography merits more detailed exposition.

Throughout the dissertation, the author consistently links research on Siberia with developments in European theoretical thinking, first and foremost with the development of national ideology. He argues convincingly that were it not for the development of the ideology of Romantic nationalism at the beginning of the nineteenth century the

magnificent achievements in research on Siberia in the 1850s would hardly have been possible (p. 132). That is undoubtedly the case: without this current in philosophical thought, the idea of the value and importance of learning about the indigenous cultures within the Russian Empire would scarcely have taken root in the minds of academics. It seems to me, however, that in one instance Schweitzer posits rather too direct a relationship of cause and effect between philosophical thought and the practice of academic research. Whilst the discoveries of European philosophy certainly acted as a powerful stimulus for research on Siberia in the 1870s, there was another. altogether more straightforward, reason for the change: demography. By the 1870s a fairly large number of educated people were permanently resident in Siberia, significantly more than in the 1830s, for instance. Even if the ideology of Romantic nationalism had been formulated in Europe half a century earlier and the Geographical Society had come into existence in Russia in 1815, say, it would nonetheless have been impossible to open regional branches of the Society and thereby change the scale and the direction of research: regional branches would simply not have had enough members. Schweitzer mentions this — on page 132 he remarks that by the end of the nineteenth century 'from the perspective of Irkutsk the study of eastern Siberia received the touch of studying one's backyard' — but the connection should have been drawn out more clearly.

The dissertation contains many interesting ideas about the roots and sources of Soviet Siberian Studies. Schweitzer demonstrates that the Soviet ethnographical paradigm was inspired less by Marxism than by the populist 'going to the people' (narodnichestvo) movement² of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and he traces the 'strange kind of continuity' (p. 212) between this movement and the study of Siberia and the north in the 1920s and 1930s. He selects Shnakenburg (1907–1941), student of Bogoraz, as a typical figure of this time. Had Shnakenburg not died in the war, he writes, he would have turned into a typical Soviet ethnographer specialising in Siberia: the things he wrote in the 1930s already contained everything that would later come to define Soviet ethnography. Schweitzer might be right in this particular case, but he takes the idea further in the next paragraph, and in my view he goes too far: 'The exiled revolutionaries [narodniki — N. V.]³ had

i.e., had the effect of studying. [Editor].

i.e., radical populism, a movement that came to prominence in the 1860s and remained a major political force up to the October Revolution. 'Going to the people' was the practice according to which members of the movement would take up a socially useful profession (teaching, medicine), which they would combine with agitation among the Russian peasantry and workers. The former was usually more efficacious than the latter. [Editor].

³ Members of the *narodnichestvo* movement (see above) [Editor].

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instituted a model of Siberian research which put particular emphasis on its applied aspects...' and further: 'This model... was appropriated by the Soviet state in order to carry its cultural revolution to the North' (p. 181–183). If the author is referring to the 1920s, I agree with him completely. However, comparing these statements to what was said earlier about Shnakenburg, I begin to suspect (perhaps wrongly) that Schweitzer is inclined to apply this parallel to a later period, too, to the 1930s and beyond, and that I cannot agree with. Soviet ethnography in the 1930s to the 1950s was a far cry from the ideals of narodnichestvo movement as formulated by Bogoraz and his colleagues on the Committee for the North, in the ethnography department of Leningrad University, or in the Institute for the Peoples of the North, the ideals of applied ethnography and linguistic research for the benefit of the Siberian peoples. Stalin's 'Great Breakthrough' of 1929 laid all liberal hopes and expectations to rest once and for all and marked the beginning of the Great Terror of the 1930s, which inevitably affected ethnography. Schweitzer himself writes that as early as 1930 sensible ethnographical descriptions were disappearing fast from the journal 'Soviet Ethnography': specific, practical ethnographical work on modern life was explicitly forbidden, banned from research and publications schedules. In the 1920s, the difficult economic situation notwithstanding, practical fieldwork in villages was still carried out (e.g. the famous 'ethnographical excursions' for students organised by Bogoraz and Shternberg), but by the mid-1930s ethnography had become, in Slezkine's words [1993], 'nothing more than a theory of primitive communism'. In 1931, Matorin, a leading Soviet ethnographer, declared that in current conditions fieldwork was a form of imperialism and that ethnography should not concern itself with the modern day, since there was nothing 'ethnographical' about contemporary collective farms (I cite from Slezkine). This view prevailed, with only rare exceptions, until the beginning of the 1960s. Thus whilst the roots of Soviet Siberian Studies do indeed lie in the *narodnik* movement, it is important not to underestimate the destructive impact which Stalinism had on this academic tradition and its consequences for Soviet ethnography in the 1960s to the 1980s.

One category of scholars remains on the periphery of Schweitzer's otherwise comprehensive inventory of names, publications and ideas connected with Siberian Studies: linguists. For the 1920s as for later, it is not always easy to draw a clear distinction between ethnographical and linguistic research in Siberia: the first generation of both ethnographers and linguists studied under Bogoraz and Shternberg; both groups were heirs to the Boas tradition of anthropological research, in which there could be no ethnography without linguistics and folklore, and vice versa. Prokofyev, Forshtein, Kreinovich,

Tsintsius, and later Menovshchikov and others were all involved in the study of languages as well as of ethnography. In later years (the 1960s to the 1970s), other schools like the Dulzon School in Novosibirsk also worked on both ethnographical and ethno-linguistic material. The entire corpus of highly significant and interesting sociolinguistic research on Siberia conducted first in Novosibirsk and then in Leningrad by Avrorin's group remains outside the purview of Schweitzer's dissertation. The same is true of the Leningrad branch of the Institute of Linguistics from the 1960s to the 1980s: the only person to receive a mention is Kreinovich. The author has evidently been misled by the existence of two different names, the Institute of Ethnography and the Institute of Linguistics, and has overlooked the fact that the academics who worked in the two institutes (which, incidentally, were just a stone's throw apart on opposite sides of Birzhevyi Pereulok) knew one another well, read one another's publications, organised joint conferences and sometimes even collaborated on research projects; in other words, in spite of bureaucratic barriers, Northern Studies nonetheless remained a single discipline.

'Marginalising' the linguists in this way sometimes results in inaccuracies. For instance, we read on page 281 that the driving force behind what Schweitzer calls the 'folklore' approach was Finnish and Hungarian researchers: they are said to have been the first to begin recording and publishing texts in indigenous languages. I would like to draw the author's attention to the fact that Shternberg, Jokhelson and Bogoraz published such texts in the 1920s and the 1930s, and that the later period saw similar publications, including Rubtsova's Eskimo texts (1954). Whilst the author surely knows these texts, in some sense they seem to fall into his 'blind spot', since in his model they count as 'linguistics' and not ethnography.

None of these points compromises the main impression left by Schweitzer's dissertation: it is an outstanding piece of work, and there is nothing (at least in the field of Siberian Studies) to rival it in scope, analytical depth or factual accuracy. For me, certainly, this book is more than a history of the discipline: in some sense, it is my own personal history. Like the author (p. 17), I too feel that I cannot easily separate my view of the past from my concern for the present and future of the study of Siberia and the Russian north. That is why this dissertation is particularly valuable to me. I sincerely hope that the author will have the time and the opportunity to publish it; such a book would be exceptionally useful to anyone who studies the ethnography, folklore and languages of the indigenous population of Siberia.

References

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Translated by Sarah Turner



K. A. Bannikov. The Anthropology of Extremist Groups. Moscow. 2002. 339 pp. (Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Russian Academy of Science) Rewieved by Zhanna Kormina

COSMIC BALLS

If systematised material is itself examined in an unsystematic way, it is not possible to talk about the existence of a system in the first place. (K. A. Bannikov. The Anthropology of Extremist Groups. p. 132).

The Russian tradition of academic anthropology was disrupted almost as soon as it had begun. In the Russia Empire, as in other colonial states, anthropology came into being at the end of the nineteenth century, but the rise of Soviet power made it unviable both as a discipline and as an ideology. An anthropological approach to the study of social phenomena presupposed cultural diversity and intellectual heterodoxy, and these were utterly unacceptable according to the terms of the new political project. Consequently, institutes and university departments were left with ethnography, a descriptive subject, which in its theoretical aspects had remained more or less confined to the evolutionist paradigm set out at the time of Shternberg

and Iokhelson. Soviet scholars' attempts at discussing theoretical issues (for instance their discussion of the *etnos*, ethnic group), on the one hand, and the popularity of Lev Gumilev's ideas,¹ on the other, illustrated how this branch of learning had run into a dead end under Soviet power.

The new political climate has brought with it a fashion for anthropology — or at least a fashion for the word, not the discipline. Its place as an academic discipline has been taken by sociology, which enjoyed a much happier fate in the Soviet period,² but as a word 'anthropology' has easily taken root in Russian soil and is used to refer to really rather diverse things. It pertains simply to matters human, so it is equally possible to talk of *philosophical anthropology* and *the anthropology of the female body, of silence, of religion*, and *of extremist groups*. Amidst all these diverse anthropologies, work is also going on in the traditional fields of social and cultural anthropology, disciplines which have their own methods of analysis, their own history, their own schools, and their own classics, and, when all is said and done, their own research techniques.

It is already possible to talk of trends within the development of anthropology in Russia. A distinctive feature of the modern understanding of anthropological research is the focus on the researcher him- or herself. The starting-point and primary source for a whole host of studies which style themselves 'anthropological' is the researcher's personal experience: not professional experience gained in the field, but experience gained in everyday life. Mothers write about giving birth, conscripts write about the army, people who have lived in communal flats write about communal flats. Thanks either to scrupulousness or irony, some succeed in separating themselves as the focus of study from themselves as researchers; some are engaged in sublimation or exhibitionism. Success depends upon talent, not least (and sometimes most of all) upon a talent for writing.

The book to be discussed here is not notable either for the refinement of its language or for the precision of its formulations. The best thing about it is its subject-matter, which is topical, rich, but also, as it turns out, dangerous. The danger inherent in any study of everyday life, especially of contemporary everyday life, lies in trivial observa-

Lev Gumilev (1912–1992), son of the poets Nikolai Gumilev (1885–1921) and Anna Akhmatova (1889–1966), a historical geographer by profession, acquired a great degree of prominence in the late 1980s as a proponent of 'neo-Eurasianist' theories of cultural development, according to which Russian culture was traceable to the culture of the Eurasian steppes in the pre-historic and early historic eras. He believed in the objectively verifiable, 'sociobiological', existence of ethnic difference, and in 'bioenergy' as a driving force behind this. [Editor].

At least during the first decade and a half of Soviet power, and in the post-Stalin era. Little, if any, sociological work of merit was produced in the Stalin years. [Editor].

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tions and banal conclusions. The author manages to avoid this trap, but only by going to another extreme, treating his subject as something outlandish, and thereby oversimplifying it.

The book is about *dedovshchina*, the bullying of junior recruits in the army, and about how a hierarchy develops within a community which is ostensibly founded upon the presupposition of absolute equality. The driving forces behind the transformation of an egalitarian society into a hierarchical one have been studied before, by the Russian ethnographer Klein, who wrote a series of articles on the ethnography of the prison camp. Klein suggested that the social hierarchy is re-created because human consciousness preserves primitive instincts. When civilising constraints are loosened, man is set free from these cultural norms and naturally reverts to the behaviour of a savage, re-creating amongst other things a three-level social structure and initiation ceremonies. Bannikov accepts this controversial² position in its entirety. In the theoretical section of his book he tries to develop and add detail to Klein's hypotheses. Since for some reason he ignores the Western literature on the subject, and since those few Russian studies to which he refers do not provide him with an adequate explanatory model, Bannikov works out his own theory to account for the phenomenon of *dedovshchina*.

He finds convenient support for a new anthropological approach in Lotman's semiotics of culture and Jung's theory of archetypes, borrowing from Jung the concept of the collective unconscious. Why should a concept from psychoanalysis — the collective unconscious — be preferable to a sociological concept such as Durkheim's collective conscious as framework for the study? Because to accept such a tenet is to assume that everything which is shameful, base and uncivilised is beyond man's control. It is not people themselves who are bad, but their dark, uncontrolled unconscious, to which ethical standards do not apply. Man is but a pitiful puppet in the hands of this force. So 'when a soldier... or a prisoner... "bring scapegoats down" by raping them... their actions are not driven by the savagery of the prevailing morals; rather, they are unconsciously realising the archetypes of social stratification, and in the most primitive of ways at that' (p. 147). And somewhere in that unconscious there are semiotic models. They cannot be controlled either; they are universal and we make use of them in spite of ourselves. It would be interesting to find out how Bannikov thinks these archetypes, together with their binary oppositions, are passed on, and where he thinks they are

¹ E.g. Lev Samoilov [=L. S. Klein]. 'Etnografiya lagerya' [The Ethnography of the Prison Camp] // Sovetskaya etnografiya. 1990. №1. Pp. 96–108.

See, for example, Kabo's criticism: V. R. Kabo. 'Struktura lagerya i arkhetipy soznaniya' [The Structure of the Prison Camp and Archetypes of Consciousness] // Sovetskaya etnografiya. 1990. №1. Pp. 108–13.

located. Are they perhaps to be found in the cosmos, to which he so often refers?

Efforts to get to grips with this Jungian-semiotic chimera produce some rather unexpected results. 'The semiotic approach... externalises the origins of the archetypes of the collective unconscious, linking them to the objective laws of the universe' (pp. 131–32). Consequently, the archetypes which make people murderers and rapists are located beyond the boundaries of human society, and responsibility for them lies with him who enforces the objective laws of the universe. Thus, following the author, we have no choice but to assert the existence of God, or at any rate of some form of cosmic intelligence.

Appeal to the Durkheimian tradition would have spared Bannikov all this trouble. As it is, the eccentricity of his academic tastes prompts him to take unpredictable steps. For instance, in his discussion of the nature of time, or, to quote, 'of time as a socioformative category', he for some reason refers to Bocharov's highly dubious claim that time is 'a concept which reflects the objective process of change in the world around us' (p. 24). Following Durkheim, the anthropological tradition tends to take the view that time (like space and many other categories) is social, in the sense that it does not exist independently of the ideas and practices which are observed in society and which are specific to every individual society. No less surprising is the pronouncement which follows on rapidly from the discussion of the nature of time: social change is a fundamental human need. That remains to be demonstrated. But the reason for which the author makes the claim is clear: that, evidently, is how he explains social evolution.

The language in which the book is written does nothing to help the reader in the exacting task of understanding what the results of the research actually are. The book is guilty of imprecise and even erroneous formulations: 'the semiotic identity of the soldier's belt to ritual artefacts'; 'transformation of stress into positive emotions by means of the sign'; 'the semiotically complex sign of fecal expansion'; 'this sphere of the military mentality among the people... is regarded as a genre of folklore'. The author not only reduces all folklore to a single genre, but labours hugely over straightforward things. And this reservation is by no means accidental. The point is that the source of information (which is also the subject of study) is not clearly differentiated from the author of the book. The author, evidently, is the people who ponder the folkloric nature of 'the army demobsters'.

One of the notable features of the book (or of the authorial style) is the proliferation of over-the-top expressions which obscure — or at times even replace, I fear, — the sense of his statements. What price, for instance, such stylistic flourishes such as 'the semiotics of everyday existence conveys existential sense' (p. 49) or 'in the possession of foodstuffs lies the semiotics of power' (p. 57)?

At the end of the day these faults can be blamed upon editorial carelessness or haste in production. So let's leave aside stylistic quibbles and turn to the methodology of the research. What types of sources form the basis of the book? The first and main source is the author's own experience. The book is in large measure autobiographical. We learn that its author did military service. We learn about the first time he personally experienced stress because of 'organised violence' — in a pigsty one day, when members of his detachment were put to castrating pigs (p. 104). However, the reader is left wondering what this traumatic personal experience has to do with violence in the army. Okay, so a few pigs got castrated. So what? We also learn that the author was a leading member of a guitarpoetry club and spent a month travelling round military units taking part in concerts; this tour constituted his fieldwork for the book. His field diary (apparently in its entirety) is given in an appendix. It's not exactly long, and significant parts of it are reproduced in the text anyway.

Another source, which in itself is interesting and rich, is letters sent to friends and relatives by people doing national service. However, there are problems with these too, not just because the potential of the material is under-exploited, but because it is never treated as a source that requires criticism and analysis. The writers' points of view, the phraseology they employ, the system of ideas, the ways in which they represent themselves and so on, could all perfectly well be scrutinised. But Bannikov merely expresses his solidarity with the writers of the letters, and he uses their epistolary endeavours as support for his own opinion without ever commenting on them.

The book also draws upon army folklore (visual and written), an interview with a representative of the non-governmental organisation Soldiers' Mothers, and newspaper stories. Significantly, there are no interviews with the book's protagonists — the soldiers themselves — other than those mentioned in the field diary, who are blatantly described from memory. The author's disregard for fieldwork is explicable: any new piece of information is in fact a needless repetition of his own experience.

The lack of a strict (or even consistent) method of analysis results in conclusions which certainly strike the reader as abrupt. For instance, a *dembel* — a soldier who is shortly to be demobbed and sent home — wears his belt so low that the buckle is on a level with his penis, one reason for which is apparently that the penis is associated with the cosmic body in the collective unconscious

of extremist groups (p. 117). What precisely this cosmic body is and how the author learned of this remarkable association remain mysterious. And the irritating thing is that the semiotics of the belt has already been studied. He could just have done a bit of reading; why re-invent the wheel? Incidentally, the way the soldiers themselves put it, a *dembel* wears his belt not over his penis, but over his balls. Following Bannikov's logic, what we should all be studying, then, is not the 'world tree', but the balls of the 'cosmic body'.

The interested reader will never cease to be amazed at the author's conclusions — and will always be left wanting evidence, argumentation, or at the very least a reference to some sort of authority, a dictionary, say, or a scholarly paper. For example, in the section on 'the perception of ethnic difference' Bannikov claims that the word churka (literally, a block of wood; figuratively, a pejorative term for people from the Caucasus and Central Asia) is connected with the words chur (an exclamation meaning 'keep away!') and churatsya (to shun, fight shy of). Though attractive, this idea still requires at least a minimal amount of linguistic research: support from dictionaries would not go amiss. One could claim with an equal measure of confidence that the word is derived from churban (blockhead), i.e. someone who is dull-witted, slow on the uptake, rough-hewn (like a block of wood), 'unacculturated'.

Bannikov's failure to differentiate between himself as author and himself as subject makes him place too much trust in his material. For him, the representation of a phenomenon or event is enough to capture its essence. The main theme of soldiers' folklore, he says, is violence. I won't argue, it may well be. However, there is a crucial difference between violence as an action and violence as a metaphor. Sexual contact is traditionally understood (this appears to be a cultural universal) as an asymmetrical relationship in which there is a weak and a strong party. It is entirely logical that this metaphor should be used to describe hierarchical relationships, and not only in the army, though admittedly it applies best to communities of that type. The power of the images derived from the metaphor is increased by the absence of gender diversity within the social group. However, their frequency is by no means an indication that sexual violence amongst national service conscripts really is widespread, as the author claims. The examples which Bannikov takes from the press as support for his argument do not involve sexual aggression within the ranks, amongst the soldiers themselves, but are acts of violence committed against soldiers by officers. That is a somewhat different matter, concerned not with the construction of relationships of dominance by means of violence, but with the reinforcement and exploitation of an existing, formal hierarchy.

heart?

Bannikov's book creates a mixed impression. On one hand, it is not necessarily a bad thing for someone to lay bare his civic values, particularly if they happen to coincide with one's own. Yes, the army is in crisis. Yes, this crisis reflects the crisis in society (to quote from the text: 'if, in order to illustrate the turbulence of social processes, we compare society with home-distilling equipment, the army is the coilpipe' (p. 238)). And it is necessary to do something about this potentially explosive situation, even if that just means bringing it to the attention of the public and the powers that be. That was evidently one of the tasks of the book and the project, which was supported by a grant from the MacArthur Foundation, and which must therefore have been considered topical. On the other hand, what value is there in using research which has academic pretensions to express one's political views, even if the views are widely shared? And what if the reader does not agree with them? Maybe mixing academic investigations with personal opinions and biases isn't such a good idea after all; maybe a cool head would be better than a passionate

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If Bannikov's pseudo-academic endeavours had been replaced by a sensible, coherent exposition, and if the author's manly stoicism had been expressed less sentimentally, the book would have been more valuable. It would have passed for a likeable and honest piece of ethnographical work, a description of the everyday life of soldiers illustrated by photographs and drawings from their notebooks and albums (these are indeed very good). Even better, the author could just have published his own recollections of his national service. Forget the 'anthropology'.

The title of the book may well contain the word 'anthropology', but, as in the old story about Jung saying, 'sometimes a cigar is just a cigar', that does not necessarily mean a thing. Our suspicions as to its meaninglessness are confirmed the last time it is used: 'The humanitarian crisis in the army is a syndrome. It is the anthropological syndrome of an army which everyone's dying to get out of.'

No arguing: that really is an anthropological syndrome and a half!

Translated by Sarah Turner



A. A. Panchenko. Khristovshchina i skopchestvo: folklor i traditsionnaya kultura russkikh misticheskikh sekt [The Christ Faith and the Auto-Castrators: the Folklore and Traditional Culture of Russian Mystical Sects]. Moscow. 2002. 544 p.p.

Rewieved by Arina Tarabukina

THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF MYSTICISM

Aleksandr Panchenko's monograph *Khristov-shchina i skopchestvo* represents the first indepth study of the rituals, folklore, and historico-cultural context of two large-scale religious movements which flourished from the eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries. Although the culture of Russian mystical sects and folk religion in general has of course been of interest to academics from the nineteenth century to the present day, the inadequacy of the methodology used for studying religious culture and the texts that represent it means that it is hard to think of a work which is as comprehensive as Panchenko's book.

In the foreword, the author sets out his methodological position with his subject and methodology. His starting-point is that the two sects — *khristovshchina* [the Christ Faith, also known as the *khlysty*, or self-flagellants] and *skopchestvo* [the auto-castrators]¹ — are to be characterised in the first instance by the religious ecstasy which forms part of their ritual practices. This then allows him to identify the fundamental principles and symbols, the overall structure,

Two mystical Russian Orthodox sects. The term khlysty is conventionally translated 'self-flagellants', though this is not particularly accurate, as a more important practice in the cult was ecstatic dancing (ryazhenye), and by the belief that Christ and the Mother of God were reincarnated at intervals as specific members of the cult. The 'auto-castrators' (skoptsy) practised an extreme sexual ascetism whose highest manifestations were the removal of the testicles and the penis in men, and of the breasts, clitoris, and labiae in women. (A scholarly study of the latter group in English is Laura Engelstein, Castration and the Heavenly Kingdom: A Russian Folktale. Ithaca, NY, 1999.) [Editor].

and the individual elements of these rituals in the texts upon which his research focuses.

Panchenko is surely right to use the term 'sect' in a qualified way. He does not use it in its accepted sociological sense because 'the dividing-line between members and non-members of sects in popular rural and urban culture in Russia from the eighteenth to early twentieth centuries rarely coincides with any form of social structure: it can normally be discerned in differences in religious practices and everyday conduct, in specific types of ideology and in folkloric texts' (p. 10). This conception of the term 'sect' reveals an important methodological premise: the view that mass religious movements are to be treated as an interaction between diverse religious practices and religious institutions (p. 95).

Like many researchers at home and abroad, Panchenko draws upon a conception of folklore which is extended to take account of the socio-historical context of the data. His material confirms that in the first instance the essence of folkloric texts lies not in their content, but in their communicative function, which is determined both by the collective experience of members of the society and by the specific way in which it finds verbal expression. The latter is in turn directly linked with audience response to the text.

Panchenko's review of the literature on the subject shows clearly how various writers, among them academics, authors and theologians, have created a 'myth of sectarianism'. Though polemical, his survey is informative and objective.

Panchenko divides his primary sources into three groups. The first consists of documents drawn up during official enquiries into the sects; the second group contains letters written by local priests and parishioners who were not members of the sects, as well as notes written by former members of the sects who had left the communities; the third group comprises folkloric evidence and the personal documents of the members of the sects themselves. In his discussion of the sources, the author touches upon the topical issue of how to record folkloric texts taking the form of dialogues. On the one hand, it is difficult to dispute his view that, very broadly speaking, the methods of data collection used by folklorists and ethnologists are similar to those used in an official enquiry. This similarity is naturally reflected in the form the material itself takes — texts whose dialogic structure is the result of 'situations of mutual incomprehension between interviewer and interviewee' (p. 51).

On the other hand, Panchenko appears to overlook a difference between the two methods of collection that necessarily affects the quality of the data from the anthropologist's point of view. A folklorist or ethnographer makes a cassette-recording of his mate-

rial, and, though 'dialogic' in nature, it none the less consists of material provided by the informant. The eighteenth- and nineteenth- century records of interrogation from which an anthropologist extracts his material inevitably reflect the language and the interpretations of their compilers. In this case, alongside the incomprehension of interviewer and interviewee to which Panchenko rightly calls attention, there is also the incomprehension (or maybe the comprehension, but only of a certain kind) of the record-keeper himself to consider. We cannot say for certain that a topic or ritual described in the record is an accurate reflection of what was said. or whether it might not in fact reflect the transcriber's preconceptions. This observation does nothing to reduce the pressing methodological problem in folklore studies, and it is certainly the case that 'the heuristic value of folkloric-ethnographic and historico-anthropological research patently increases in situations in which the source document gives access to the voices of both parties, both the interviewing elite and the interviewed majority' (p. 51). The same could be said of the subsequent content of Panchenko's book, whose value would increase greatly, in my view, if account were taken of the discourse of the 'interviewing elite'.

In Chapter 1, 'Religious Practices and Religious Folklore', Panchenko identifies three approaches to issues of popular Christianity taken in Soviet and Russian work on folklore. The first, which treats religious tradition as an adaptive-informative system, hardly holds water, since it does not consider the cultural specifics of individual and ritual religious activity.

The second approach idealises the Orthodox canon, taking an extremely oversimplified view of it. In so doing, it effectively 'compares' peasant lore on Orthodoxy with 'canonical Orthodoxy'. Of course, Panchenko is right to remark in his critique of the approach that 'synodal Orthodoxy had no semblance of either "syntagmatic" or "paradigmatic" unity: both synchronically and diachronically it was characterised by disparate and sometimes even contradictory ideological and theological tendencies' (p.66). It might be added that the legends of the Church are a constituent of the canon, and these legends are interconnected with oral legends (in certain circumstances, such as in the composition of vitae, the latter frequently serve as a source of information for the former). That said, Panchenko does write about the influence of 'folk religion' on 'church tradition', albeit in a slightly different context (p. 69).

The third, ideological approach regards the way the peasantry observes the eternal and constant Orthodox faith as an absolute truth in itself, even though such observation may be variable in its strictness.

Panchenko rightly remarks that the failure to distinguish between

religion and religious institutions is a widespread academic error. He defines the concepts of the religious institution and religious practice, and he develops the concept of religious experience on the basis of Peter L. Berger's ideas. In our view, the author constructs an exceedingly useful model for understanding religious behaviour. The religious experience is regarded simultaneously as the foundation and source of religious activity, and as a destructive factor in the life of the collective. Religious institutions are stable and, according to the model, they are at variance with religious experience (which is admissible within the framework set out). Religious practices 'serve as a fixed, socially vital mediator between the maximal stability of the institutions and the absolute instability of religious experience' (p. 75). And whilst indeed 'it is virtually impossible to draw clear boundaries between institutions and practices, and also between practices and an individual's religious experience in relation to actual, observable traditions'(p. 95), it is nevertheless somewhat questionable to treat any large group of people as a religious institution (for example, 'special monastic orders uniting people who have withdrawn from the secular world and who have devoted themselves to the service of God'(p. 67)). After all, a large monastic community is the product of its religious practices, and a researcher who took it upon him- or herself to make a comparison between monks' understanding of their religion and the church canon would come to no more comforting a conclusion than he or she would if their fieldwork investigated the village instead — further confirmation of the effectiveness of Panchenko's research model.

Panchenko uses the theme of the narration of dreams in peasant culture as an illustration of the functional specificity of religious folklore, which serves to consolidate personal religious experience. This theme demonstrates the usefulness of analysing the ways in which 'altered states of consciousness' have traditionally been adapted. 'The vital importance of research into the role of dreams in the context of locally and functionally limited cultural forms' (p. 82) is confirmed by the analysis of the function of dreams in stories about objects of local worship and the function of dreams about hidden treasure. Stories about dreams have been actively studied in recent years (see, for instance, the recent collection Sny i videniya v narodnoi kulture [Dreams and Visions in Folk Culture]. Moscow, 2002), and data relating to other societies collected in the 1990s lend further weight to the author's approach. However, Panchenko's assumption that 'in general the symbolic interpretation of dreams is not particularly characteristic of peasant culture' (p. 91) is open to question. Peasant dream superstitions are widely reported, and they hardly ever coincide with those in popular books of dream interpretation; according to my own field observations, the act of mentioning the superstition is often accompanied by narrative examples. One

such story follows: 'There are dreams where sometimes you have one and you wonder what it means. Doing the garden — that means there's going to be a death. I had this dream that I was going round the garden, there are cucumbers and potatoes growing, and I say, "Why've you planted them so close together?" And he says, "It was Evdokimovna planted them", and a month later she went and died.' In Tver province just a decade ago there were still people who were able to interpret the dreams of the entire village according to the significant phenomena occurring in these. Yet, although such dreams are recounted to other people, they are taken much less seriously than dreams in which a sacred figure speaks directly. They appear to occupy a lower rung on the peasant hierarchy of dreams and are comparable in status to collective divination involving hallowed objects, which is patently less sacred than 'dread' (strashnoe) divination, undertaken in isolation.

Chapter 2 — 'Khristovshchina and Skopchestvo in an Historico-Cultural Context' — presents a wide range of factual data on the history of these religious movements. The author notes that the seventeenth century marked the beginning of a new era of religious life in Russia. The age was imbued with the religious ferment which is always characteristic of transitional periods, and it gave rise to new phenomena, among them religious sectarianism. Panchenko rightly refutes the possibility that *khristovshchina* had its origins in western heresies, and he sees its origins in the eschatological mood and behaviour typical of the time, and also in the traditional religious practices of the peasantry and town-dwellers of the seventeenth century. The author's position is confirmed by the activities of the monastic elder Kapiton (Danilovsky), which reflected the apocalyptic mood of the era. Panchenko writes that 'the anti-Church tendencies in Kapiton's teachings can hardly have been the result of some sort of coherent social programme. <...> Retreat into forest wildernesses and extreme ascetic rituals were one possible form of such "eschatological behaviour" (p. 107). Moreover, the elder Kapiton might have been but one of many, a generalisation, as it were, of a type of traditional behaviour which rejected church life in the 'early evangelical times'.

Taking as his example the 'liturgy of the *podreshetniki*', 3 the author draws upon ethnographical data to analyse 'ritual creativity', based

Recording of A. N. Balabkina (b. 1933), made in the village of Starinok, Toropetsky district, Tver province in 1988, during a folklore expedition organised by the Herzen State Pedagogical Institute in Leningrad.

² Literally, primety (omens). [Editor].

The podreshetniki were a group of religious dissenters based near Kostroma in the late seventeenth century. Their 'liturgy' consisted of a ritual in which a young girl processed into the izba from the cellar or other under-floor space carrying raisins on a sieve. This can be interpreted as a parallel to the Orthodox communion ritual, with raisins standing for hosts and the sieve for the paten. (My thanks to Aleksandr Panchenko for this elucidation). [Editor].

upon the rites of the Church and of peasant life. The importance of underground spaces, the sieve and raisins in the 'liturgy of the *podreshetniki*' all point to its connection with funeral rites. And although the idea that underground space in the sense of the cellar used for rituals was 'associated with the tombs of locally revered saints' is probably not sustainable (p. 111), participants in the rituals clearly had 'contact... with the sacral sphere in the context of the eschatological climate and expectations' (p. 116).

The author gives special attention to ascetic practices among the *khlysty* or *khristovshchina*, which include prohibitions on drunkenness, profane language and sexual relations. On the whole, the idea that 'the asceticism of the khlysty was directed first and foremost against the fundamental aspects of peasant ritual tradition' (p. 139) is a promising one. However, the eschatological world-view clearly demands the rejection not only of practices which involve ritual drunkenness and swearing, but also of all norms of day-to-day life which 'turn the soul away from the Lord'. Strictly speaking, an eschatological outlook rejects everyday life per se — a man must be ready to stand before God at any moment; ideally, his spiritual condition should be like that of a communicant before death; and that means that normal modes of behaviour which are sinful in essence are ruled out.

A subsection within the chapter — "The Faith of the Other" and "Blood Libel" — analyses two mythological motifs associated with the ritual practices of religious sects: accusations of carnal sin and of ritual murders. The author examines the motifs of ritual murder and carnal sin in a wide range of literary and oral versions and associates them in the first instance with 'blood libel' against Jews and with the representation of some peasant rituals as orgies in the literature of the Church, for example. Panchenko includes a legend about ritual murders in broader discussion of the themes of cannibalism and infanticide, thereby explaining the mechanism by which images of 'other' religious and ethnic groups are formed. (According to our data, the Russian Yamalo suspect the Nentsy — Samoyeds ('self-eaters') of cannibalism.)

Sources relating to the history of *khristovshchina* and *skopchestvo* in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are seen as groups of texts, each having their own discrete tradition, but also intersecting on the level of motifs, plots and characters. For example, folkloric texts about particular individuals are compared to documentary evidence. By drawing on a wide range of different sources, the author is able to build up a picture of early sectarianism and the subsequent development of rituals, folkloric images and motifs. Although Panchenko does pick out many obviously folkloric motifs in his documentary evidence, in less clear-cut cases he treats texts of

diverse origins simply as sources of factual information, without taking their oral origins into account: in so doing, he contradicts his own methodological position.

The chapter as a whole is an historical outline of the emergence and development of *khristovshchina* and *skopchestvo* in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the context of the socio-cultural trends of the era. Particular points of interest include the analysis of how local centres of sectarian movements with their own traditions, cults, and ritual and narrative practices came to be formed, and also the rise of an epic tradition centred on the leaders of the cults, to which the study devotes much attention.

In Chapter 3 — 'Ritual and Folklore in Khristovshchina and Skopchestvo' - tradition in Russian mystical sects is examined from a synchronic perspective. Analysis focuses upon the structural-typological and functional characteristics of ritual ecstasy, by which the author means a group of features common to the ceremonial rites of both the khlysty and the skoptsy. Panchenko describes in detail the tripartite structure of the ecstatic ritual, consistently drawing attention to the recitation of the 'Jesus Prayer', ecstatic dancing accompanied by religious singing, and prophecy. He draws an analogy between the communion with bread and kvass, which was part of the ecstatic rite until the mid-eighteenth century, as well as their ritual use of 'holy' objects, and the taking of communion by 'Orthodox' peasants. Panchenko's observation that communion was far less important to the peasantry than it was to those in clerical and ecclesiastical circles is borne out by the relative equanimity shown when the closure of churches in the 1920s and 1930s deprived people of the opportunity to partake of it. The peasantry found it much harder to accept the loss of various rites of passage that had previously been marked in church.

Philological analysis of variants of the 'Jesus Prayer' traces its evolution into a 'poem', the diversification of its motifs, and the development of its imagery, and it demonstrates how its literary treatment is compatible with its subsequent folkloric re-working.

The absence of comprehensive descriptions and the possibility of incidental variation in practices naturally make it difficult to analyse the ways in which religious ecstasy was manifested. Nevertheless, the study presents a systematised view of their ecstatic 'wanderings', in which the dancing 'figures' correspond to figures in the songs being performed. By making this comparison, the author is able to show that the principle of dramatising the text of a song found in ecstatic rite is broadly similar to that found in round-dances. The author's interesting observation that ecstatic wanderings are perceived as a form of divination makes it possible to draw conclusions about the means by which rites are reconstructed in the collective consciousness.

Panchenko regards prophecy as the culmination of religious ecstasy. He identifies three types of prophecy among religious sects: eschatological, 'normalising' and domestic. It can hardly be denied that 'eschatological prophecies in khristovshchina and skopchestvo are a means of exercising social control and regulating day-to-day life' (p. 261). Since this conclusion is arguably applicable to similar sorts of texts in any sphere of life, the most important point to emerge here is that the community was actually in constant contact with the sacral world (p. 261). An example which Panchenko provides (p. 260) confirms this point: even if other skoptsy had doubts about the movement led by Kozma Lisin, belief in the father-redeemer had to be professed in a sacral voice. The comprehensive description of the sects' ritual practices concludes with an analysis of the initiation rites of oath-taking and swearing-in, which the author relates both to the community's mythology and to the social context.

The second part of the chapter examines the origins and structure of the lyric material found in the collections made by Vasily Stepanov and Aleksandr Shilov in the eighteenth century. Panchenko is right to claim that it is pointless to study folkloric texts without reference to the social group to which they belong, without reference to the traditional beliefs, rituals and ideology of this group. 'Micro-historical' analysis of the collections leads him to significant conclusions about the ideology and the cultural themes of mystical sects.

The third section analyses the images of the ship and of sailing in the lyrics of the religious dissidents. The author compares these images with themes in folklore and literary epics and ties them in with the sacral themes. His conclusion that dissidents' rituals are a visual enactment of these motifs serves to confirm their eschatological semantics.

In the last chapter — 'Folk Theology' — Panchenko places the religious practices of *khristovshchina* and *skopchestvo* in the wider context of religious culture among the peasantry. When examining the phenomenon of religious impostors, which has traditionally been the subject of much academic research, Panchenko analyses historico-ethnographical data and the particular symbolic significance of the fundamental images. He demonstrates convincingly that the role played by the images of Christ and the Virgin 'cannot be reduced to that of the "deliverer" of members of a community in crisis. Their role is much wider, hence the stability with which the tradition of religious impostors is reproduced in khristovshchina and skopchestvo' (p. 321).

Placing the phenomenon of ecstatic prophecy in a broad typological

Kozma Lisin was recognised as a Christ figure among the khlysty by means of the Holy Spirit speaking through a prophet. Even if members of the cult had doubts, the authority of the prophet ensured that these had to be suppressed. [Editor].

context, Panchenko touches upon a topical issue in modern folklore studies: the problem of 'altered states of consciousness', the way they adapt and function in relation to tradition.

The author refers in this connection to the typologically similar phenomenon of klikushestvo, hysterical behaviour displayed by women, in Russian peasant tradition. Although one can agree in principle with his remarks concerning klikushestvo in its 'village' form, one might add that data collected in the Bryansk region almost twenty years ago indicate that klikushestvo is primarily ritualistic in function: the texts give a detailed account of how women prone to it behave during the liturgy. Their actions, together with those of the congregation and the priest, are consistent and regulated: 1) 'When they start singing "The Cherubims", she falls to the ground and beats herself...'; 2) Even though 'six lads can't restrain her', they nevertheless manage to lead her over to the priest; 3) An extended dialogue takes place between the priest and the 'devil' possessing her ('Begone, Satan!', 'No way, hairy! I'm not leaving!') in which the 'devil' does not so much impart 'useful' information as swear and curse (ritual blasphemy); 4) Then follows the exorcism of the devil (it emerges in the form of green or black smoke, or a snake or frog); 5) Finally, the rite of Communion takes place, to which the exhausted woman is carried by the same six men. 1 Characteristically, these stories make no mention of any prophecies associated with klikushestvo.

Although admittedly this material relates to a local tradition and to a rather different time period, the ritualistic function of both *kliku-shestvo* and prophecies is arguably no less important than their social function. There are several notable features: firstly, the very fact that the sacred voice speaks at all; secondly, the point at which it speaks; and thirdly, the manner in which (and the people to whom) it speaks. (The functions of *klikushestvo* in the church (monastic) environment are much broader and are closer to those about which Panchenko writes. There are virtually no texts describing the ritualised behaviour of *klikushestvo*: the consequence, perhaps, of its widely known association with the rite of exorcism, which is regarded as being on a par with the sacraments.)

In his discussion of the eschatological disposition of Russian mystical sects, Panchenko draws upon eschatological narratives of the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. He is certainly right when he says that 'the essence of peasant stories about the end of the world lies in their adaptive interpretation of the dynamics of social life' (p. 363), though one wonders in that case how he would explain the widespread motif of water being transformed into gold, at the moment only in America, but soon all over the world (Tver province).

¹ Recording made by the Herzen State Pedagogical Institute, Leningrad, July 1985.

The chapter closes with an analysis of the 'Adventures' and the 'Passion' of Kondraty Selivanov. The author describes the fascinating phenomenon of 'literature which is not aware of its own literariness, and which does not set out to be literature, thus forming its own alternative cultural practices' (p. 399). Panchenko includes the texts of the 'Adventures' and the 'Passion', as well as the collections of Vasily Stepanov and Aleksandr Shilov, in appendices.

Panchenko's book opens up promising new lines of research, into the folklore of religion in the first instance. His methodological conclusions are of great importance for cultural anthropology, history, ethnography, and the sociology of religion; the field data used in his study are valuable in their own right.

Translated by Sarah Turner