

SPIRIT OF SIBERIA: TRADITIONAL NATIVE LIFE, CLOTHING, AND FOOTWEAR. By JILL OAKES and RICK RIEWE. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1998. Co-published with the Bata Shoe Museum. ISBN 1-55054-648-1. viii + 215 p., maps, b&w and colour illus., appendices, bib., index. Hardbound. Cdn\$65.00.

This beautifully produced book explores the traditional culture of Siberian indigenous peoples through their footwear. Richly illustrated with contemporary and archival photographs, maps, and patterns, the volume is a highly energetic reflection of Jill Oakes and Rick Riewe's research in the Canadian Arctic, now focused upon the Russian North. The book owes its origin to a ten-year collection effort by the Bata Shoe Museum in Toronto, which presented to the North American public some of the rich ethnographic holdings of Russian museums. Intrigued by the similarity between Siberian and Canadian aboriginal footwear, the authors have produced a well-organized collection of ethnographic descriptions, histories, and photographs of Siberian peoples viewed through the prism of their footwear.

Organized along national and linguistic divisions, the book is prefaced by a good introduction and contains several useful appendices that define terms and explain the technology of producing footwear. The bibliography gives the reader one of the better collections of English-language work on Siberian native peoples (but has some typos in the Russian sources). The book ends with a comparative chapter that extends Grafira Mikhailovich Vasilevich's (1963) typology of Siberian footwear, using the authors' experience from the Canadian North.

In general, each chapter begins with a thumbnail ethnography of one of ten northern Siberian groups. The very traditional descriptions of geography and economy are combined with good descriptions of local worldviews. Each chapter then offers full-page illustrations of costumes from the Bata Shoe Museum exhibition, as well as contemporary photographs of indigenous people using their clothing in action. Archival photographs, taken from the Russian Museum of Ethnography, help reinforce the descriptions of tradition with representations of contemporary life. The most stunning part of the book is the high-quality illustrations of truly special collections from the Russian Museum of Ethnography. The authors have thoughtfully added drawings of details of the exhibits.

Although the focus of the book is on footwear, the range of the portrayal of aboriginal material culture is wide. Some chapters portray entire costumes, as well as tools, such as child cradles designed for reindeer in harness. Each chapter then moves to a long section (often up to one-third of its length) that describes footwear according to how it is made and who uses it (such as children or shamans).

The images in the book speak strongly for a local view of traditional culture. I have given a dozen copies of the book to visiting aboriginal delegations from Siberia (most

of whom do not read English), who have immediately recognized the value and sensitivity behind the range of images. Speaking personally, from my own fieldwork in Siberia, I have noticed that the difference in style of footwear is generally one of the most important national markers of culture in Siberia today. As an anthropologist, however, I would have liked to see in this collection some discussion of how various types of footwear are combined in everyday life in post-Soviet Siberia. Most of the illustrations speak to an ideal form of culture, which to a great extent is present only in museums and in the wardrobes of musical ensembles. Contemporary tundra people combine leather, rubber, and other forms of industrial footwear in interesting and complex ways with fish-skin and reindeer footwear in different seasons. Perhaps one of the more exotic local adaptations of tradition is the traditional beaded reindeer boot glued onto a rubber sole for use in Siberian regional cities. Further, it would have been nice if the authors, in an attempt to widen the typology developed in the last chapter, had provided their expert assessment of how footwear techniques mix across cultural lines. Some of this assessment is implicit in the chapters of the book, which combine Yukagir and Yakut footwear, for example, but distinguish Evenki and Even footwear.

This book is a beautiful and authoritative introduction to modern Siberian culture and makes an excellent gift as much as a good reference source. This reader hopes the authors continue their work in this area.

REFERENCE

VASILEVICH, G.M. 1963. Tipi obov narodov Sibiri. Sbornik Muzeia antropologi i etnografi tom XXI. Moskva: Akademii Nauk.

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MAMMALS OF NORTH AMERICA. TEMPERATE AND ARCTIC REGIONS. By ADRIAN FORSYTH. Willowdale, Ontario: Firefly Books, 1999. ISBN 1-55209-409-X. 350 p., maps, colour illus., bib., index. Hardbound. Cdn\$40.00.

This is an exceptionally beautiful book. The photography of terrestrial and marine mammals is stunning and their visual presentation of great artistic quality. These captivating images dominate the book page by page. Adrian Forsyth is a very talented writer, and this book is well organized. Not only are species and their biology described, but also interesting aspects of the biology of any given family. There are thus sections called "Why there are so many Shrews?" "Sex-Ratio Manipulation,"