

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,"

“Howling & Scowling,” “Bear Attacks,” “Antlers as Status Symbols,” and so forth. This is a laudable way to present much of the complex biology of northern mammals as well as topical issues.

However, this book raises a rather fundamental issue: is encyclopaedic material best presented by one author, or by a panel of experts, whose writings are closely edited by an able, visionary editor? After reading this book, I would choose the second option. My expertise resides primarily with hoofed mammals. The sections of this book dealing with these species are, unfortunately, peppered with annoying inaccuracies and dated ideas. This being the case for hoofed mammals, I wonder about the trustworthiness of the other sections. Had the author invited the participation of experts and acted as editor, a role for which he is eminently qualified, the result would have been a better book. I also take issue with the statement (p. 9) that “North Americans are lucky enough to live in a region that still supports wolves, grizzly bears, pronghorn, caribou, orcas—mammals that need large wild spaces.” A sentence such as this misinforms, because the abundance of wildlife we enjoy today has nothing to do with luck: this is wildlife restored through the efforts of three generations of North Americans. Over much of our continent, at the turn of the century, wildlife was depleted to the point of extinction. The return of wildlife was achieved by a remarkable continental co-operative effort that made the United States and Canada adopt identical policies of wildlife conservation. It is in my eyes the greatest environmental success story of the 20th century, and one of the great cultural achievements of North American society. More important still is the fact that wildlife is maintained by deep-rooted populist conservation movements, the product of grass-roots democracy, and a splendid example of a great public good.

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VOYAGE OF THE *BELGICA*: FIFTEEN MONTHS IN THE ANTARCTIC. By ADRIEN DE GERLACHE. Bluntisham, Huntington: Bluntisham Books, 1998. ISBN 1-85297-054-5. xxx + 202 p., maps, b&w illus., appendices. Hardbound. £37.50; US \$67.50.

This book, translated from the original French version by Maurice Rarity, is reprinted on the occasion of the one-hundredth anniversary of the Belgian Antarctic Expedition of 1897–99. It recounts the events preceding and following the first overwintering (and camping) expeditions in the Antarctic regions. The expedition, of a purely scientific nature, was to set out for the southern oceans, following the recommendations of the Sixth International Geographical Congress held in London in July 1895.

The book is introduced with an interesting background of the southern polar region designed to make the reader more familiar with the goals and objectives of the *Belgica* expedition. The story begins in the late 1500s, with Dutch expeditions to the Antarctic region, whose discoveries most probably came about as the result of commercial zeal mediated by chance. The reader is drawn in to the saga of nationalistic conquests, seal slaughters (which parallel today’s shifts in animal populations due to man’s interference through excessive hunting), and well-known explorers whose names live on as geographic markers. The author also wanted to verify in his own mind the fact that a continent did or did not exist in the southern polar region. The stage was set for a Belgian voyage studying many facets of science, including ice drift, geological and zoological collections, ethnological observations of various peoples encountered, a complete year’s meteorological observations made every hour, studies on terrestrial magnetism, and observations of flora and fauna. But first there were the challenges of getting approval from governments to pursue such a voyage, raising the money, assembling the crew and supplies, in a country (Belgium) which did not have a taste for such “far-flung enterprises,” where de Gerlache met much “latent mistrust among most Belgians.” The reader meets interesting personalities, such as Roald Amundsen, the second officer, and Frederick Cook, who “was the one man of unflinching courage, unflinching hope, endless cheerfulness, and unwearied kindness...his ingenuity and enterprise were boundless” (p. xv). We follow the saga of a young sailor, Auguste Karl Wienke, who died in an accident because of “excessive zeal.” The author recounts the sad story of his closest companion, Emile Danco, who was probably destined to death because of his health, and the subsequent effects on the crew’s morale. We follow them sailing on the high seas and stranded deep in polar ice and can feel their every move. The text is supplemented by excellent reprints of the original photographs, taken presumably by Dr. Cook.

There is an excellent description of the lifestyles of the aborigines of Tierra del Fuego, whom de Gerlache dooms to extinction: “So everything is conspiring towards the destruction of this race of people, for whom their history will have been the same as the Indians of North America, the Patagonians, the aborigines of Australia and of so many others, with one important difference: alcoholism will not have been responsible for their disappearance” (p. 53).

Reading this book one hundred years after the fact, one cannot help but observe the differential status between the officers and crew. On various occasions, readers glimpse how crew members were treated, dissent between officers and crew, and insubordination of crew members. Though subtle in the actual account, these problems were more pronounced in the foreword written one hundred years later, which only serves to remind one of the way attitudes have changed over time.

The account of the expedition from its preparation stages to its return is a most interesting anecdotal retelling