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TWO RECENT PUBLICATIONS IN SOVIET STRUCTURAL
PAREMIOLOGY

Permiakov, G.L. (ed.): *Tel pain, tel grain. Poétique de la sagesse populaire*. Moscou: Editions du Progrès, 1988.

Permyakov, G.L.: *Osnovy strukturnoi paremiologii*. Moskva: Nauka, 1988.

With the death of Russian paremiologist Grigorij L'vovich Permyakov in 1983, modern structural paremiology has not only lost one of its most original and inspiring scholars, but an important organizer of the international exchange of results and advances in proverb scholarship, too.

Thus, the "*Paremiologicheskij sbornik*", edited on Permyakov's initiative and under his editorship in 1978, on the one hand provided the Russian reader with original articles from Soviet scholars. On the other hand, for the first time, his reader was made acquainted with important paremiological articles by Alan Dundes, Matti Kuusi, Vilmos Voigt, Heda Jason and Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett in Russian.

Similar things can be said about the "*Paremiologicheskie issledovaniya*", also edited by Permyakov, although published only after his death in 1984. As in the first volume, the reader found not only contributions by Russian (or Soviet) scholars, but also contributions (i.e. either complete translations or abridged presentations) of foreign scholars such as Nigel Barley, Zoltan Kanyó, or Dumitru Stanciu. Of outstanding help was also the appended bibliography of paremiological publications from 1975-1982 which provided the

Western scholar with much data about recent developments in Soviet paremiology, usually not easily accessible (cf. the review of this volume in *Proverbium* 3).

The present report in no way attempts to supply comprehensive information about the most recent events in Soviet paremiology. It does not claim to fill the gap caused by Permyakov's death, and it does not even claim to provide information about recent Soviet paremiology in general. Instead, it informs the reader about two important publications on the semiotic investigation of proverb material undertaken in the USSR which are directly connected with Permyakov's name.

Generally speaking, the importance of Soviet semiotic paremiology cannot be overestimated. Scholars such as *Permyakov*, *Arvo Krikmann* or *Yurij Iosifovich Levin* have repeatedly provided us with many interesting and intriguing theoretical innovations, and it would not be wrong to claim a leading role for Soviet paremiology on a structural and semiotic level.

One of the two important events which will be mentioned here, is the publication of Permyakov's "*Poetics of Popular Wisdom*" in French translation, introduced with a foreword by T.V. Civ'jan. Predominantly, the volume is a translation of the main articles previously published in the above-mentioned "*Paremiologicheskie issledovaniya*". Thus, we find articles on the riddle by T. Ya. Elizarenkova and V.N. Toporov ("The Vedic riddle of the brahmodya type"), by V.P. Mazurik ("The Japanese riddle: universality and individuality"), by A.K. Ogloblin ("Types of the Javanese riddle: form and meaning"), and by Yu.I. Levin ("The semantic structure of the Russian riddle"), first published in 1973. — All these articles can also be found in German translation, published in "*Semiotische Studien zum Rätsel*" (1987).

Investigations on genres with some affinity to the proverb are the articles by A.A. Bykova ("The semiotic structure of wellerisms") and by E.G. Pavlova ("Essay of classification of popular omens").

The other investigations directly concern the proverb. Of central importance is G.L. Permyakov's "Grammar of Proverb Wisdom", which now exists, apart from its Russian original, not only in German translation (published in 1984 in "*Semiotische Studien zum Sprichwort*"), but also in a second Western language — unfortunately, we are still waiting for an English translation of this milestone in structural paremiology. — In addition to this, we find translations of

A.A. Krikmann's "Semantic mechanisms of the proverbial utterance", of E.N. Savvina's "Discourse transformations of clichéized expressions in speech", of Yu.I. Levin's "The proverbial space" and of E.V. Paducheva's "Semantic connections between the fable and its morale", originally published in 1976.

The bibliography of Soviet paremiological publications (1975-1982) has been included in the volume, too, and a helpful additional bibliography on publications from 1982-1985 has been supplied by I.G. Nikolaeva.

With this volume, many investigations are accessible in a second Western language (some others, which have been accessible only in Russian, thus far, have been translated for the first time). One can only express one's gratitude to the translators for their mediating work, ask them to provide the Western reader with further translations in future, and utter the hope that we will have some English translations too, sooner or later.

The second event which will be reported here is the publication of G.L. Permyakov's "*Foundations of structural paremiology*" (Moscow 1988), compiled by Georgij Leonidovich Kapchits and provided with a short introduction by him. In Permyakov's notes (his archive is preserved in the Institute of Oriental Studies at the Soviet Academy of Sciences), one can find a remark by Permyakov that he himself had planned to compile his articles in one volume — the present book can be regarded as the result of this wish, and it is definitely more than just a sign of friendship by Georgij Kapchits.

For the most part, one finds already previously published articles (partially under modified headings), but there is a lot of unpublished material from Permyakov's archive, too, which partially gives additional interesting insights.

Let us quickly enumerate the most important of his previously published works included in the present volume: "The classification of proverbial expressions — the system of the logical transformation of proverbs" (1968), "On the motivation of the overall meaning of complex language forms" (1970), "On the semantic transformation of some folklore sujets and configurations" (1972), "On the question concerning the structure of the paremiological stock" (1975), "On the semantic structure of proverbial expressions and a corresponding classification" (1978), "On the phenomena of paremiological homonymy and

synonymy" (1974), "On the semantic correspondence of proverbial expressions".

The theoretical annotations to Permyakov's collection "Proverbs and Proverbial Sayings from Oriental Peoples" (1979) have been included as well as the "Universal Thematic Index".

In addition to this, there is a whole section concerning Permyakov's theoretical and empirical research into a paremiological minimum in Russian. We find here not only his relevant theoretical considerations and the text of the questionnaires given to the subjects tested, but also an enumeration of the 75 most frequent paremiological comparisons, previously published in *Proverbium* (25) 1975, and, for the first time, a list of the 500 most frequent proverbial expressions of different kinds. Unfortunately, there is no detailed explanation given about the method of empirical investigation, and there are no percentages given for the single entries. Still, there can be no doubt about the extreme value of this material which will, in future, have to be subject to further statistical analyses and intercultural comparisons.

In the "Dispersed Notes" included in a special section of the volume, Permyakov himself points out the need for intercultural comparisons, not only synchronically, but also diachronically. — It may be interesting to note that the investigation of a German/Serbocroatian paremiological minimum is in preparation, at present, by the author of the present report and by colleagues from Germany and Yugoslavia. The investigation of further minima would be desirable for intercultural typological comparisons.

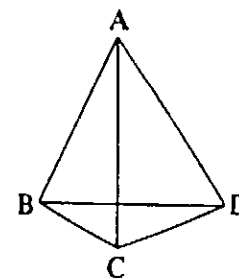
In the section in question, there are many other valuable remarks. Thus, for instance, one finds explicit reflections on the notion of 'sign' and on the notion of 'model'. Although both terms are more or less central to Permyakov's theory, their explicit analysis was formerly practically excluded or used in a more or less intuitive way. In this respect, Permyakov's approach is fully in line with the characteristics of the so-called Moscow-Tartu school of semiotics, which is best understood as representing a research strategy of what is usually called applied semiotics.

Irrespective of the intriguing originality of this school, the overall applied orientation sometimes results in a lack of theoretical clarification, and may thus lead to conceptual complications (cf. Grzybek 1989). Partially, this also has to be said about Permyakov's theoretical

remarks, in particular about his short essay "On the structure of the paremiological sign", which has previously been published in German in the above-mentioned "*Semiotische Studien zum Sprichwort*" (1984). One should not forget, however, that we are concerned here with preliminary ideas which were never published during Permyakov's lifetime. Still, these considerations offer interesting perspectives which should not remain uncommented on here.

According to Permyakov one should regard the paremiological sign (a special case of the sign in general) as a tetrahedral sign consisting of:

- (A) the real situation,
- (B) the sign as such—Permyakov speaks of the "significate" [signified], in this context, most probably meaning the "significant" [signifier];
- (C) the explicit description of the sign's literal meaning—according to Permyakov this corresponds to Frege's "Sinn" (meaning);
- (D) the interpretation of the sign and its complete description—according to Permyakov, this corresponds to Frege's "Bedeutung" (reference).



At first sight, these distinctions seem to be contradictory in themselves, since (A) and (D), i.e. the situation of reality and the situation referred to, seem to be identical. Permyakov, however, attributes (A) to extra-semiotic reality, (D) to the realm of consciousness: obviously, this has nothing to do with Frege, but throws an interesting light not only on the relation between (paremiological) sign and consciousness, but between sign and reality, too. This holds true for various further remarks in other passages of this section, too, in which Permyakov maintains that by denoting a situation one, at the same time, determines it and defines its place among other situations.

There are many other reflections to be found in this section, the status of which is best described as "ideas", and which are partially worth

being taken as serious hypotheses, e.g. on the notion of 'model', on semantic indefiniteness, on the interrelation of proverb and riddle etc.

Resuming then, this volume offers the reader not only a good overview of Permyakov's activities, but also presents an insight into the development of his thoughts in the course of the 15 years of his active research. Additionally, one finds a lot of new material, the value of which is not diminished by the fact that it has not been worked out as systematically as was characteristic of Permyakov's works published during his lifetime.

In an attempt to provide the reader with the state of the current paremiological scene in the Soviet Union, many more paremiological works would have to be mentioned in this report, demonstrating the overwhelming activity of Soviet structurally or semiotically oriented paremiologists in the last few years. But such a comprehensive overview of the most recent results and tendencies must be left to a special treatment and cannot be given here "en passant".

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