

REVIEW ARTICLES

Irina Nikolaeva, Elena Perekhvalskaya, and Maria Tolskaya. *Udeghe (Udihe) Folk Tales*. (Tunguso-Sibirica, herausgegeben von M. Weiers and H.-R. Kämpfe, Band 10). Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2002. Pp. 193.

Reviewed by Wolfgang Schulze (University of Munich)

Following Maslova 2001, the present book is the second volume of the *Tunguso-Sibirica* Series edited by Michael Weiers and Hans-Rainer Kämpfe that concentrates on the documentation of narratives and folk tales in one of the languages of Central and Eastern Siberia. Whereas Maslova 2001 relates to Yukaghir, the volume prepared by Nikolaeva, Perekhvalskaya and Tolskaya (*Udeghe (Udihe) Folk Tales*, UFT) addresses the Southern Tungus language Udeghe (or: Udihe, Udegey etc.). The highly endangered language is spoken by some 100 to 150 people in basically four of the twelve or thirteen Udihe settlements located at the Ussuri and Amur tributaries Iman, Bikin, Khor, and Anyui (in the 'Russian Far East'). Udeghe or Udihe (the name for the language used by the two of the authors in their voluminous description of the language (Nikolaeva & Tolskaya 2001)) shows up in two dialectal varieties: Northern and Southern Udihe. UFT concerns the southern dialect as spoken in the basin of the Bikin river (a tributary of the Amur river running through the Sikhote-Alin mountain range some 500 km north of Vladivostok). More precisely, the data stem from Udihe speakers living in the settlement Krasnyj Jar at the Bikin river.

Contrary to the northern varieties of Udihe, folklore traditions have hardly ever been investigated with respect to the Southern Udihe speech community. A few tales are documented in Nikolaeva & Tolskaya 2001 as well as in a textbook for local usage (Perekhvalskaya 1991), which — as the authors of UFT say — is not “available outside the local community” (p.9). Hence, the overall 27 tales given in UFT represent an important and factually unique data base both for research in the linguistics of Udihe and in Udihe folklore traditions.

The book starts with a brief 'Preface' that informs the reader about the technical aspects of the documentation process. All texts have been recorded from Udihe speakers in the years 1984 to 1997. Quite in accordance with the fieldwork standard, other Udihe speakers had later been asked to translate the

recorded texts. These speakers were allowed adding or changing the original data — changes that are carefully documented in the edition. Fortunately, the editors did not intervene to ‘clear’ the texts of the many Russian calques or loans as well as from code switching techniques, typical for a number of texts in UFT.

In addition, the authors use the Preface to inform the reader about aspects of articulatory peculiarities, about glossing techniques, and problems related to the translation of the documented texts. With respect to the glossing techniques, the authors address a ‘classical’ problem in the interlinear analysis of texts: Should polysemy be mirrored in the glosses or reduced to a ‘basic’ meaning? The authors give the example of Udihe *egdi* that may be glossed as ‘many’ or as ‘much’, and *b’a-* meaning both ‘get’ and ‘find’, “depending on the context” (p.10). An example for the use of *b’a-* is (glosses and translation slightly modified):

- (1) *si ute-be nixe-lie e-zeŋe-i b’a-gi* [T 10,35]
you:SG DIST-like do-CC:SS AUX:NEG-FUT-2SG find
‘You will not find her (doing it) this way.’
- (2) *kui-ne-mi b’a-gi-zeŋe-i* [T 9, 29]
force-DEST-REFL get-REP-FUT-2SG
‘You will get your strength (> become stronger).’

The position taken by the authors is not undisputable. In fact, it mixes up aspects of metalinguistic representation and translation. It may well be that from the point of view of e.g. Cognitive Semantics, the two readings of *egdi* and *b’a-* can be represented in terms of a single conceptual entity that is blended with the conceptual ‘surroundings’. Nevertheless, the way chosen by the authors guarantees that the interlinear glosses become immediately transparent. Hence, they serve a practical rather than a theoretically well-founded purpose. Unfortunately, the rich system of interjections is indifferently covered by the gloss INTJ. The same wholes for the complex system of focal particles (glossed ‘FOC’). In fact, interjections and other types of particles play an important role in the pragmatic organization of Udihe texts (see Nikolaeva & Tolskaya 2001: 437–474). Information on the distribution and functions of these interjections and particles as reflected in the Udihe corpus would have been highly desirable. This aspect also becomes apparent from the fact that in UFT, interjections are sometimes neglected in the translation, compare (glosses slightly modified, see Nikolaeva & Tolskaya 2001: 466–7 for the ‘conclusive’ particle *ge*):

- (3) *ge uti belie* “*ge ele einenji deunce-ze-f(i)*” [T 25,220]
 INTJ DIST fairy INTJ enough today have=rest-SUBJ-1PL:ICL
 ‘The fairy (said): “Well, enough, let’s have a rest for today.’

In the ‘Preface’, the authors themselves refer to this problem without, however, explaining their decision. In addition, they note that the “understanding of the texts may be difficult without additional ethnographic information” (p.11). In order to compensate for this aspect, they refer to four publications (e.g. Krušanov 1989) that include information on the Udihe traditional culture. Unfortunately, some of these sources are not easily accessible to Western scholars (e.g. Simonov et al. 1998). Accordingly, a brief survey of the Udihe culture would indeed have been helpful to the user of UFT.

The fact that such information is missing is related to the seize of UFT: The book contains 193 pages, 180 of which are devoted to the documentation of the tales. Obviously, the authors had faced strong restrictions set up either by the editors of the Tunguso-Sibirica Series or by the publisher. These restrictions have at least two consequences: On the one hand, the authors could not include lexical data in terms of a vocabulary (Udihe-English and English-Udihe) that would also give cross-references to all occurrences of an individual entry. The lack of such a vocabulary makes the book less useful to linguistic investigations. In fact, the reader has to browse through the whole corpus in order to retrieve for instance examples of a special constructional pattern. Likewise, users interested in the semantic scope of individual entries have to go through the Udihe texts (here again the above-mentioned trend to observe metaphorical and polysemic variations renders it difficult to retrieve specific items with the help of the interlinear glosses). Hence, the reader has to refer to a separate documentation of the Udihe lexicon. Here, the only material available for the southern dialect is included in Nikolaeva & Tolskaya 2001. However note that this volume covers the Udihe lexicon in terms of a ‘Thematic lexicon’ (roughly some 1.200 entries). The only alphabetically organized lexicon (Simonov & Kjalundzjuga 1998–1999) relates to the northern (Khor) dialect of Udihe.

On the other hand, space restrictions obviously conditioned that the texts had to be documented and glossed in a very condensed form: There is no separating line between the glosses and the following new line, a fact that renders it somewhat difficult to go through the Udihe texts. Nevertheless, this shortcoming is compensated by the numbering of each phrase, which is then matched in the translation.

Although the authors give a list of abbreviations used in the glosses (p. 7), the analyses presented in the glosses can actually only be used in reference to the

Udihe grammar prepared by two of the UFT authors (Nikolaeva & Tolskaya 2001). Actually, UFT can be regarded as an extension to Chapter 25 of the Udihe grammar ('Texts'). The texts given in UFT are of different length. They range from 16 phrasal units (Tale 25) to 299 such units (Tale 15). In sum, UFT entails 2.252 'phrases'. If we calculate an average of eight words per phrase, we arrive at a corpus of roughly 18.000 word tokens. It is interesting to see that some texts are of nearly equal length. For instance, seven texts contain 24–29 phrases, eight texts 54–67 phrases, and three texts exactly 100 phrases. It is up to the specialist to judge whether such distribution patterns reflect specific preferences in the organization of Udihe narrative texts.

This review cannot be the place to inform in details about the contents of the Udihe narratives given in UFT. Unfortunately, the authors do not tell us, to which extent the given tales belong to the actual cultural knowledge (and practice) of the Udihe community and whether they represent ritualized texts or spontaneous reformulations of narrative traditions. Tale 27 ('The shaman') for instance is said to "visibly illustrate[s] the fragile state of the modern Udeghe language." (p.188, fn. 97). The text is marked for a higher number of Russian phrases especially in the beginning of a paragraph. An example is (glosses slightly modified):

- (4) *(v)se derevnja nikogo ni-de anči* [T 27,10]
 all village nobody:GEN who-FOC NOT:existing
 'There wasn't anybody in the whole village.'

This strong tendency towards code switching suggests that the tale at issue is not 'entrenched' as such, but remembered for its plot. On the other hand, the authors give a short list of lexemes (pp.11–2) that occur in the texts but are only used in folklore (for instance *belie* '[a] beautiful, skilful and clever girl or young woman, sometimes with supernatural powers', *jegdige* '[a] brave young man and a good hunter, who represents an ideal male character' (p.11), *kanda mafa* 'old man' (p.12)). The restriction in usage suggests that at least parts of the tales are made up of ritualized passages. Such a background is also suggested by the fact that some of the tales given in UFT show motifs that also occur in the northern Udihe tradition. The UFT authors carefully note such correspondences at the appropriate place.

In sum, UFT represents a very valuable and unique collection of Southern Udihe texts that will hopefully find a great audience. The texts can be used both for linguistic purposes (serving both Tungusic linguistics as well as language typologists) and specialists in local and comparative folklore. For instance, it

would be an interesting task to apply a Proppian analysis to these texts (Propp 1928) or to examine the lexicon with respect to metaphorization processes, blending, or embodiment (compare for instance the semantic scope of *ba*: ~ *bua* “that may indicate ‘nature, universe, place, sky’ (...) ‘outside, in the forest’” (p.11)). Likewise, the collection invites the reader to elaborate constructional patterns and their distribution in textual discourse. All these (and in fact many more) perspectives can be taken by the user who, however, will either have to have at hands the Udihe grammar by Nikolaeva & Tolskaya (2001) or who is familiar with Tungusic languages as such. It is a pity that the extremely experienced and highly engaged authors obviously had to face problems of space. The book (as it is) thus may be difficult to use for people not trained in Tungusic languages. Nevertheless, it represents an impressive piece of work that helps to document important aspects of the cultural tradition of a highly endangered speech community in the ‘Far East’. Hopefully, the authors will continue working on this language and add a comprehensive dictionary that makes comprehensive reference towards the present text collection.

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