

The Folklore Archive of the Russian State University for the Humanities in Moscow

Andrei Moroz

The subject of the article is the field research of the folk tradition of the northern Russian area (the region of Kargopol, Archangelskaya oblast), led by the folklore and ethnolinguistic expedition of the Russian State University for the Humanities (RSUH) since 1993 until now, and the expedition data archive. The expeditions are organized 1–3 times a year, the participants include professors, postgraduate and undergraduate students of the RSUH. Several groups take part in the expedition, each consisting of 10–15 people who investigate one village during 2–4 weeks. The expedition is aimed at collecting ethnographic, ethnolinguistic and folkloric data, which could give a researcher the opportunity to get as detailed as possible a description of a modern folk culture state in the region.

The main method of the field research used during the expedition work is interviewing a considerable part of the village inhabitants – about 20–60% – using 27 questionnaires that concern different spheres of the traditional culture, the audio records are later deciphered, and deciphered texts make the card index.

The computer version of the archive has been created in the Laboratory of Folklore since 1997. The multimedia database “Traditional culture of Northern Russia (Kargopol region)” contains written texts, audio records of some fragments of interviews and graphic data (photos, scanned manuscripts, containing incantations, prayers, songs, etc). The database includes now about 20% of all archive materials. The card index contains about 120000 cards, while the database – about 23000 cards.

The folklore and ethnolinguistic expedition of the Russian State University for the Humanities (RSUH) was organized in 1993, and since then it has been leading the field researches. One of the northern districts of Russia – Kargopol region of the Archangelskaya oblast - was selected as a research area. The expedition is financed by the University and the Russian State Foundation for the Humanities (grants of the RFH №№96-04-18004, 97-04-18026, 01-04-18007e).

The main method of the field research used during the expedition work is interviewing of a considerable part of the village inhabitants – about 20–60% – using 27 questionnaires that concern different spheres of the traditional culture: wedding rituals; maternity rituals; funeral rituals¹; winter calendar rituals; spring calendar rituals; summer calendar rituals; autumn calendar rituals; rituals and beliefs connected to sowing and harvest; cattle-breeding rituals and beliefs²; building rituals; rituals and beliefs connected

1 М. Д. Алексеевский. Похоронно-поминальная обрядность// Актуальные проблемы полевой фольклористики. Вып. 2. Москва. 2003. Р. 112–118.

2 А. А. Трофимов. Скотоводство// Актуальные проблемы полевой фольклористики. Москва. 2002. С. 108–111.

to spinning and weaving; baking; utensils and clothing; folk demonology (mythology); the conception of nature and time; meteorological magic; rituals and beliefs connected to plants; rituals and beliefs connected to animals, hunters' and fishermen's magic; rituals and beliefs connected to birds; insects; folk medicine; non-ritual folklore texts; folk christianism³; «folk Bible»⁴; folk pedagogics⁵; children's folklore; traditional meals⁶. A part of the questionnaires is written by the expedition participants especially for its needs and reflects the particular features of the local folk culture. Others are based on the questionnaires used in the ethnolinguistic expedition to Polesye organized by the Institute of Slavistics RAS which were adapted for use in northern Russia. These questionnaires were partly published in the "Polessky etnolingvistichesky sbornik"⁷. One of the reasons for the adaptation of the Polesye expedition's questionnaires was the methodical difference between field researches. The main aim of the polesskaya expedition was the revelation of several most archaic facts characteristic for the Slavic traditional culture, as are beliefs, rites, folklore motifs. Our expedition is aimed at collecting ethnographic, ethnolinguistic and folkloric data, which could give a researcher the opportunity to provide as detailed as possible a description of a modern folk culture state in the region.

The interviewing of informants is conducted within the single scheme in order to make easier the comparison of data collected in different villages. The expedition participants do not select informants, quite the contrary – collecting data from members of the different social and age groups of peasants is considered very important (for example, there is a large group of so called «dachniki» – people who were born in the investigated villages, but have been living in big cities such as Archangelsk or Severodvinsk for a long time and who spend just some period of time in their native villages). Such an approach is effective when we try to get information about the modern state of folk culture and its role in the village life.

The expeditions are organized 1–3 times a year; the participants include professors, postgraduate and undergraduate students of the RSUH. Several groups take part in the expedition, each consisting of 10–15 people who investigate one village during 2–4 weeks under the general supervision of the Head of the Laboratory of Folklore A. Moroz. During the period of the expedition activity the Kargopol region was investigated completely. Every village of the area (totally more than 30) has been described. A few of them were visited twice. The region center – town of the Kargopol – was also investigated twice. The method of total field research of the territory allows us to accomplish more detailed fixation of the areal distinctions of the folk culture and dialect of the described area, to create microgeographical notes on the diffusion of different ethnocultural facts, to study its dynamics and development, and to discover any cultural contacts between this region and the neighbouring ones.

³ М. М. Каспина, А.Б. Мороз. Народное православие// Актуальные проблемы полевой фольклористики. М. 2002. Р. 111-117.

⁴ М. М. Каспина. «Народная Библия»// Актуальные проблемы полевой фольклористики. Москва. 2002. Р. 117-120

⁵ Л. Р. Хафизова. Народная педагогика// Актуальные проблемы полевой фольклористики. Москва. 2002. Р. 100-108.

⁶ И. А. Морозов, А.Б. Мороз. Традиционное застолье// Актуальные проблемы полевой фольклористики. Москва. 2002. Р. 125-128.

⁷ Полесский этнолингвистический сборник (материалы и исследования). Москва. 1983.

The main method used during the field research is interviewing, the audio records are later deciphered, and deciphered texts make the card index. The structure of the card index is determined by the use of questionnaires and their structure. Each questionnaire contains 15–40 questions, and an interviewer should obtain answers to them during an interview. In general each answer is written on a particular card which is placed in the index according to the number of the question; the data are placed in the index according to the scheme: village → questionnaire (topic of the interview) → question.

But a real dialogue between an interviewer and an informant is not a set of questions and answers, organized according to a structure of a questionnaire. On the contrary, usually it looks like an unconstrained conversation that follows the logic of the informant's speech, his/her associations etc, so that many digressions from the main topic of the interview are possible. During a questioning, the interviewer often puts additional questions to define the received information more exactly, to get a wider description of some facts, to explicate the meaning of a word or a passage which was not comprehended correctly, etc. Finally we get a complicated narrative that often could not be divided into several short passages to put them into different parts of the index. Even quite independent fragments of an interview are usually connected by the informant's associations or logical links.

So the question arises: how to divide the text of an interview into parts to classify? The problem is like this: on the one hand, when dividing a text into several short fragments containing a description of any ritual, belief or one folklore text, the researcher takes the text out of its context and makes it lose associations with the other parts of the same interview. On the other hand, an attempt to preserve these associations and context leads to a concentration of a great sum of information on one card (archive unit) and hampers the information search because of the attribution of a card to one or several questions of a questionnaire. Mainly, the question of criteria for dividing an interview into some parts is answered intuitively. A simple reduplication of materials could of course make the search of information easier, but would overly increase the archive content and in the upshot hamper the search of data. It is impossible to avoid this difficulty using only the "paper" archive.

Only the use of a database may solve this problem. The database "Traditional culture of Northern Russia (Kargopol region)" has been created in the Laboratory of Folklore since 1997. The multimedia database is a computer version of a folklore archive created as a result of a 10-year field research of the region. It contains written texts, audio records of some fragments of interviews, graphic data (photos, scanned manuscripts, containing incantations, prayers, songs etc). The work on the database is supported by the Russian State Foundation for the Humanities (grants of the RFH №№99 -04-12024B, 02-05-12026B) and Association Henry Durand, Université Paris-IV, Sorbonne.

The database does not contain any analysis of field data, for its aim is to give a researcher in folk culture access to materials collected by the expeditions that have been investigating the tradition of Kargopol region over 10 years, and to provide tools which could lighten search and selection of information as much as possible. In the other words the purpose of the database is to make the "paper", photo and audio archives available to researchers. This aim determines the database structure, which is similar to our card index.

The information unit in the database is a "card" – just like in the "paper" archive. The card is a text containing one interview fragment written on one card of the card index. The

paper cards also contain a description of the records: numbers of the questionnaire and the question, name of the village where data were recorded, researcher's and informant's cipher, year of the expedition. All these data are located in special fields in the base and may be shown at the user's request. The database also contains the questionnaires and the informants list, including short biographies of the latter. Some texts – the most representative – are associated with audio records, which may be played when the corresponding text is open. Listening to audio files gives a user the possibility to verify deciphered records and correct an interviewer's possible mistakes. It also allows for listening to the original text performance and dialect.

A database user may not only review information according to the parameters 'village → questionnaire (topic of the interview) → question', as is also possible in the card index, but can also search information through all texts using the system of text search. A user should enter any letter set into a query field 'text' to find it. The program will search it through all cards in the database considering or ignoring letter case. But this simplest search mode is not always effective enough. The dialect word may be used in different cases, with different diacritics, in different transcription (according to the dialect and individual pronunciation), besides the sought word may not be present in the text, although its meaning may be expressed by other words.

Therefore the main search tools are so called "key words". That is a list of words that denote essential categories of the traditional culture, relevant for ethnologic descriptions, notions, including objects, phenomena, actions, characteristics, and genre denominations for texts and rites. Each archive text may be described by a selection of the key words from the glossary⁸, which are entered into the appropriate database field.

The selection of the key words describes mainly their content, so that synonyms, dialecticisms, phonetic and morphological variants, and grammatical forms may be reduced to one «title» word. This word may also denote a phenomenon which is not nominated directly in the text. Key words do not contain any analytical information; therefore the researcher may avoid alien sight of the material. The database also gives the opportunity to compile a complex query including any combination of named parameters (village, informant, questionnaire, question(s), text, key word).

The database includes now about 20% of all archive materials. The card index contains about 120000 cards, while the database – about 23000 cards.

The database and the card index archive also includes audio files (recorded interviews), photos and video records.

The folklore archive of the Laboratory of Folklore is available to specialists; the organizers are looking forward to any contacts with colleagues. Any detailed information on the expedition and archive may be received on the internet site of the Laboratory of Folklore (www.ruthenia.ru/folklore/folklorelaboratory) or by e-mail labfolk@rsuh.ru.

⁸ The glossary was adopted by us from the database "Polessky archive" operating in the Department of ethnolinguistic and folklore of the Institute for Slavic studies of RAS and adapted to be used for description the data of Northern Russia. The glossary and the principles of its use were published in the article: А.Б.Мороз. Из опыта работы над базой данных «Традиционная культура Русского Севера (Каргополье)»// Актуальные проблемы полевой фольклористики. Вып. 2. Москва. 2003. Р. 85-99.

Folklorni arhiv Ruske državne univerze za humanistične vede v Moskvi

Andrei Moroz

V članku so predstavljene terenske raziskave ljudskega izročila s severnoruskega ozemlja (pokrajina Kargopol, Archangelska upravna enota), ki jo vodi folklorna in etnolingvistična odprava Ruske državne univerze za humanistične vede (RSUH) od leta 1993 do današnjih dni. Prav tako je predstavljen arhiv zbranega gradiva odprav. Odprave so organizirane enkrat do trikrat na leto. Med člani odprave so profesorji, podiplomski in dodiplomski študenti te univerze. Več skupin – po deset do petnajst ljudi – se udeleži odprave in skupaj raziskujejo posamezno vas dva do štiri tedne. Namen odprave je dokumentirati etnografska, etnolingvistična in folklorna dejstva in podatke, ki bi zbrani na terenu omogočili raziskovalcu, da dobi vpogled v sodobno življenje in ljudsko kulturo raziskovanega območja, in to tako podrobno, kolikor je le mogoče.

Glavna metoda terenskega dela odprave je intervjuvanje dela vaškega prebivalstva – okoli 20–60% – pri tem pa člani odprave uporabljajo sedemindvajset vprašalnic, ki se nanašajo na različna področja tradicionalne kulture. Magnetofonsko posneto gradivo pozneje transkribirajo in prepisano gradivo je nato razvrščeno po kartotečnih karticah.

Elektronski arhiv pripravljajo v Folklornem laboratoriju od leta 1997 dalje. Multi-medijska podatkovna baza »Tradicionalna kultura Severne Rusije (pokrajine Kargopol)« vsebuje napisana besedila, zvočne posnetke nekaterih fragmentov intervjujev in grafične podatke (fotografije, skenirane rokopise, ki vsebujejo zagovore, molitve, pesmi ipd.). V podatkovni bazi je zdaj približno 20% vsega arhivskega materiala. Kartotečni arhiv tako vsebuje 120.000 kartotečnih lističev, podatkovna baza pa okrog 23.000 enot.

V arhivu so shranjeni tudi avdioposnetki, fotografije in videoposnetki.

Več informacij o odpravah in arhivu lahko najdete na spletnih straneh Folklornega laboratorija (www.ruthenia.ru/folklore/folklorelaboratory) ali prek elektronske pošte (labfolk@rush.ru).