

## Reviews

---

*Ethnographia* 125(2):1–104 (2014)

---

*Diána Vonnák*

Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle

Following a keynote article by János Szulovszky, „Can there be a Christian scholarly approach to the anthropology of religion,” a fairly wide-ranging debate developed in the columns of *Ethnographia*. (*Ethnographia* is the quarterly periodical of the Hungarian Ethnographical Society since 1890.) Through the ideological and methodological criticism of an article by Éva Pócs, and of the wider Hungarian ethnographic scholarly community as a whole, the treatise poses the following question: is scholarly objectivity strictly secular? He then proceeds, in a quite sharp and provocative tone, to advocate for the possibility of a Christian-oriented scholarship. The treatise is followed, on the one hand, by responses from Éva Pócs, Gábor Klaniczay, Gábor Vargyas and Tamás Mohay, which, beyond their immediate reactions, outline a possible broader scholarly context for the debate. On the other hand, Ágnes Hesz, Csaba Mészáros and Zoltán Nagy, while not directly discussing the treatise itself but building upon the issue it raised, plug it into one of the most pressing contemporary international debates.

The latter three articles might provide the real significance of the debate, despite the fact that they drift relatively far off course from the original problem inasmuch as they do not deal with Christianity itself but with researchers' religiosity in general (Hesz), the epistemological situation of indigenous, shamanistic researchers (Nagy), and with the perspectivism/epistemological relativism proposed by postcolonial anthropology (Mészáros). Szulovszky's proposal relates solely to Christianity, building on its deep intertwinement with rational scholarship, among other things, which he sees as an exceptional property in relation to other religions, and thus he is not likely to be persuaded by shamanistic or animistic examples as parallels. With this in mind, I shall attempt to present the dispute in a way that also covers the special situation of the issue of Christian scholarship.

With the rise of classic anthropological authors like Evans-Pritchard and Mary Douglas, the relationship of emic/etic approaches, scholarship and local terminology has been an important anthropological theme, as it is stated in Gábor Vargyas' response. In its contemporary form, through the analysis of the researcher's epistemological commitment, the debate questions whether it is politically and ethically problematic to view the scholarly discourse as a kind of meta-discourse whose interpretations provide more fundamental truths than the informants' own terminology. That is to say, is the language of academic ethnography ultimately suited to provide legitimate explanations for any object in a way that only takes into account its own (agnostic and objectivist) criteria? If we cannot find convincing arguments for the preeminent validity of scholarly epistemology, it becomes difficult to argue that the perception of a researcher seeing a wild boar run through the village is more correct than the local villagers' who see a spirit

in this same phenomenon (Csaba Mészáros' example). Similarly problematic would be a description of possession in which the researcher's – possibly secular – interpretation would appear to dominate the interpretation of the individual and the community experiencing the possession.

Éva Pócs' response, in addition to exhibiting a calm and humble attitude that is exemplary, rejects the above proposition from the outset, arguing that the sphere of the researcher's personal life is separate from the research sphere, so his/her religiosity has no potential impact on his/her analysis. According to this perspective, scholarly objectivity is a clear and unambiguous criterion, which includes value-neutrality and scholarly detachment. The debate between schools of religious phenomenology and reductionism analyzed by Ágnes Hesz is a good illustration of the fact that few people would follow Éva Pócs in her stance since the postmodern revolution. However, it should also be taken into account that however widespread the critical literature may be, the scholarly conduct adopted by Éva Pócs, built on fieldwork and respecting the informants' position in all cases, is as close to the scientific ideal she set for herself as possible, so her agnosticism infringes neither the atheist nor the Christian readers' and researchers' sensibilities. However, if we accept that personal elements may inevitably leak into the scholarly description, it behooves us to address another issue.

The difficulty of separating emic/etic positions is just as obvious in the case of indigenous researchers as it is among researchers who, as a result of fieldwork, change their value-system and „become native.” In such situations, the often conflicting epistemological positions and methodological preferences manifest not in the relationship between researcher and researched but within the research community itself. Szulovszky's initial outburst sort of illustrates this – the position of a religious researcher feeling marginalized and overlooked along with his own canon. However, despite marginalization – which results from the sociology of science and institutional framework – being a legitimate and important area in the discourses of contemporary anthropology, history of science and science of religion, an indication to such is totally absent from Szulovszky's text. Éva Pócs' accusation of outdated resource utilization seems slightly strange, given that Szulovszky's proposal seems novel, according to his self-concept, except for some German-language work cited, most of whom were not authors employing Christian epistemology but rather theologians. Talal Asad, Tanya Luhmann, Saba Mahmood or Charles Taylor are all authors who could have helped in bringing up a sensitive, more up-to-date issue, which was left instead to the discussion partners.

Since in their response Éva Pócs, as well as Gábor Klaniczay and Tamás Mohay, try to show that the accusation of „vulgar Marxist” discrimination presumed by Szulovszky is untrue in the Hungarian scholarly context, the last point for us to address is the question of the role of theology. If we agree with Éva Pócs' response, a position that Klaniczay and Mohay also seem to represent, Christian theological works appear only as a source, as part of the emic discourse. For the field researcher this often means that their importance in relation to local practice becomes secondary, because it is not vis-à-vis church authority that the researched religious practice gains significance. The perspectivism and postmodern anthropological practice outlined by Csaba Mészáros would not necessarily allow the emic/etic perspectives to appear in such a binary opposition, so theology would be considered one voice among the many voices reflecting on each other. Szulovszky's solution seems to suggest that he sees theology as part of the etic discourse, even if

utilized in somewhat self-limiting ways. It is perhaps this aspect of the debate that remains the most unresolved and which for exactly this reason would be worthwhile to continue working on in hopes of a future consensus.

Based on the above, it turns out that the religious-anthropological role of Christian paradigms is important in regard to their scientific validity and their relationship to the researched subject, as well as in their practical, sociology of scientific knowledge sense. The often radical innovations and explicit emic commitment of native researchers presented by Zoltán Nagy may provide a highly accurate analogy for Szulovszky's treatise, in some respects even holding up a curved mirror to it, yet the presented movement has not become as much of a theoretic challenge as its Christian counterparts. This is probably due in part to theology having significant roots within European scholarship, as well as to the never-ceasing debate about the Christian conceptual roots of secular scholarship. Overall, it seems that Szulovszky was kicking in an open door in regards to exclusion and the importance of theology, since his discussion partners did not represent a position different than his. If we accept this, the real outstanding issue remains whether scholarly discourse deserves preferred validity, and, consequently, whether theology should appear in Christian religious anthropology as an interdisciplinary secondary literature or as a primary source. The answers provide exciting propositions in these areas, but certainly leave enough room for further discussions.

---

MÉSZÁROS, Csaba: *Tekintély és bizalom. Kultúra és társadalom két szibériai faluközösségben* [Authority and trust. Culture and society in two Siberian village communities]. 2013, Pécs – Budapest: PTE – Kulturális Antropológia Tanszék, MTA BTK Néprajztudományi Intézet, L'Harmattan Kiadó, 359.

---

István Sántha

Institute of Ethnology, RCH, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest

According to the title of the book, Csaba Mészáros, a Hungarian ethnographer and a specialist in Mongolian studies, is writing about authority, trust, culture and society in two Siberian village communities. This is one of the important recent books that follow the old traditions of Hungarian ethnologists (such as Antal Reguly, Bernát Munkácsi, or Vilmos Diószegi and Éva Schmidt, among others) working in Siberia from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. This monograph is also in the line of monographs published recently by the new generation of Siberianists in Hungary, such as Eszter Ruttkay-Miklián, Zoltán Nagy, and the author of this review, whose intention is to describe various aspects of life in particular Siberian communities based on long-term fieldwork in accordance with the western requirements of socio-cultural anthropology and the possibilities for conducting fieldwork that opened after Gorbachov's Perestroika in the Soviet Union and Russia at the end of the 1980s. The main argument of the book is a proposition to see society (culture and history) in Siberia as a result of continuous interactions between the state and local people, sometimes partly mediated by ethnographers. So, for example, the history of ethnography in the region is the history of interactions between state interests and the

activities of ethnographers in the region supported by the state in particular periods. The author does not register any significant impact of western anthropologists working in Yakutia upon this web of interactions (between state and local people). The main method of analysis is a comparison of the society and culture of two villages: one “Sakha” (Yakut), the other ‘Evenki’ (Tungus). However, the main objective of the comparison is not the presentation of these (and other) ethnic groups, not even that of a local (regional) culture, as it is expected, but instead the analysis of how the available versions of social and cultural organizations and institutions are performed in these localities in particular periods in interaction with the state. Through the comparison of two village communities, the author provides descriptions and summaries (about perception of environment; resettlement, collectivization, de-collectivization, privatization; various forms of cattle economy; kinship, territorial and friend relationships, etc.), and introduces the reader to the broader context of Siberianist anthropology.

This approach is in accordance with recent trends in social anthropology, especially the proposed careful incorporation of categories used in postcolonial studies in the analysis of post-socialist materials. The author also uses Bourdieu’s social capital theory in the analysis of social relationships, as well as theories rooted in hunter-gatherer studies (the works of Tim Ingold, David Anderson and Nurit Bird-David on the analysis of perception of environment, among others). His other objective is to present society as a dynamic phenomenon.

Authority, trust and family character are categories that provide the links between different parts of the book. Authority may emerge when a representative of a community successfully performs (manages) options available for the community, on the bases of his or her relation of a social web with the representatives of the state (bureaucrats) located in places closer to the centers and central power (of the state). Trust (or mistrust) are important categories to perform cohesion (or skepticism) among the members of the community in particular situations. The family characters are the available categories through which various members of a community have a chance to interpret order or disorder and to perform success or lack of success.

I appreciate very much an important aspect of this book: it gives tremendous and fine details (descriptions, classifications and summaries) about life in Northeastern Siberia. The body of material comprises mainly narratives collected through semi-structured interviews during long-term fieldwork in the region. At the same time, this feature is one of the limitations of the book, because the analyses of concrete events and situations based on personal observations were less systematic. Another important feature is that the author avoids the possibility of interpretations based on ethnicity, which could be a result of an intention to construct a politically correct analysis, but could also stem from a potential combination of the absence of references to ethnic perspectives and the domination of one particular group. I would expect the author to reflect on this danger more and discuss this problem. Another potential that I see in this text is to analyze how egalitarian features leak into the highly hierarchical structure of society in Yakutia. The author includes short references to this throughout his text but does not engage with this problem systematically.

Despite the very detailed descriptions and rich material, I would be interested to learn more about emic interpretations and reflections on local terms (for example, on ‘authority’ and ‘family character’).

Ultimately, I believe that publication of the book in English (and probably also in Russian) would be of high interest to social anthropologists, specialists working with narratives, ethnographers, specialists in Siberian studies, historians and interested readers.

---

MOREH, Christian: *Alcalá románok. Migráció és társadalmi differenciálódás* (Romanians of Alcalá. Migration and social differentiation). 2014, Budapest: L'Harmattan Kiadó, 227.

---

Tünde Lőrinczi

Institute of Ethnology, RCH, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest

The study of migration is a major area of study within contemporary social science. There are a number of theoretical and methodological approaches that attempt to describe and interpret migration as a social phenomenon, using keywords like transnationalism, diaspora, multi-sited ethnography, network, global society, or social capital. Cristián Moreh intends to guide us through the complex system of migratory processes by bringing this topic close to us. He investigates the *migratory way of life* of Romanians in a Spanish city, Alcalá de Henares, starting with their *migratory plans*, the way they organize their travel, their travelling, their relations to work and to the incipient Romanian civil society in Spain, as well as the social differentiation of this migrant community, one that comprises 10% of the overall population and more than half of the migrant population of a city of 200,000.

The introductory chapter starts with the description of the five-months-long fieldwork conducted in 2009, the methods used (participant observation, informal conversations and in-depth interviews), as well as the existing theoretical and methodological approaches. The latter mainly point out the scientific potential of the research topic as the author deals with them only briefly, centered on certain concepts (*migration system, migratory culture*). The main part of his analysis rests on internal explanatory models grounded in his field, producing a text that may be placed somewhere between a case study and a community study. The second part investigates the history of Romanian migration, its development and current contexts. It focuses on the questions of *who, when, how many, from where to where, why and how*, and it discusses various inter-state agreements, immigration legislation, as well as the ethnic, religious and urban geographical determinants of migration. The third chapter may be read as an itinerary based on personal experiences and impressions. The author here uses his own travel experience from Bucharest to Alcalá as a starting point for meditating on the limits and possibilities of migratory goals, and on the various challenges met during the process, such as finding your way in the city, renting an apartment, and dealing with the authorities. This part contains many useful tips and detailed practical information for anyone who intends to travel. The next chapter discusses the relation between work and success, and introduces the reader to the internal system and workings of the *migration culture* of Romanians in Alcalá. The author describes the social networks and their enabling and limiting effects on succeeding, the situatedness inherent in a *culture based on trust*, the effects of work ethic, the difference

between small and large corruption, and in the meantime we get a picture of a certain general *Romanian mentality*, of migrant lifeworlds and processes of self-stereotyping. The next chapter presents the self-organization and lobbying efforts of the Romanian elites, small entrepreneurs, intellectuals, and artists in Alcalá, discussing the personal and institutional determinants of political and cultural relations. Finally, the book concludes with a discussion on researching *community*, *diaspora*, and *social differentiation*.

One of the main strengths of Christián Moreh's book is its engaging style and personal voice. The author is able to bring the reader close to the stories, motivations, successes and failures of everyday people. This impression is reinforced by long quotations from interviews that offer us a glimpse into the dense network of Spanish and Romanian relations of the Romanian community in Alcalá, and into the personal stories of *getting on* and *making a decent living*. Such stories are representations also, narratives that reflect on personal ideas and desires, the expectations of those left behind and the stories of other migrants. One question we may ask ourselves while reading them is to what extent are they typical, and whether it is possible to describe through them the general mechanisms of the complex social phenomenon of migration.

*Romanians of Alcalá* leaves open various possibilities of reading and interpretation, and this makes it an exciting book for everyone. We can read it as a theoretical summary of contemporary migration studies, as a field diary full of personal stories, as a practical guidebook to Alcalá de Henares, or as a history of postsocialist Romanian mentalities and mobilities.

---

RUTTKAY-MIKLIÁN, Eszter: *Amikor a láb elnehezül* [When the foot wearies]. 2014, Budapest: L'Harmattan Kiadó, 265.

---

*Csaba Mészáros*

Institute of Ethnology, RCH, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest

Two years after her first book on the Khanty kinship system, Eszter Ruttkay-Miklián writes another book about the Khanty people living along the Sinya river. The book summarizes the Khanty's perceptions of cleanliness. Reading the book, it soon becomes clear that even more important than cleanliness is its counterpart of uncleanliness, and knowledge of the rules stemming from its avoidance, prevention and elimination is what pervades the daily life of the Khanty. The book summarizes in an easy to read, personal tone that is comprehensible even to lay people the rules and behavioral patterns linked to the phenomena of cleanliness and uncleanliness.

One of the greatest merits of the book is exactly this personal tone which immediately creates in the reader an attitude of confidence in the author. This confidence is elicited not only by the unique field and language expertise that characterizes all of the author's work, but also by the fact that Eszter Ruttkay-Miklián formulates her thoughts on the topic based on situations she has experienced and rules she has internalized during her lengthy fieldwork.

In the detailed description of a complex set of rules on uncleanliness, it becomes clear that research techniques based on fieldwork and participant observation require that the

researcher not only commit long-term to the research topic/area but also accept fieldwork as a lifestyle, namely because one cannot step out of the fieldwork position while staying in the field. Collecting does not end when the voice recorder is turned off or when the camera's shutter button is pressed. This life situation and research method often leads to a researcher getting personally engaged with the community (in fact, sometimes becoming a member) that was initially the subject of his/her interest. Thus the analytically approached research object sometimes becomes a subject in which the researcher's personality is dissolved.

This epistemological feature characterizes the study of cleanliness and uncleanness among the Khanty. During fieldwork conducted among the Khanty (especially for a woman who has extensive kinship in the researched community), one must be sure to familiarize oneself with and adhere to the rules which apply to the preservation of cleanliness and confinement of uncleanness. In other words, the rules described in the book all become behavioral patterns that the author had to not only learn but also practice every day.

Consequently, the book provides an extremely detailed and accurate roster of the Khanty's notions of cleanliness. Since protecting the household and human life from uncleanness is foremost the women's task, and because fertile women are one of the main carriers and sources of uncleanness, the author paid special attention in her processing of the topic to the position of women, the rules pertaining to women, as well as the behavioral patterns to be acquired by women throughout their life. Thus, an important part of the book is the 65-page appendix that contains details of the author's interviews with Khanty women.

One of the main goals of the book is to shed light on the relationship between cleanliness and uncleanness and the sacred and the profane. Concepts of cleanliness form a system among the Khanty. The road to understanding the Khanty system of cleanliness and uncleanness leads from simply dirty but still cleanable places and objects, through contamination caused by the presence of human beings, to uncleanness related to female bodily fluids and therefore surrounded by taboos. The human presentment of the clean as sacred and the unclean as profane is a well-known topos in international anthropology.

One of the distinct lines of thought in international research on religion following Durkheim's ideas assumes that every religion and belief system shares the common feature of classifying known phenomena and notions into two categories. One group includes those phenomena that are considered by a community profane and contaminated, the other group those that are holy and at once pure. At the same time, the mechanical opposition of the profane and the sacred worlds has received a lot of criticism. Most of the profound anthropological fieldwork shows that in most cases the notions considered sacred have their profane dimension. In this respect it is edifying, for example, the way Raymond Firth anchored the phenomenon of *mana*, which the anthropological literature on religion relates to the sacred world, within the everyday world of Tikopia. Eszter Ruttkay-Miklián also comes to this conclusion in the final, summary chapter of her book when she states that the two spheres are obviously not possible nor advisable to separate in the analysis of the Khanty lifeworld, because the two spheres mutually permeate each other. One can only agree with the author on this, adding also that explaining Khanty notions of cleanliness in the framework of discourse that is based on the opposition of the sacred and the profane might not prove to be practical in all cases.

---

ÁRENDÁS, Zsuzsa – SZELJAK, György (eds): *Vándorló tárgyak. Bevándorlók tárgykultúrája Magyarországon* [Migrating objects. The material culture of immigrants in Hungary]. 2014, Budapest: Néprajzi Múzeum [Tabula Könyvek 12], 280.

---

*Tünde Turai*

Institute of Ethnology, RCH, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest

In 2011, the staff of the Ethnographic Museum began a three-year research project titled „The Study of the Material Culture of Immigrant Groups in Budapest,” not even imagining that by the time the project’s final essays are published, third-world migrants will have become one of the most important topics of public discourse. For non-European, and especially for non-Hungarian migrants, Hungary is primarily a transit country; very few settle down here for the long term. Researchers only turned their attention to them in the last few years, therefore rather little is known about their local life and local homes, their integration, their everyday strategies, their relationships with the host and the departed communities, their plans for staying and/or continuing their migration.

The research providing the basis of the volume is museologically driven; the approach is object-oriented, a very innovative point of view within migration research and unprecedented in our country. The staff of the Museum of Ethnography seek solutions for the re-thinking of the limitations and possibilities of ethnographic museology in the early 21st century. Furthermore: How can global social phenomena be interpreted through objects (or their absence)? How can such objects be contextualized and embedded into the structure of museum collections?

Ethnographic and anthropological object collection has a great tradition in the museologizing and presentation of other peoples’ cultures. But it is exactly the theoretical and methodological bases of this tradition that the research team is reinterpreting, as they were pervaded primarily by colonialism, modernization or an eleventh-hour approach, which resulted in the formation of specific museum object diasporas. This requires a rethinking of the terminology of museological activities, a conceptual change, and a renewal of methodology and enquiry. This time the museum staff embarked upon ethnographic and anthropological research not in a far-away terrain, but among the representatives of remote peoples living in Hungary. Their basic premise was that „there is a corpus of special objects connected only to migrants” (page 12) and that „migration created new local worlds and cultural shapes which can be traced back to the mingling of cultures, hybridization processes, and immigrants’ multiple ties” (page 9).

After the introduction that outlines the project’s basic concept (authored by Zsuzsanna Árendás and György Szeljak), the book, which features eight authors, starts out with two theoretical studies. Gábor Wilhelm redraws the theoretical framework for the study of material culture with an ontologically based enquiry which inspects the elastic boundaries between a person (as subject) and an item (as object). He emphasizes that objects fulfill not only a symbolic, communicative or representational role, but serve as agents; that is, they participate in social processes. With immigrants, this can be particularly detected in the case of so-called boundary objects. From among the migration theories, Zsuzsanna



Árendás highlights hybridity approaches, noting that an increase in migration leads to the emergence of new forms of mobility, „within which bodies and information, as well as different patterns of mobility mix with each other” (page 71).

The rest of the book reads like comparative research, as the authors explore various migrant groups in Budapest, in the same social space and urban context. The presence of Andean Indians in Hungary is analyzed from a 25-year perspective in an excellent study by György Szeljak and Júlia Széli. Since the early 1990s, they have been investigating the process of how immigrants who place their ethnic identity, their Indianness into focus and the global migration of objects relate to each other within the framework of economic and integration strategies. Gabriella Vörös explores Turkish entrepreneurs and thus the phenomenon of döner in Budapest; more precisely, the adaptation of a Turkish life to the consumption habits of a globalizing urban culture, as well as the integration strategies and transnational relations unfolding along the restaurant chains. Ágnes Kerezsi's research focuses on a particular group of Russian immigrants, the wives, and within an extended period to boot, because Russian women immigrated to our country even before the regime change. Her writing focuses mainly on the home and objects in the home, although, given the chosen topic, gender aspects are not strongly articulated. Gábor Wilhelm examines the material culture of East- and Southeast-Asian migrants, paying special attention to the home-making process. The target choice is quite bold, as the merely 21-page study includes groups of fairly large numbers and of very different social, cultural and migratory backgrounds; admitting to the problematic nature of his endeavor, he indicates that instead of seeking completeness, he just wants to bring to light „what is out there.” Zsuzsanna Árendás chose the hybridity approach proposed earlier in her theoretical treatise for her interpretation of Indian immigrants. Through examples of the home and everyday life, she analyzes within a global cultural context individual identity, the transitional nature of lifestyle, strategies of making connections and maintaining multiple ties. Judit Farkas' choice of topic is slightly different, as it examines a phenomenon that is not tied to the migration of people, but instead to the ingress of a religion and its related set of objects into a new milieu. Thanks to the study we gain insight into the world of the inhabitants of the Krishna valley in Somogyvámos and can follow the processes of sanctuary-creation. Edina Földessy contributed two articles to the volume. She explores the material culture of Middle Eastern immigrants through another theoretical innovation by incorporating in her research the anthropology of the senses. She describes the process of home-making from the perspective of two senses: sight and touch.

The research resulted in the publication of a complementary collection of texts in a booklet series by MaDok. In this, the immigrants appear in a more personal way: faces and objects can be viewed, life stories and interviews can be read. I highly recommend KERÉK, Eszter – SZUHAY, Péter (eds) *Az otthon tárgyai. Képeskönyv a magyarországi bevándorlók tárgykultúrájáról*. [Home Objects: Picture Album of the Material Culture of Immigrants in Hungary] (2014, Budapest: Museum of Ethnography [MaDok-füzetek 9], 264 pp.) as a follow-up to these studies, but mostly as simultaneous reading.

---

TAKAKURA, Hiroki: *Arctic Pastoralist Sakha. Ethnography of Evolution and Microadaptation in Siberia*. 2015, Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 254.

---

*Csaba Mészáros*

Institute of Ethnology, RCH, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest

Siberian studies have always occupied a central role in Hungarian anthropological scholarship, thus a monograph on ecological adaptive strategies in north-eastern Siberia fits exactly into the profile of this present number of *Acta Ethnographica* focusing on non-European studies in Hungary. A book published by a Japanese author is of particular interest for Hungarian scholars involved in the study of Siberian peoples, since in both countries Siberian studies have a rich legacy of research activities on Siberian peoples since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, none of these countries belonged to the metropole centres of Siberian anthropology/ethnography, and thus they can be partly characterised with an independent epistemology. While mainstream anthropological studies found distant otherness in Siberian communities, Hungarian research tradition never theorized Siberian peoples as “others,” and Japanese research tradition has not referred to them as particularly distant communities either. Commercial relations, as well as political ones, were frequent between Yakutia and Japan, and it is no surprise that one of the usual pretexts for purging members of the local intelligentsia in rural Yakutia in the years of repression was their “affiliation to Japanese secret agencies.”

The book consists of the author’s previously published and thoroughly revised articles in English and Japanese. The introductory and concluding chapters are new, thus setting all materials and argumentation in a unified framework. Hiroki Takakura has conducted fieldwork in Yakutia since the early 1990s and has a vast experience in rural Sakha and Even lifestyles. Although his studies initially focused on reindeer herder communities in northern Yakutia, later he started to carry out research among cattle and horse breeder Sakhas of Central Yakutia as well. This current book is the summary of fieldwork done in a dozen village communities in Central Yakutia, mostly at the fluvial plains along the river Lena in Nam and Khangalass regions (to the north and south of Yakutsk).

The monograph intends to describe the adaptive strategies of Sakhas residing in probably one of the harshest climatic regions of the northern hemisphere. By doing so, the author tackles all important questions of local agriculture, i.e., obtaining ice and water, making hay and managing pastures. Rich ethnographic data (especially on hayfield and pasture management) support the author’s assumption that Arctic pastoralism cannot be restricted to reindeer breeding – a topic widely researched in current anthropological scholarship. I absolutely agree with the author that the example of Sakha and Northern-Tungus coexistence in north-eastern Siberia illustrates well that under the same climatic and similar geographic conditions two very different kinds of pastoralism may function at the same time. Besides Takakura Hiroki, so far only Susan A. Crate (professor at George Mason University, Fairfax, VA) has immersed herself in the study of Sakha horse and cattle pastoralism from an anthropological point of view. Therefore the importance of this book cannot be overemphasised.

There are two questions I would like to discuss more thoroughly. The first one is theoretical. I think the ways of pastoralism perceivable today in Yakutia do not only represent a form of adaptation to ecological conditions, but they are also the outcome of a nearly four-centuries-long coexistence with the Russian and the Soviet state. Although the author deals with this issue in the second and ninth chapters, in my opinion not enough attention has been given to this problem. The system of Sakha cattle and horse economy changed radically several times under Russian colonial legislation and later in the Soviet era. For instance, until the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, good hayfields were intensively managed land plots and commodities to be sold and bought. Due to Russian land-tenure taxation system levied on Sakhas, the importance of cattle breeding grew steadily to the detriment of horse breeding. This process resulted in an increased demand for hayfields; therefore, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Sakhas in Central Yakutia began to collect hay from territories formerly used as pastures as well.

As far as language skills are concerned, in current anthropological scholarship there is such a huge pressure on researchers to publish and to provide academic output that sometimes the core issue of anthropology (i.e., fieldwork) is overshadowed. Since it is more and more difficult for researchers to spend years on fieldwork, usually they do not have the opportunity to get immersed in the local vernacular (especially if coursebooks are hardly available). A limited command of the Sakha language may pose a number of problems during fieldwork and during the analysis of data. This common weakness (characteristic of the majority of current anthropological studies on Yakutia) is also detectable in this book. At the same time, these minor issues do not hinder the reader from getting a full picture on Sakha horse and cattle breeding. Current global climate change, in my view, will radically change the Sakha system of horse and cattle economy thoroughly described and analysed in detail by the author, and will thus trigger Yakutia's government to respond with new adaptive techniques to mitigate inevitable harms.