

BOOK REVIEWS

Wolfgang Steinitz, *Ostjakologische Arbeiten*, Band IV. Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft und Ethnographie. The Hague, Paris, New York, Mouton Publishers, 1980. XV, 493 S. DM 120. (Janua Linguarum, Series Practica, 257).

Reviewed by Felix J. Oinas

This book has two subtitles, one on the title page (given above) and the other on the cover: **Ostjakische Volksdichtung und Erzählungen aus zwei Dialekten. Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft und Ethnologie.** The second is obviously a mistake, since the volume is devoted primarily (ca. 90 per cent) to linguistics. There would hardly be any reason for reviewing it in a folklore journal, did it not contain two significant articles on totemism and kinship terms.

In the study of totemism, Steinitz proves--in contradistinction to former scholars--the presence of totemism in Ob-Ugrian (Vogul and Ostjak) religion. This totemism, however, is of a special kind, since the totemistic gentile spirit can appear both in animal and anthropomorphic form; in the latter form, he fights with adversaries, undertakes risky wooing trips, and--after his death--is venerated by a religious cult.

This duality is accounted for by Steinitz as the result of the merging of two tribes, the *por* and the **mańś*, the first of which was on the more primitive, totemistic level, and the second possessing a definite ancestor or hero cult. From a part of the more southern **mańś* tribe originated the Hungarians (cf. *Magyar* = *mad'* [*<*mańś*] + *ar*). As Steinitz admits, his basic ideas for this study derive from V. Tschernetsov, a contemporary scholar of the Voguls.

The Finno-Ugric kinship terms are characterized by age classification (separate terms for "younger brother" and "older brother," but none for "brother") and by the assigning of a variety of relations to the same term

(Ostjak jaj "older brother," "father's younger brother," "son of the father's older brother," and even "stepfather"). Steinitz, who lived among the Ostjaks for some time, has--after Karjalainen, Harva and others had failed--discovered the basis for this system. He shows that each kinship term in Ostjak applies to a clearly defined group of relatives who are classified as opposites: male/female, older/younger, related/not related by procreation, and directly/indirectly related by marriage. His conclusion is that "a kinship term is a social designation which combines the biological factors in the order typical for a given society and thus represents a social unit."

Mention could also be made of some other, though brief articles in Steinitz's collection--of the note about hunters' taboo language, which belongs to the border area between folklore and linguistics; a popular discussion of the old and new folksongs; and the publication of a tale from Castrén's manuscript collection (AT 1535).

Russian Minstrels: A Study of the Skomorokhi. By Russell Zguta. Pp. 160, introduction, illustrations, notes, index. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978. \$16.00 cloth.

Reviewed by Donald Kennedy

In ancient and medieval Russia one of the smaller social classes, though probably not the least significant, was that of the **skomorokhi** (loosely translated as "minstrels" or "buffoons"). These were traveling entertainers who played musical instruments, sang songs ranging from the epic to the bawdy, juggled, performed with trained bears and dogs, did acrobatics, and staged puppet shows. For centuries they frequented festivals, weddings, and other major secular celebrations of Russian peasant life.

In his book, **Russian Minstrels: A History of the Skomorokhi**, Russell Zguta assembles a respectably large body of information on the **skomorokhi**, about whom relatively little is known with certainty. Zguta succeeds in bringing them to life for us and in revealing a fascinating