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Vologda

April – September 2014

What did I know about Sweden? Astrid Lingered, Ikea, what we call in Russia “Swedish table”, Ingmar Bergman, Tomas Tranströmer. What did I know about myself? I love life and I am open to new people and opinions. To my mind the best way to explore yourself is to explore the world. When I applied the scholarship, my main aim was to broadcast the world, where I live in, in particular, to get acquaintance with methods of European ethnology and culture anthropology and to improve myself as a scientist.

My project...

... deals with the most cheerful but at the same time one of the most fundamental things: festivals. First it was named “Modern and traditional holidays in Swedish cities: comparative aspect”. Finally it turned to “The Spring-Summer celebrations in Sweden and Russia: branches as attributes of festivity”. I had seminars at Goteborg and Uppsala Universities and also at the Department for Dialectology, Onomastics and Folklore Research in Goteborg. Now I have an article in ethnology on my project. I have also written a report about Swedish culture life at *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (Moscow).

The archives of the Institute for Language and Folklore form a network in different cities: Uppsala, Goteborg, Umea, Lund (the last two I, unfortunately, caught getting closed, but I still had very informative and useful consultations with workers). Texts and illustrations concerning festivity and everyday life from beginning of XX century till nowadays are open to everyone and professionally serviced. The University Archive in Lund, Nordic Museum Archive in Stockholm and the Vasterbotten Museum Archive in Umea are also rich and friendly. So, I had all opportunities for work.

Methodologically I followed Vladimir Propp and tried to determine the morphology of the modern holidays. My field work included observation and interviews. My route and schedule were subordinated by the research subject and went from holiday to holiday.

The holidays...

... I observed, can be divided into two groups: the traditional or new calendar Swedish holidays and special events. Second are The Culture night in Umea (May 24), The Stockholm Culture night (April 26), the Medieval week in Visby, Gotland (August 3 - 10), the Crown princess Victoria Birthday on Eland (July 14).

My scholarship began in pre-Easter time, when Easter branches with feathers were everywhere. Reading of articles (many Swedish folklorists write in English) and work in archives showed that Easter and Lent branches in Sweden had come from contact magic (giving an energy of young grown to people by touch), through religious (remaining about the Christ's suffering) and pedagogical meaning to the decoration. Something similar happened with the pussy-willow branches in Russia. In the middle XX century in the North Russian villages of Vologda region pussy-willow was used to whip the cattle for health. Now it is a tradition decoration on Palm Sunday with the religious sense (it is associated not with Christ's Sufferings but with Palm Branches).

Daffodils (Russian “Narcisy”) were the first thing, which I noticed in Aston Villa, a wonderful place, where I lived at Goteborg. Then I realized that these flowers were everywhere, and only the tradition to put 2 or 4 flowers in a vase (not necessary an odd number, as we do in Russia) reminded me, that I was not at home. Swedes call it Easter Lilly, and it is a real flower for Easter.



I visited a seminar – presentation of Fredrik Skott book about Easter witches. There is a tradition for children to mask as witches on Easter and go from home to home. The costume includes handkerchief, cow horn with a magic ointment and the coffee pot. The seminar was in Swedish, but there were photos, which were universal language. Fredrik kindly explained to me everything afterward and I got the book. A bit later I saw a little Easter witch with my own eyes.



Then we had a very specific Easter at Disa Hasted home, where both Russian and Swedish elements were combined, “kulish” and lamb, “paska” and daffodils, candles in antic candlesticks and tablecloths whose color depends on the date (black of Friday, yellow on Saturday, white on Sunday), orthodox celebration at a Stockholm church.



Easter week program included plenty of events, particularly – visiting the churches with paintings by Albertus Pictor. In Täby Church we saw the mural “The Knight playing chess with the Death”, the very one that inspired Ingmar Bergman for the scene in his “Seventh seal”.



Then I went to Uppsala to observe Walpurgis eve. It is the day, when students get their white caps as graduates, the Day of Spring and Students. Uppsala University is the oldest University in Sweden (1477). Morning was sunny and summerly, there were lot of students and old graduates in their white caps. It began to snow in the evening. It was chilly, but beautiful, as if the city had put on the white cap on its roofs in honor of the Last of April.



Another specific festival is Studentan in June, when the former school boys and girls are riding the lorries, decorated with birch branches, in honor of graduating.



The most Swedish of holidays at the most Swedish of places was Midsummer at Dalarna. There during 3 days I was happy not only to observe, but to participate in the preparing of May-pole in the Vikarbyn village. I had seen many events, pole erecting, dancing and singing.



And I tried to put on a Swedish costume (which is very warm, and that was quite appropriate for the weather). Many thanks to Ulla Gudmundson for that!

Places...

... were different. I started with Goteborg and attended the Valand academy in Goteborg (place, where people study to be fiction writers, an analogue of Litinstitute, where I had studied in Moscow) and had a very interesting conversation with the Johan Oberg. I visited Tjolöholms slot with a seminar of Scandinavian studies of Goteborg University.

Then I visited Stockholm, Uppsala, Umea, Lund, Rettvik and neighboring villages, Kalmar, Borgholm and Mörbylånga (Öland), Visby and Klintehamn (Gotland). The top of the summer were perhaps two days at Fårö – its sandy forest and sea – where I was waiting for Visby medieval week and had a feeling, that my life is true.

Among all Stockholm places I would like to mentioned specially one. It is Södra Latin, the school, marked in memoir prose of Tomas Transtremmer and the film based on Ingmar Bergman play. Disa's Hasted grandson, who is a famous rap-star now, also studied there. I met students who study Russian, with their teacher Elisabeth Poignant we talked about traditions and nowadays, "difficult, but cute" Russian letters, poems.

I was ready for differences. But many things were quite similar, starting from flowers and weather that seemed so familiar. With the special exception of the magnificent Baltic sea, the nature is very close to Vologda region where I am from. I was afraid to miss my forest and blueberry this summer – but there was a lot of blueberry under Stockholm. And every Swede understands, what it means, the call of the countryside. By the way, that is why it is better to plan all your meeting until Midsummer. After that you can be invited to village to have supper or to swim under the open sky by those, with whom you have become friends, but business meeting in a city is almost impossible. Libraries are also closed till august. As for the weekdays during spring and autumn, they were filled. There is time for rest and time for work. In general I should say that I really felt very comfortable in Sweden, and there were perfect conditions for a good work on my scientific project.

People...

... are really the most important impression from my wonderful trip. There I've met good specialists in my field (such as Birgitta Skarin Frykman, Ella Johansson and Owe Ronström), interesting interlocutors, men, who can quoted Mandelshtam in Russian, not being a Slavic specialist, just because of erudition. Many thanks to Disa Hasted, who has brilliant friends in every place of Sweden! I am happy to get acquainted with Annika Bäckström, Mats Foyer, Hjärdis Kristenson, Otto Mannheimer and others. And I am grateful to the Sverker Åström Foundation for this opportunity.

What I know about Sweden now is full of lovely details, feelings, personal remembrance, writer's notes. And what I know about myself? That I really enjoy studying the human culture living as an ethnologist and that spring-summer time 2014 was one of the best periods of my life.

