

What is the museum? It is not only a building, four walls, but is a living phenomenon, and the heart of the museum – this is the researcher. The researcher blows life on the artifacts which are mute. He/she chooses the artefacts to the exhibition, he/she opens the artifacts telling the contexts and the stories. The freedom of the researcher depends of the cultural environment, of the cultural politics and of the management too. If he/she had the freedom to choose and tell the stories, he/she had the duty how to tell and why to tell. The museum's collection are full of artifacts obtained from anywhere and anytime, quit randomly. Is it all artefact necessary and significant?

I focused my research on the material culture of the Finno-Ugrian language speaking peoples, the Finnish, Hungarians, and all other people living as minorities in Russia. I opened the old collections, obtained by the romantic enthusiasm for the aesthetic taste of the Mari, Mordvin or Urmurt folk dress or by the historical concept representing the “primitive” level of culture in Siberia between the Khanty and Mansi. To touch a dress which embroidered magnificently with silk tread maybe two hundred years ago, and less to know y function, the wedding, the phantasy began more and more active. One item – but it tells the story of young woman, her destiny, including the questions, how prepare to wedding, how obtain the approval of the new society, of the new relatives, and how follow the values and norms of the society.

To touch a Mari embroidered dress, used up, repaired few times – and finally to find its history. The dress obtained in the time of the Famine in the Volga region in 1920s. Food conditions in the Volga region, including the Mari speaking, were particularly bad, because as result of collectivization a great number of the population not engaged in grain production.

How open the items? My way – it was and still is the ethnographicali expedition, interviewing and observation between the Mari, Mordvins, Khanty and Mansi. The researcher acts as intermediary between the artefact and human being, the user of the artefact. Few times, I felt that my informants were present in the exhibition and I follow their instructions. To make an exhibition, it is something, but for me it was all time important to publish articles which gave the deep information and which still is living after the exhibition. How to know the reaction of the public? For me, it was the guiding and also presenting of papers.

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