

Glorious Baikal

Slavnoye morye – sveshtsheny Baikal,
slavny karabl' – omulyevaya botshka!
Ey, Bagruzin, pashevelyvai val!
Plýt' byegletsu nyedaletshko!

Dolgo ya zvonkiye tsepi nasil,
dolgo brodil ya v garakh Akatuya.
Starý tovarish byezhat' pasabil.
Ozhyl ya, volyu patshuya!

Shilka i Nertshinsk nye strashny tepyer',
gornaya strazha minya nye paimala.
V debryakh nye tronul prazhorlivy zver',
pulya strelka minovala.

Shol ya i v notsh, i sred' byelovo dnya
vkrug garadov ozirayasya zorko.
Khlebom kormili krestyanki minya,
parni snabzhali makhorkoi.

Slavnoye morye – sveshtsheny Baikal,
slavny moi parus – kaftan dyrovaty.
Ey, Bagruzin, pashevelyvai val,
slyshitsya buri raskaty.

A glorious sea is the holy Baikal,
a glorious ship is my salmon barrel.
Hey, Bagruzin, stir up the waves!
This fugitive has to sail on still a bit.

For a long time I had to wear clanking chains,
and dragged myself through the Akatui mountains.
An old comrade helped me to escape.
I draw a deep breath when I felt I was free!

Shilka and Nertshinsk don't frighten me anymore,
the mountain guard did not catch me.
In the thicket I did not meet predacious animals,
and the bullet of the marksman missed me.

I walked also at night, and when it was day
I avoided the towns and was on my guard.
The country-women fed me with bread,
the lads provided me with tobacco.

A glorious sea is the holy Baikal,
a glorious sail is my ragged coat.
Hey, Bagruzin, stir up the waves,
I hear the thunders of an approaching storm!

Words and music: Russian folksong

Pronunciation:

a as in "bar", *e* as in "bed", *i* as in "bid", *o* as in "bore", *u* as in "blue"

y = as in "yellow" / *y* = dull *i*, as in "bill"

s = always voiceless, as in "son" / *z* = voiced, as in "zone"

sh = voiceless, as in "mesh" / *zh* = voiced, like the *s* in "measure"

kh = mostly rough, like the *ch* in Scotch "loch", but smooth when "e" or "i" follows

a, e, i, o, u, y = the underlined vowel signifies the stressed syllable of a word.

Transcription and analogous translation: Kai Kracht

Comment:

This song obviously was created in the 18th/19th century, when also the Far East of Siberia was explored, and the Russian imperial regime began to banish especially political prisoners to the most distant places like Shilka and Nertshinsk near the Mongolian frontier, six thousand kilometers away. To escape from there was nearly impossible: First you had to beat your way of nearly one thousand kilometers through the virgin forest of the Taiga and over high mountains, and then you found yourself at the shore of the Baikal Sea, the deepest lake of the earth, which blocked up your way on a length of nearly seven hundred kilometers and a breadth of seventy kilometers.

Standing in a barrel, and using his coat as a sail, the dare-devil fugitive in our song tries the crossing, and he hopes that Bagruzin, the cold north-east wind which comes from the icy Tundra and steadily streams down into the Baikal valley, will drive him to the other shore before the thunderstorm will break out.

Alone on this endless sheet of water, without any oar or rudder, he is completely at the mercy of the wind, and of the waves which give whole the song its peculiar rhythm – dotted crotchet, crotchet, quaver – and so we also in the music feel the dashing of the waves where the barrel is drifting in so helplessly. The words, on the contrary, are full of tremendous energy and of the undisturbed confidence that also this daring adventure must end well. This fine tension between music and words makes this song so interesting also in a musical respect.

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