VERBAL HAGIOGRAPHY OF SERAPHIM OF SAROV

Among saints who have become famous in Nizhny Novgorod province of Russia in all history of its existence since the 13th century the figure of Seraphim of Sarov (1759–1833) is sure to rank exceptionally. He was a hieromonk, a starets of the Sarov monastery; famous before the Revolution 1917, it stood at the very border of Nizhny Novgorod province and Mordovia.

However the life story of the saint was connected not only with the Sarov monastery but also with the Serafimo-Diveevsky convent which got its name by the name of the starets. Popularity of the saint is explained not only with the fact that in Diveevo region, Nizhny Novgorod province, the convent exists which grew to its modern status from a small mill community organized by Seraphim of Sarov, not only with pride of the “local” saint famous in whole Russia and even in the whole world, but also with special anxious attitude of simple people and of local peasantry to “father Seraphimushka,” helping in all troubles old man “*with a stick..., crooked old man with a bag and a stick,*”¹ good-natured and merciful saint as if he went off a typical home icon.

The starets was canonized in 1903 in spite of the fact that canonization commission made a lot of protraction and thanking to the supreme direction of Russian Emperor Nicholas II. The latter and his family visited Sarov and Diveevo in July 1903; they took part in Seraphim glorification events. As the legend says, beata Pasha Sarovskaya foretold the Emperor a glad prediction that the tsar couple would have a long-awaited successor, and a tragic one that the tsar dynasty would be broken soon.

(1) Ю. М. ШЕВАРЕНКОВА, *Исследования в области русской фольклорной легенды* [Y. M. SHEVARENKOVA, *Researches in sphere of Russian folklore legend*], Нижний Новгород, 2004, с. 99.

The first hagiography of Reverend Seraphim of Sarov² was written soon after he had died — in 1841, but 70 years before Seraphim was officially canonized, Sergiy, a monk of the Sarov monastery³ had written it, too. Then in different years a few biographies of the Sarov hermit were published,⁴ in 1896 Seraphim Chichagov brought out “Chronicles of the Serafimo-Diveevsky convent,”⁵ the main part of which is given to the life story of Seraphim of Sarov. However, nowadays general readers learn the hagiography of the saint mainly in numerous contemporary editions and reprints.⁶ All above said hagiographies differing from actuality and low level of artistic merit (nevertheless the latter has never been the goal of the hagiography)

(2) *Сказание о жизни и подвигах блаженного памяти отца Серафима, Саровской пустыни иеромонаха и затворца* [A Narration about the Life and the Deeds of Father Seraphim, of Blessed Memory, a Hieromonk and a Hermit of the Desert of Sarov], Москва, 1841.

(3) About establishment of authorship of this text see: Т. Р. Руди, “Ранние жития Серафима Саровского: вопросы литературной истории” [T. R. RUDI, “The Early Lives of Seraphim of Sarov: on literature history”], in: *ТОДРЛ*, Санкт-Петербург, 1999, с. 427–434.

(4) М. ЕЛАГИН, *Житие старца Серафима, Саровской обители иеромонаха, пустынножителя и затворника* [M. YELAGIN, *The Life of starets Seraphim, hieromonk of Sarovskaya cloister, hermit and anchoret*], Санкт-Петербург, 1863; Д. С. ДМИТРИЕВ, *Старец Серафим. Пустынник и затворник Саровской обители* [D. S. DMITRIYEV, *Starets Seraphim. Hermit and anchoret of Sarovskaya cloister*], Москва, 1903; Л. И. ДЕНИСОВ, *Житие, подвиги, чудеса, духовные наставления... преподобного и богоносного отца нашего Серафима, Саровского чудотворца* [L. I. DENISOV, *The Life, deeds, wonders, spiritual admonitions... of Reverend father Seraphim, wonder-worker of Sarov*], Москва, 1904; Е. ПОСЕЛЯНИН, *Преподобный Серафим, Саровский Чудотворец* [E. POSSELYANIN, *Reverend Seraphim, wonder-worker of Sarov*], Санкт-Петербург, 1908.

(5) *Летопись Серафимо-Дивеевского монастыря Нижегородской губ. Ардатовского уезда, с жизнеописанием основателей ее: преподобного Серафима и схимонахини Александры, урожд. А. С. Мельгуновой*, сост. архимандрит Серафим (ЧИЧАГОВ) [Chronicle of the Serafimo-Diveevsky convent situated in Nizhny Novgorod province, Ardatovsky district, describing also biographies of Reverend Seraphim and schemanun Aleksandra, secular name A. S. Melgunova, ed. archimandrite Seraphim (CHICHAGOV)], Москва, 1896.

(6) Е. г., *Житие Преподобного Серафима Саровского чудотворца*, составил автор летописи Серафима-Дивеевского монастыря Архимандрит Серафим (ЧИЧАГОВ) [The Life of Reverend Seraphim, wonder-worker of Sarov, compiled by archimandrite Seraphim (CHICHAGOV), the author of the Serafimo-Diveevsky convent chronicle], Санкт-Петербург, 1903.

traditionally portray us idealized and strict temper of the saint whose life from infancy till death was subdued to selfless service to God and people. To call these authorial hagiographies of Seraphim common canonical text wouldn't be correct: each of the named authors can be eventually called a biographer and a thorough researcher of Seraphim's life; each author of the following hagiography guided by predecessor often argues with him in different details and dates, and a small time gap between saint's life and writing of his hagiographies as well as appearance of new "evidences of eye-witnesses" telling about selfless life of the saint allow to the authors each time to introduce new facts of unusual life of the great hero. Every time hagiography of Seraphim of Sarov expands to the scale of real biography though all hagiographies of the saint are common to describe general order of his life events.

Verbal stories about Seraphim of Sarov are the object of our attention. They were written in 2001–2011 by participants of folklore expeditions under the aegis of N. I. Lobachevsky Nizhny Novgorod State University. The stories were told by old local pensioners peasants who had been kolkhozniks before.

By analogy with official church written tradition the term "verbal hagiography" has become really popular in modern Russian storiology concerning totality of verbal stories about a saint. We have to agree with L. V. Fadeyeva⁷ that the term "verbal hagiography" is sure to be relative: hagiographical legends written separately from different people show various edges of knowledge of a saint in folk layer, and only in conception of a researcher they are shaped to a relative logical structure.

Folk legends geography about Seraphim of Sarov in Nizhny Novgorod province is sufficiently localized and it is limited with only southern districts of the region — Diveevsky district of the province (right here the Serafimo-Diveevsky convent is situated) and close districts: Pervomaysky, Voznesensky, Ardatovsky and Arzamassky. Exactly in this territory are natural relics connected in local folklore tradition with the name of the saint (numerous saint springs, saint rocks and trees). Then folk cult of the saint leads to the South-West of

(7) Л. В. ФАДЕЕВА, "Книга как источник народного жития святого праведного Иоанна Кронштатского" [L. V. FADEYEVA, "Book as source of folk Life of saint righteous John of Kronstadt"], in: *Актуальные проблемы полевой фолклористики*, Москва, 2002, с. 47.

Nizhny Novgorod province — to Kulebasky district where through the forests lay-brother Seraphim went to get money to build a temple and where his maybe farthest relic is situated — a rock in Kutuzovka village (in the second half of the 19th century in this village a convent was created, against a legend a nun whose birth Seraphim himself foretold became its abbess).

However historically the Sarov monastery was the centre for pilgrims who visited starets Seraphim to find both consolation and help (the town of Sarov is situated not far from Diveevo village): here in the forests seeking solitude monk Seraphim built small ashrams for himself. He lived in solitude taking deeds of hermitage, silence, prayer on the rock and starchestvo. Here his relics were till 1927. In 1920–1930 here, to “Seraphim places” mass pilgrimages were still organized as well as religious processions of local peasants (at religious holidays, in memorial days of the saint, to pray for rain), but the monastery itself had already been closed — there a youth detention centre was established. In 1946 the town of Sarov became a secret one; it was surrounded with barbed wire due to Federal Nuclear Center which was based on the territory of the town. In addition, the name of the town was encoded in numerous double names.

We should actually agree with the thought of A. B. Moroz that “folk cult of saints doesn’t demand adequate biography knowledge of the saints from bearers of traditions.”⁸ Verbal folklore “hagiography” is a little correlated with the written one with its form (short narratives), its volume, simple colloquial language, its attitude to the character, its episodes of the saint life story: verbal “hagiography” does not give his biography in details “marking” from his life only brightest striking episodes startling the narrator himself. Such episodes characterize personality of Seraphim from different views, they depict his humanness and unusual talents. Sharp knowledge is often changed with vague, approximate and sometimes associative notions about the saint: “*Seraphim of Sarov is almost as saint as Jesus Christ;*”⁹ “*Seraphim of Sarov was called Easter starets as he told to anybody when*

(8) А. Б. МОРОЗ, “Народная агиография Каргополья” [А. В. МОРОЗ, “Folk hagiography of Kargopol'sky district”], *Традиционная культура* (2004), № 3, с. 50.

(9) 2001, Voznessensky district, Vilki village, P. I. Vilkova, dvc 015.

met: “Christ is risen, my dear!”¹⁰ Also folk stories about Seraphim of Sarov can be heard: they are short summarizing stories without plot where narrator strives not to elucidate a quality of the saint or a detail of his life, but to show his common portrait schematically (figuratively speaking, it is a verbal “small hagiography”) feeling warm and sympathetic attitude to the character: “*The Reverend lived in Sarov where he had a hermitage. Somebody respected him but somebody mocked at him. Once he was beaten and as a result he hardly survived. Kind people help him but there were people who mocked at him, that is. He lived eating only rye bread and drinking only water. And he kept on kneeling on the rock praying to God all days and nights long. The bear — it is plain truth as the old say. There is a picture — he tamed it. Another bear could tear him to pieces, but he gave him a lump of sugar, he didn’t eat the sugar himself but gave it to the bear. And the bear visited him, duv you imagine?*”¹¹ Such common information stories don’t focus on separate sharp events in the life story of Seraphim of Sarov, but they almost always accumulate the main ideas of many plots of folklore hagiography legends about the saint uncovering respectful, admiring or sympathizing attitude to the “starets.” However, among the legends of the southern part of Nizhny Novgorod province where Seraphim of Sarov is loved a lot and popular, and people’s attitude to him can be compared with veneration of supreme representatives of Christian world (Jesus Christ and the Virgin), such narratives are not numerous; they give way to completed plot stories characterizing the personality of the famous saint from different sides and in different stages of his life.

We can claim that a few factors influenced to form legends “corps” of “folk hagiography” of Seraphim. First, life and activity of the saint in the territory of Sarov and Diveevo (he lived in the Sarov monastery; for all that he helped spiritually to nuns of the new created Diveevo female community in the village of the same name). Probably, this is precisely why the verbal legends about the saint describe those moments of his biography which the natives connect with loci of their country. That’s the way how life of the saint in his forest hermitage near Sarov (when he was attacked by peasants — “brigands”) gets into verbal hagiography as well as digging Kanavka (fosse in the territory of the monastery) in Diveevo, “unveiling” of

(10) 2001, Diveevsky district, Maloye Cherevatovo village, father Georgy, audio recording.

(11) 2002, Diveevsky district, Vertianovo village, M. I. Yeskina, dvc 139.

saint springs and rocks in different settlements of southern districts in Nizhny Novgorod province. Natives say that Seraphim was really a simple man, “fruit” and “local” one who appeared everywhere in Diveevsky and Sarovsky districts: *“Here they said long time ago that father Seraphim... whipped round money for church... So he was in we’s Konnov. Old men, old men saw him there. In total, he was there, he sat with them on the bench and prosed. <...> So they said that where Seraphim... walked,... generally, no troubles would be... Well, golly, Our Lord does save us, the God does save us.”*¹² Until now in different families we can hear fables telling that the Sarov starets was visited by a member of the family: *“We were working in the forest, here was my grandpa. He was alive, father Seraphim, at that time. We were goin’, and our carts, and here he was walking with his stick. We said: ‘Father, long way?’ — ‘To the vespers’. He lived in his small ashram. It was my grandpa who saw him... He was walking, and a bag over his shoulder,.. and we bowed him.”*¹³ *“Great-grandmother, my mom’s mother, Anastasia... She says she visited father Seraphim maybe thrice when she was a little girl... She says father Seraphim gaved her rusks, and what he told her — grandma didn’t tell anything.”*¹⁴ And even a reference to stories of the old is a typical component of their words: *“My grandpa believed. We could sit on the floor in winter, and he kept on telling... Yes, that father Seraphim sat on the rock in Sarov: they gaved him a piece of bread but he didn’t eat it himself, he gaved it to the bear;”*¹⁵ *“Granny told: he lived in Sarov, in a cave, a long cave... And he lived there and prayed there.”*¹⁶ We cannot but agree with observance of the authors of the work “Sacred places in cultural landscape of Pinezhsky district” that “all what can be found in church literature corresponds to what was heard before in the family and from the neighbors.”¹⁷

(12) 2011, Diveevsky district, Berezino village, Maria Ivanovna Ponomareva, born in 1928, 21-D092.

(13) 2001, Voznessensky district, Alamassovo village, Arina, born in 1917, audio 014A.

(14) 2002, Ardatovsky, Avdoteyevo village, Anastasia Kulakova, born in 1913, ex-kolkhoznik, nun, audio 056B.

(15) 2001, Diveevo village, N. M. Ofitserova, dvc 002.

(16) Voznessensky district, Alamassovo village, 2001, Natalia Pavlovna Zabrodina, born in 1929, audio 014A.

(17) А. А. ИВАНОВА, В. Н. КАЛУЦКОВ, Л. В. ФАДЕЕВА, *Святые места в культурном ландшафте Пинежья* [A. A. IVANOVA, V. N. KALUTSKOV, L. V. FA-

Second, the process of “verbal hagiography” formation was influenced by the existence of written hagiographies of Seraphim: directly there verbal tradition “adopts” plots about the fall of the saint from the bell tower when he was a child, blessing of his mother to monasticism, parables about knowledge given by Seraphim to nuns of Diveevo, stories about his astuteness regarding famous people and even stories about his death. Simultaneously the verbal tradition escapes excessive religiousness, pathetic element and biography actuality. It is interesting to know that tellers themselves often say that they read the hagiography of the saint. But we cannot claim that the written hagiography of Seraphim is initial if to compare with compilation of the collected verbal legends. The fact is also that the hagiography itself often was not written basing on the documents (or not basing only on the documents) but on natural evidences of the people (that’s to say, basing on natural alive history). We also have to underline that not all peasants knew the hagiography of the saint as the peasantry lived hard and worked hard, so they were not too religious; then, we have to recollect dramatic processes of Russian village in the 20th century — collectivization, dekulakization, hunger before the war, during the war and after the war. We can also recollect that in Soviet atheistic time any religious literature was inaccessible and the faith itself was almost totally eliminated. All above said moved aside bases of traditional national culture. Actually, both direct narrations and references to separate episodes of life of the saint can be found in our field notes, but as we observed many of them are interviews with pilgrims and peculiar migrants on grounds of the religion (the quantity of these people have increased much for the latest decade) to Diveevo from other cities, towns and villages of post-perestroika Russia: “*And when we weren’t churchd a woman brought us a book about father Seraphim. Har gaved it us only for one night and said that she would take it back in the morning. It was a thick book. My husband and oi, we haven’t read so much in our lives... And oi absorbed it very well, thatn book, oi mean father Seraphim, Diveevo and thatn rock on which he prayed... And a secret idea comed into my mind, to visit once Diveevo at any price.*”¹⁸ Pilgrims and migrants are mainly people churchd not long ago, in-

DEYEVA, *The Sacred Places in the Cultural Landscape of Pinezhsky District*], Москва, 2009, c. 43.

(18) 2001, Diveevsky district, Bolshoye Cherevatovo village, O. V. Shilina, dvc 075.

spired with faith and ceremonial rites, and that's why they enthusiastically think about Seraphim of Sarov. For these people the starets is a prophet, an organizer of Diveevo as "the fourth condition of the Virgin" and their "own" saint who called them to move to Diveevo land. Novices read religious literature a lot and they have their own world perception in contrast to native peasants who easily relate to the church, to the activity of the Serafimo-Diveevsky convent and to the saint himself [in details about moods and folklore of "about-temple surroundings" see: Tarabukina, Akhmetova]. But we cannot call knowledge of the saint hagiography in national sphere universal and thorough; it is probably selective: people remember only those moments from Seraphim of Sarov life which, as it was said, connect his personality with local areas and also the ones where the personality of the starets is close to national understanding of saint in total.

The third factor promoting "verbal hagiography" of the saint in local folklore is icon painting tradition. Religious iconography of the saint is different: from church growth icons, belt "solemn portraits" and classic icons with hagiography stamps to single small icons devoted to life of the starets where one can see common crooked old man not in canonical dress but in linen loose overall, bast shoes or shoe covers — but not strict depiction of Seraphim. Exactly these typical small icons (Seraphim on the rock, Seraphim feeds his bear in the forest, Seraphim prays in the forest in front of the icon on the pine) being mass religious product popular among believers extremely correlate with folklore portrait of the saint: it is the same on home icons and in the legends, Seraphim is a good-natured crooked "old man" in "white loose overall" and bast shoes with a bag and a stick:¹⁹ *"So we went to Sarov, my mom took me. We came to the spring to bathe... And in the well we saw starets Seraphim! He was with a bag and a stick!"*²⁰ In our stories we can often hear references to icons of Seraphim: *"Starets lived in a hut in the forest, I saw it only on the picture. I had an icon where he was in white caftan and bast shoes, but his black caftan was hanging behind the oven."*²¹ In this message icon is almost equal to pic-

(19) About folklore portrait of "father Seraphimushka" see: К. Е. КОРЕПОВА, "Серафим Саровский в традиционной культуре" [К. Е. КОРЕПОВА, "Seraphim of Sarov the Traditional Culture"], in: *Этнопоэтика и традиция. К 70-летию В. М. Гацака*, Москва, 2004, с. 199–200.

(20) 2001, Voznessensky district, Alamassovo village, Avdotia Ivanovna Rozanova, video 016.

(21) 2001, Diveevo village, Natalia Mikhailovna Ofitserova, video 002.

ture of the saint: “Here’s he shot with his bear, there is a picture with thatn bear.”²² Humanization and simplicity of the saint on popular hagiography icons are directly connected with verbal folklore tradition about Seraphim. As we can see, these icons are often called just “pictures;” this name was promoted with appearance of cheap depictions of the saint — calendars, paper and laminated icons.

Official hagiography of a saint doesn’t focus attention on childhood and boyhood of the character creating portrait of serious child marked by God; first of all it is interested in formed mature person living selfless in special sacred area. Official hagiography of Seraphim does not give sufficient attention to childhood and growing-up of the starets. Simultaneously, “verbal hagiography” gives even less information about these years of the saint. Almost the only episode in the “folk hagiography” field of vision of the saint is the dramatic fall of the boy from the bell tower: “He lived with his mom, she built a church. He was 7 years old, he climbed to the bell tower and fell. His mom in panic ran — it turned out that he was alive;”²³ “He climbed to the bell tower and falled. With mom he was. His mom was armed and led: ‘Ah, not alive!’ Cried. Comed, and he was alive.”²⁴ It is logical to suppose that absence about Seraphim’s childhood is conditioned by the fact that Prokhor Moshnin (his secular name) was born in Kursk where he lived before monasticism, that is why stories about his childhood cannot be property of folklore tradition of *Nizhny Novgorod province*. Every hagiography contains the episode about the fall from the bell tower. Thus, folk stories are correlated with written “origin” but in both variants interpretation is different. In hagiographies the fall of Prokhor from the bell tower and the fact that he survived are a sort of symbolic sign, first indication of the child singularity marked by God;²⁵ but in verbal interpretation of this fact we meet at first impossibility of what happened and it would seem disaster — but not symbolicalness of this event. In the stories the main ideas are gladness that the child survived, emotional condition of Prokhor’s mother and sympathetic

(22) Diveevsky district, Maloye Cherevatovo village, 2002, Anastasia Pavlovna Privalova, born in 1918, video 131.

(23) Republic of Mordovia, Temnikovsky district, Dossaeyevo village, A. A. Cherentayeva.

(24) 2001, Diveevsky district, Kanerga village, M. V. Ganina, audio.

(25) Е. г. А. И. ДЕНИСОВ, *Житие Преподобного Серафима, саровского чудотворца* [L. I. DENISOV, *The Life of Reverend Seraphim, wonder-worker of Sarov*], Москва, 1997, с. 28.

attitude to the mother felt by the narrator. The figure of the mother is touched a little but it is the figure of suffering and frightened woman. The narrator expresses the condition of the mother describing her impulsive motions: *"His mom in panic ran," "His mom was armed and led," "Cried;"* vice versa, the condition of the child after the fall is described laconically and short: *"it turned out that he was alive."*

Verbal tradition seldom shows the hagiography episode when Prokhor Moshnin was blessed by his mom to monasticism:²⁶ "He did not know how to arrange his life. And four people from one thorpe were going to the lavra. And he was going, too. But his mom did not want to let him go but she did put the cross on him, and he wore it until he died, and did not take it off."²⁷ These stories are close to national tradition what can be explained, to our mind, with "human factor," viz. the figure of Seraphim's mother anxious about her son as well as with the figure of Seraphim himself who never took her cross off. It is interesting to know that in some stories the saint's pious parents (her parents were merchants, it was a family of believers) built a church in Kursk (from which the boy fell) are characterized in another way differing from what is said in hagiographies, for example: "He is from a simple family. His father didn't believe, his mother also didn't believe hot."²⁸ This characterization creates positive figure of Seraphim whose righteous life was formed as if contrary to the atmosphere where he grew up.²⁹

The "folk hagiography" does not describe such episodes and events in the life of the saint as coming of Prokhor Moshnin to the Sarov monastery, his life there, numerous appearances of the Virgin to monk Seraphim (against the hagiographies she visited him 12 times), monk Seraphim's help to arrange Diveevo female commu-

(26) The same plotline see e.g. ДЕНИСОВ, *Житие Преподобного Серафима*, с. 33.

(27) 2001, Kulebaksy district, Teplovo village, A. V. Fadeyeva, dvc 065.

(28) 2001, Diveevo village, a girl named Zhenya, dvc 032.

(29) Hagiographies of many hermits and saints of Early modern period and Contemporary history point up non-believers and their characters' parents, not always deserving of veneration. Among old examples we can mention "The Life of Archpriest Avvakum" (*Житие протопопа Аввакума*, Москва, 1991, с. 31), among modern ones — hagiography of the 19th century beata Pelagea Serebryannikova ("Diveevo beata Pelagea Ivanovna Serebryannikova. Her biography") whose mother being tired of her daughter's extravagance practically sold her to the Diveevsky convent.

nity: common people are indifferent either to spiritual life of the saint or life in monastery. It can be explained by the facts that monasteries structure was closed, that peasants thought mostly about daily bread but not about structure of monasteries and lifestyle there.

On the contrary, verbal tradition “clarifies” well Seraphim’s life in Sarov forest as a hermit. We can meet stories about his forest way of life, how he fed the wild bear, stood on the rock and how he was attacked by brigands.³⁰ Here are legends about his simple and hard life in the forest: *“There was a hut, he had a little land and he looked after it;”*³¹ *“He lived in Sarov an always gade to his small ashram where he had a mill and a source. He chopped firewood. He had nothing, only a homespun coat and an axe. He feared nothing, neither hunger nor cold. He hoped only on God, and the Virgin was with him;”*³² *“Nothin’ he had, he was poor. He had an axe, a pot and a bag, and also an icon with the Virgin on the pine;”*³³ *“He planted cabbage in the beds;”*³⁴ *“When he prayed, floor could break. He was visited by ill people, he received ‘em, blesst ‘em and cured. Spoilt people were, with demons people were, lame or blind — he cured all;”*³⁵ *“Nothin’ he had. He fed bad. Once people brought him bread and potato... Seraphim of Sarov comed to the church and tooked rusks and ate these rusks.”*³⁶

Legends portray the saint a sole praying hermit (*“When he prayed, floor could break”*) with only *“burning icon-lamp and an icon”* in his hut, a folk doctor receiving *“lame and blind people.”* The saint as if he was a common peasant looks after his *land, plants cabbage*; he chops firewood, he has his own mill and a source. Poverty of Seraphim is underlined with his household items (*“a homespun coat and an axe,” “He had an axe, a pot and a bag”*) including an icon of Holy Mother *“on the pine”* and with dearth of his food — bread, potato, rusks. The main characters of Seraphim figure become life modesty, even poverty, ability to be satisfied with a little and to live working himself looking after the land — as a peasant, and simultaneously sensitiveness to

(30) E. g. ДЕНИСОВ, *Житие Преподобного Серафима*, с. 75–101.

(31) 2001, Ardatovsky district, Avdoteyevo village, T. M. Belyakova, audio.

(32) 2001, Voznessensky district, Svobodny village, M. V. Avvakumtseva, dvc 018.

(33) 2001, Diveevo, R. A. Saksonova, audio recording.

(34) 2001, Diveevo, P. V. Karpunina, dvc 012.

(35) 2001, Voznessensky district, Alamassovo village, P. V. Mitryayeva, audio recording.

(36) 2001, Diveevo, Tuzhilkina E. M., dvc 001.

others' grieves and misfortunes. These qualities make the figure of the saint attractive for common people creating figure of "common" comprehensible saint. The food which Seraphim ate is a special subject to admire him and to emphasize again and again. It is aegopodium which he ate in the forest: *"The community wondered: he hathn't taken anything from the refectory of the monastery, he ate thisna weed. They wondered: what did he eat? He said: take this weed, this aegopodium, knead it and put it into the pot, and then get it to the oven. Thatn scran was excellent!"*³⁷ People could not understand power of aegopodium and tried to find it in scientific researches: *"When scientists took it to research they found a lot of vitamins in it."*³⁸ Seraphim called everybody to eat aegopodium.³⁹ It becomes a symbol of Seraphim asceticism, of his disavowal from common life; his fasts become ensamples and that level which common peasants can never reach — even those ones who suffered from hunger once. *"Oi made soup of it. Well, of course we're sinners, fallen and damned people, we used to live well and fill we's bellies. Indeed, oi put there onion but father ate only thatn weed."*⁴⁰

The figure of the saint hermit becomes wider if to listen to the legends about his friendship with a bear: *"Duv ye see him with the bear on the picture? It was when our grannies and great grandmothers walked. And a bear comed to him to bed fed. He wanted to eat and he comed. Father guved him bread. And once a girlie comed to him with that's grandma, and they saw he fed him. And he saw 'em from behind the trees: 'Jeez!' The girlie was afraid and screamed, and he said: 'Teddy, these visitors have come here to see me, not you. Go and eat. When visitors come to me, never frighten 'em. Why have ye frightened the girlie?' He prosed to him as to a carl."*⁴¹ Another one: *"Bear comed to him. He fed the bear with bread. A nun comed from Sarov... and har saw thatn bear. Har hid in them bushes. Father Seraphim*

(37) 2001, Diveevsky district, Maloye Cherevatovo village, E. N. Sumin, dvc032. Many references to supposedly scientific research of holy water and discovery iodine or silver in it are often fixed by us when researching folk cult of saint springs. See: ШЕВАРЕНКОВА, *Исследования в области русской фольклорной легенды*, с. 147].

(38) 2001, Diveevo, A. V. Ivanova, dvc 023.

(39) *Летопись Серафимо-Дивеевского монастыря*, ed. CHICHAGOV, с. 77.

(40) 2001, Diveevsky district, Maloye Cherevatovo village, E. N. Sumin, dvc 032.

(41) 2002, Pervomaysky district, Koshelikh village, N. M. Kornoukhova, dvc 154.

*gaved bread to thatn bear, smacked him on the shoulder and said: "Flee, enough, I'm havin' visitors..." And thatn bear, people say, fled easy. Duv ye know thuck story? Oi e'en read in the book. Oi heard it before. Oi heard it at work and thought that these were rumors."*⁴²

As we can see, in each legend exists a reference to written or icon-painting plotline of "friendship" between Seraphim and bear ("*Duv ye see him with the bear on the picture?*", "*Oi e'en read in the book?*"). Official hagiography of the saint gives great attention to this small plotline and suggests to look at the relations between the hermit and the animal through the prism of vision of monks and nuns who came to the forest for a piece of advice given by the starets.⁴³ Nevertheless, the reference to the authoritative source doesn't mean that a literature origin source underlies; we can declare contrary situation: hagiographies of many saints are known to be created against folk legends, "often naturalistic or fantastic ones."⁴⁴ Again, the narrators themselves underline that the verbal legends are old: "*our grannies and great grandmothers said,*" "*mother told,*" "*people said before.*" In communication with the bear both miracle and fabulousness can be observed: the saint tames the wild forest animal⁴⁵ not with his strength of faith and of persuasion, but with his defenselessness and term of endearment. In the following story Seraphim appears as the lord of wild animals what can be actually compared with the only figure of grey-haired George⁴⁶ convoking wolves to the fire at nights: "*He*

(42) 2002, Diveevsky district, Glukhovo village, M. A. Tokareva, dvc 165.

(43) Е. г. ДЕНИСОВ, *Житие Преподобного Серафима*, с. 83–89.

(44) Л. А. ДМИТРИЕВ, "Жанр севернорусских причитаний" [Л. А. ДМИТРИЕВ, "Northern Russia lamentation genre"], in: *История жанров в русской литературе X–XVII вв.*, Ленинград, 1972, с. 183.

(45) Wild animal tamed by saint is one of the oldest in Christian literature. We can recollect a legend about Arabian saint Gerassim and a lion he tamed, another one about Sergius of Radonezh who tamed a bear, too etc. This subject can also be met in Nizhny Novgorod legends: Ю. М. ШЕВАРЕНКОВА, *Нижегородские христианские легенды* [Y. M. SHEVARENKOVA, *Nizhny Novgorod Christian legends*], Нижний Новгород, 1998, с. 67.

(46) We draw analogy with George recollecting another legend which we have to retell in short here: a peasant whose horse had been stolen visited Seraphim in the forest; the starets gives him a piece of advice to go to the village and to take a horse at one house (similar in the story about George see: С. В. МАКСИМОВ, *Нечистая, неведома и крестная сила. Куль хлеба* [S. V. MAKSIMOV, *Fiends, deuce and cross power. Sack of bread*], Смоленск, 1995, с. 598).

*prayed so hot! All animals comed to meet him at midnight!"*⁴⁷ It is interesting to note that alternative characteristics of the saint combine in the text: one characteristic is evident to be folk (animals visit the saint at midnight) and the other is religious ("*He prayed so hot!*"). But it is important to the narrator not only to show amazing ability of his kind character to tame wild nature: feeding of the bear is shown through reactions of common people ("*Har hid in them bushes,*" "*The girlie was afraid and screamed*"). For Seraphim the bear became friend in his forest loneliness, but for other people the bear remains a usual awful being. Emotional speech of characters is important both in the legends and stories about the fall of Seraphim from the bell tower. When the saint speaks to the bear his words are simple and convincing; Seraphim tames the animal "*smacking him on the shoulder*" and calling it "*Teddy,*" he reproves the bear blandly and indulgently, like a slow-witted child, for frightening visitors ("*Flee, enough, I'm havin' visitors,*" "*Go and eat... Why have ye frightened the girlie?*"). Sometimes the starets asks the bear to look for food for the visitors.

Nonetheless, against our observations the main popular story in hagiography stories about Seraphim is the dramatic one telling how the starets was attacked by local peasants always called brigands. "*He was beaten to death, ... they beat him, he crawled, he was met. Hegumen wanted to find the offenders but he didn't want it. They beat him and asked money. He said: 'I have nothin' except bread'. He didn't have money... He didn't punish them. But when they comed home they saw that theirn houses had been burnt. Our Lord punished them for they wanted to offend Seraphim;*"⁴⁸ "*He should have hated them a lot! But he holp them to escape the gaol! But the Blessed Virgin punished them: She blinded them. They crawled to him, he washed them with holy water. So they recovered, them killers. He gaved ilka them a golden coin and said: 'You're sinners but you committed this sin not of your own free will. You come to kill me 'cos you don't live like lords.' He wasn't malicious and that's why he won malice!*"⁴⁹

(47) 2001, Diveevo, A. V. Ivanova, dvc 023. There is also a reference about feeding the bear by Seraphim in his hagiography, see: *Лемонусь Серафимо-Дивеевского монастыря*, ed. CHICHAGOV, c. 76.

(48) 2001, Voznessensky district, Alamassovo village, P. V. Mitryayeva, audio recording.

(49) 2001, Pervomaysky district, Kremenki village, P. F. Aksenov, dvc 019.

Official hagiography of Seraphim explains traditionally the real assault of landlord Tatishchev's krepostnoys taken place in autumn 1804. As it was usual for such hagiographies, it explains this fact as a temptation from the side of the devil who sent malicious people with the aim to injure the saint. Describing extreme resignation of the saint (he gets blows easy) and his anguish of body (being bloody he hardly got to the Sarov monastery, couldn't get asleep and fainted) the hagiography explains his healing by the fact that the Virgin appeared and said: "This man is insider."⁵⁰ Motives of struggle between evil and good for souls of saints are obligatory in genre of religious hagiography as well as resignations motives, ordeal ones and miraculous healings. However, this dramatic story about the brigands attack loses in the hagiography giving place for description of his spiritual deeds (standing on the rock, isolated life, starchestvo) and wonders which he worked. Folk legends point up the dialogue between the saint and the brigands; Seraphim explains them that he doesn't have any wealth: *"I have nothin' except bread..."* The motive of pity for the criminals extremely reveals the figure of the saint and raises the character among the folk a lot: *"he washed them with holy water. So they recovered, them killers. He gaved ilka them a golden coin and said: "You're sinners but you committed this sin not of your own free will. You come to kill me 'cos you don't live like lords."* But Seraphim not only asks not to punish the villains threatening to leave his dwelling-place, he finds his own fault in the assault: *"Don't judge anybody. It means it must have happened."* The motive of divine punishment threading through all Russian prose folklore,⁵¹ becomes the leading one in this plotline, that's why punishment of the sinners itself can be realized not one-time (as a rule, brigands are punished with blindness, fires in their houses or in the whole village) but long-time: *"One man told me. Me asked him and he told: "No happiness for thuck generation."⁵² The very folklore is the figure of the saint who feels sorry for the criminals, excuses and heals them. Evergreen bushes are signs of the "scene of the crime" and original monument to Seraphim: *"Where Seraphim had been beaten, bushes grew. They don't become either thick or thin, they are**

(50) ДЕНИСОВ, *Житие Преподобного Серафима*, с. 93.

(51) We can also recall legends about destroyers of churches or legends in which the character is punished for not keeping religious holidays or promises given to God, and many others.

(52) 2001, Diveevo, M. A. Nazarova, dvc 054.

always green. It's in Sarov, in his small ashram."⁵³ The stories about brigands attack are so popular among people because they name the offenders — Krassuliny who were inhabitants of Kremenki village, Diveevsky district.

The plotline of the saint forest life is followed by another topic of his standing on the rock. This subject is reflected both in the hagiography and iconography. Description of Seraphim forest life and his standing on the rock are often contaminated in one story: *"He had a rock, a big rock, looked like a log, and he prayed on it. Once father Seraphim was praying on it, and a bear comed to him. He had rusks, and he... did feed him;"*⁵⁴ *"When Seraphim of Sarov was praying in his hermitage in the forest he was visited by a bear, and he fed thisna bear. And the rock [arose] in the form o' bear: here are hindfeet, there are forepaws and thuck's his head."*⁵⁵

Verbal tradition doesn't focus on the standing on the rock, it describes this fact in short; narrators emphasizes only main marks of this deed: its duration (official hagiography declares one thousand days of the standing, but folk legend means 40 days, what seems to be a lot for people) and originality of the rock form on which cavities made by Seraphim's knees can be found:⁵⁶ *"I hear that father Seraphim was praying there on the rock for 40 days and 40 nites... There remained cavities where he was kneeling..."*⁵⁷

If official hagiography tells us about the only rock on which the saint stood, "verbal hagiography" develops this subject. And we think that general fame of the hagiography story results in the fact that all rock relics in the south and southwest of Nizhny Novgorod province become connected with the name of Seraphim (people came to these rocks to treat backs, eyes, toothache; they rub against the rocks, arrange molebens. In the Soviet period people provided there sacred processions broken up by militia.) Even such detail of Seraphim written figure as carrying stones in his bag on the back symbolizing both carrying sins of people and free-will weighting of his own

(53) Diveevo, Pelageya Samsonovna, 2001, dvc 008.

(54) 2001, Arzamassky district, Vyezdnoye village, Z. I. Semenova, audio recording.

(55) 2001, Pervomaysky district, Pribrezhnoye village, V. I. Fadeyeva, dvc 012.

(56) We have already written about the cult of Seraphim's rocks: ШЕВАРЕНКОВА, *Исследования в области русской фольклорной легенды*.

(57) 1998; Kulebasky district, Kutuzovsky hermitage, E. V. Podstavnyagina.

selfless way also brings together two notions, Seraphim and saint rocks or stones: *"One belief exists: a few saints wear chains but Seraphim of Sarov carried a bag in which he had stones. He put them to remember and they grew. Them stones are Seraphim's ones from thack bag."*⁵⁸ Among Seraphim's rocks we know a rock near Kremenki village, Diveevsky district, a rock near Kutuzovka village, Kulebasky district (in the forest behind the Kutuzovsky convent) and a big rock complex near Pribrezhnoye village, Pervomaysky district, close to the Tsar hermitage (the Tsar hermitage is a convent closed in the Soviet period). All stones except the first one are connected with the legend about the fact that Seraphim of Sarov put small stones in the forest and they became to grow and turn into rocks: *"He sent two hermits, two monks... He gaved 'em twelve pounds o' stones... and told 'em to measure 50 metres off the Sarovka [river]. So them measured and put a stone... and it grew into a very big rock."*⁵⁹ That's the way how new episode of life is formed in "verbal hagiography" of the saint where he acts as organizer of local religious space (the net of natural relics honoured among people). Hence, verbal stories about the saint typologically correlate to the same stories written in different local folklore Russian traditions and to observations of A. B. Moroz: "Saints popular in different areas are venerated as peculiar 'culture heroes' arranging life of people in the area and regulating it; forming special objects, creating or enculturating them, revealing them to use."⁶⁰ In these stories Seraphim's deeds look unmotivated and incomprehensible but in other stories his deeds acquire sense and the saint himself acts as seer who deliberately put stones on the ground providing full relics for the following generations. Such relics can be considered either changing old ones or full change of churches: *"He divined what the future would be like, that the rock [on which he stood]... would be blown up to pieces... And said he to his novice: 'Do bring these two stones,... once no one will be able to reach the rock and people will come there'...;"*⁶¹ *"The Reverend blest them stones. He foresaw that we's churches would be tak'n away. Instead of*

(58) Pervomaysky district, Pribrezhnoye village, Z. G. Akasheva, 2001, dvc 012.

(59) 2001, Pervomaysky district, Koshelikha village, Pelagia Afimovna Baranova, born in 1922, audio 015A.

(60) А. Б. МОРОЗ, *Святые Русского Севера: народная агиография* [A. B. MOROZ, *Saints of Russian North. Folk hagiography*], Москва, 2009, с. 56.

(61) Pervomaysky district, Kremenki village, father Pavel Bugorkov, 2001, dvc 077.

churches pilgrims comed to them stones... People say that the Little rock was a small stone before. But now it is big;"⁶² "We's mummies told us and they knew it from theirn mummies... When father Seraphim walked on the ground he put them stones from his handkerchief. He kept them in the handkerchief and put them. 'At notable days I'll be honoured'. And thuck day comed... And it's grown to a very big rock! It's real miracle, real miracle!"⁶³ We have already written about the stones and rocks subject.⁶⁴ Thus, presence of natural relics of the saint in the researched southern districts of Nizhny Novgorod province becomes the fourth factor supporting verbal hagiography tradition. Our observation does repeat the idea advanced by A. B. Moroz: "As local relics are venerated, hagiographical texts are reproduced."⁶⁵

The subject of Seraphim cult folk relics subject in his "verbal hagiography" is followed by stories telling how "father Seraphim" arranged the most famous sacred object, Kanavka in Diveevo. Both church people and common peasants say that the stories almost in all variants coincide with their written version:⁶⁶ "He was the patron of thuck monastery, father Seraphim. So he came and said: '...Queen of Heaven said that Kanavka should be dug'. But nuns didn't want. And one morning the Mother Superior got up and saw: reverend father was digging the Kanavka. Har ran and said: 'Sisters, his reverence is digging here, let's quickly go to dig the Kanavka!' And here them left and saw no reverend father but the Kanavka had already begun to be built."⁶⁷ These narratives in verbal tradition are accompanied with predictions of unusual strength of the Kanavka; they also moved from written tradition to verbal one. Simultaneously they are based on the predictions of the

(62) Pervomaysky district, Pribrezhnoye village, 2001, Maria Nikolaevna Baltina, video 013.

(63) 2009, Pervomaysky district, Likhachi village, Zhuk Yevdokia, born in 1926, 21-D021_1.

(64) Ю. М. ШЕВАРЕНКОВА, « Народные рассказы о святых камнях в Нижегородском крае» [Y. M. SHEVARENKOVA, "Folk stories about saint rocks in Nizhny Novgorod province"], *Вестник Нижегородского университета им. Н. И. Лобачевского. Серия «Филология»* (2001), № 3, pp. 159–165.

(65) МОРОЗ, *Святые Русского Севера*, с. 51.

(66) For reference see: *Летопись Серафимо-Дивеевского монастыря*, ed. CHICHAGOV, с. 232–234.

(67) 2009, Diveevsky district, Suvorovo village, Maria Ivanovna Anikina, born in 1927, 21-D005_1.

saint himself: *"When enemy comes he won't step over the Kanavka."*⁶⁸ Presence of the relic directly in the territory of the convent, church attention to it, its atypicality for folk tradition (in contrast to cult of saint springs, rocks and trees, for example) tells upon absence of folk aetiological legends about it.

Accessibility of different editions of the hagiography of Seraphim nowadays tells upon fixation of separate miraculous or parable episodes direct retellings in verbal folk tradition: *"He was here, he lived in Sarov, he often here in the monastery. Once he comed from Petrovka in summer, he comed by sleigh. Nuns said: 'Us die with laughter! Father Seraphim, have ye gone mad?' — 'Us will see who's gone mad'. And it begunned to snow, a lot of snow, from Petrovka it comed. Them say so much snow was! 'Well, he said, who's got mad, me or you?' And he left by sleigh... Old nuns, them told everybody;"*⁶⁹ *"Once he was visited by three nuns and he told 'em: we're goin' to plant onion... 'em planted thon onion and he said: in the morn do come to dig it out. 'em comed and begunned to dig thon onion out. He said that the onion was ready. 'em thought: how come? Us planted it yesterday! 'em comed and saw: really the onion had grown, aromatic onion. Then comed 'em to the far small ashram or maybe to the springs. Father was in front of 'em and 'em saw his white legs. He turned and let 'em go forward. He self gode behind. 'em turned round and saw that he was a meter high above the ground, his legs were above the ground and gode like on the air, our father Seraphim."*⁷⁰ Stories about the death of Seraphim directly correlate with the written original: they are rare in the folklore tradition of the districts. They almost exactly repeat many written details of the death of the starets:⁷¹ *"A fire was at father Seraphim when him was dying. A candle falled, a cloth tooked fire. Smoke begunned. His heir Pavel was goin', his guardian. Him comed to the porch and nosed out thatn smoke. And him begunned cryin' at once... Them comed into but him was already*

(68) 2009, Diveevsky district, Suvorovo village, Maria Ivanovna Anikina, born in 1927, 21-D005_1.

(69) 2002, Diveevo, E. F. Trifonova, dvc 104.

(70) 2001, Diveevo, S. F. Zabrodin, dvc 004. About healing onion grown by the starets see in the hagiography: *Летопись Серафимо-Дивеевского монастыря*, ed. CHICHAGOV, c. 234; about Seraphim standing in the air see: *Ibid.*, c. 358.

(71) Death hagiography of the death of Seraphim see in: ДЕНИСОВ, *Житие Преподобного Серафима*, c. 401–403.

dead, only warm body."⁷² We know against the hagiographies that the saint himself predicted that when he died a fire would occur and that he died kneeling in front of the icon.

Actually the main part of Seraphim "verbal hagiography" consists of the wonders worked after the death of the starets. The volume of the wonders can be compared with his "hagiography" legends. For example, these are stories telling about unexpected appearance of the saint in front of common people stumbling them a lot: *"It was in Sarov. My nephew's father of the son-in-law was keepin' guard in the forest and the saint appeared from them bushes. My nephew's father of the son-in-law was afraid, he put out his hand offering a cigarette but Seraphim turned round and left."*⁷³ Or: *"A driver was goin'... past Sarov, past Diveevo. He says he never drives there. And an old carl stopped him and said: 'Drive me to Diveevo'. And he answers: 'Oi have no time, oi goin' another way...' 'Please drive me', — asked thatn carl. Well,... he droved him right to Diveevo. He comed out and saw nobody. He answered: 'Wurs the carl? Have ye seen him?' — 'No, we haven't'... Once he droved and thought to come to Diveevo. So he comed. And there was an icon, a big icon, and he cried: 'Here he is, here he is, I saw him — Seraphim!'... After it he became to believe. Seraphim called him: 'Why haven't ye gone to Diveevo? Visit me!'"*⁷⁴ Naturally our expedition archive tells a lot about his help to ill common people, saint's help to lost travelers and peasants on their way or in the forest. In these stories Seraphim is common and unselfish, sympathetic assistant of a person plunged into a difficulty. The saint always appears when the protagonist is weak. Against the narrative canon of such stories the saint is not recognized, people even have no time to thank him, and recognition occurs by chance, at home or in a church, often in front of an icon with Seraphim depicted.

And of course we should mention stories where Seraphim plays the principal part creating springs in Diveevo district. A lot of them have his name. Here are a few most interesting and brightest stories where Seraphim creates a spring appearing in front of amazed people: *"There were no spring of Seraphim... When land surveyors were work-*

(72) 2001, Voznessensky district, Kurikha village, A. I. Kuznetsova, audio recording.

(73) 2001, Diveevsky district, Ossinovka village, Natalia Pavlovna Chaplinskaya, born in 1920, video 030.

(74) 2001, Arzamassky district, Vyezdnoye village, nun Yelizaveta, audio 043A.

ing... Seraphim of Sarov appeared in white flax clothes and said: 'Don't plot here, make the border there,... and here will be a spring'. He struck the ground with his stick, and then spring ran."⁷⁵ Or: "It was 23 years ago. There was barbed wire [around Sarov]... The colonel left the room at night, in Sarov it was. He wanted to check our guards in lines o' duty... He saw an old man with a stick... He thought it was a spy. So he paced from thatn barbed wire and got thuck place... and hit a stone... Well, as him hit, water babbled. And [the old man] disappeared. But them had a very good spring in Sarov before. Soldiers tooked water from there...: to wash or to do something else, and thatn water was lost. So father Seraphim... moved it there."⁷⁶ Modern stories about recoveries at Seraphim springs are typical ones of narratives cycle about any folk natural relics.

Very interesting narratives in researched Diveevsky district and neighbor administrative territories about mysterious and knotty future of the saint relics are formed in special stories section. It is well-known that when the Sarov monastery was closed in 1925 the saint relics which was there was secretly removed somewhere in accordance with the church values requisition decree. Only in the beginning of 1990s it had been found in the archive of the Kazan Icon of the Virgin cathedral of Saint-Petersburg and then brought to the Serafimo-Diveevsky convent. Ilya Bassin writes square that "the relics of Reverend Seraphim has become independent participant of history for the last 150 years."⁷⁷ In folk stories, sometimes looking like detective ones, a few versions of the relics loss are proposed as well as the versions of its location in the Soviet times: one versions says that the relics was stolen by well-wishers from the cart at an inn in a village. Another one narrates that former nuns of the Diveevsky monastery buried it in the territory of their cloister and secretly worshiped it, and that the relics lying in the Diveevsky monastery nowadays is false.⁷⁸ Rumors mark out special role keeping Seraphim relic secret to nun Margarita who really kept relics — the saint's items, his cross,

(75) 1999, Diveevo village.

(76) 1999, Diveevsky district, Khitry village.

(77) И. БАСИН, "Миф мощей преподобного Серафима Саровского" [I. BASSIN, "Myth of Seraphim's relics"], in: *Страницы: Богословие. Культура. Образование*, Москва, 1997, т. 2, с. 385–397 (ed. 3) = 538–549, 538 (ed. 4).

(78) These stories have already been published: Ю. М. ШЕВАРЕНКОВА, "Современные рассказы о тайне мощей Серафима Саровского" [Y. M. SHEVARENKOVA, "Modern stories about the secret of Seraphim of Sarov relics"], *Живая старина*, 2010, № 4, p. 11–13.

mittens and pot — in her house. She had been keeping them until the Diveevsky monastery was open again. As for the pot, she put it on her head giving communion to believers.

And now a few words in conclusion. It turned out that many Christian saints fixed certain functions both in Orthodox life and in Russian folklore: Saint Nicholas helps sailors, Antipas “heals toothache” etc. We think that it is impossible and wrong to emphasize the same function or functions sharp regarding Seraphim of Sarov. Different stories traditionally say that this Russian saint is kind assistant (what is usual for Russian saints) and they add that he also is a doctor (what can be explained through folk veneration of saint springs and rocks). However, we can definitively speak about one unique function of the saint: he is the defender and the patron of all Diveevsky district: *“My grandpa told me that in 15 kilometres radius everythin’ would stay... Now bad harvest is everywhere but us always have what to eat: if spring wheat doesn’t grow us’ll have rye, if us don’t have rye there will be spring wheat. And potato will be a lot;”*⁷⁹ *“Him foresaw that ‘... in 40 kilometres radius no hunger ‘ould be and no fear’. It was war and us saw nothin’ bad, nor hunger, nor fear!.. It was hunger but us had bread, milk and potato! Us didn’t eat cats ‘n dogs!.. In thatn radius no big hunger was and no big fear!”*⁸⁰

So these legends show that “folk hagiography” of Seraphim develops not independently from written tradition and in many variants directly or indirectly, in whole plots or in some details refers us to the official hagiography of the saint reflecting partial knowledge of his biography among people. In modern verbal folk tradition of the southern part of Nizhny Novgorod province we find first of all viable and popular plots in which sympathetic attention to Seraphim — human being is expressed (Seraphim — child who fell from the bell tower, Seraphim — old man who lived in the forest and was beaten by brigands), plots connecting life or words of the saint with the settlements known to the narrators and with sacred natural objects of the area, plots about wonders (friendship with the bear, help to a common person). But the main factors supporting “folk hagiography” of the saint can be his life and activity in this area, bulk of litera-

(79) 2001, Diveevsky district, Yelizariyevo village, Matryona Mikhailovna Lagunova, video 060.

(80) 2009, Diveevsky district, Vertyanovo village, Nadezhda, born in 1935, Irina, born in 1940, 21-D046.

ture about him and Diveevo female community (hagiographies, monastery chronicles, literature about Diveevsky monastery hermitages and natural relics of Seraphim), icon-painting hagiography tradition of the saint depiction which often as if illustrates folk stories about him, and a lot of natural relics in the south of Nizhny Novgorod province, both mentioned in the hagiography of Seraphim and appeared after his death.

The frames of this work make us be limited mainly with Nizhny Novgorod legends about Seraphim of Sarov. These legends can be correlated with his hagiography and touch a little numerous stories about the wonders worked by the saint after his death. These wonders are final but integral part of almost any *official* hagiography of saints, new martyrs or beata, but in Nizhny Novgorod *verbal folk* hagiography of Seraphim they almost prevail over hagiography legends about him, not being retellings of written legends about the wonders worked by Seraphim after his death and that's why they are worth to be discussed in details about their plot typology.

SUMMARY

The popular cult of Seraphim of Sarov is studied on the basis of the material collected in the folkloristic expeditions to southern regions of the former Nizhny Novgorod governorate. The stories recorded from the words of peasants, which deal with the life and the miraculous deeds of the saint, are compared with the known written Lives of the saint dated to the 19th–20th centuries.