

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### IMPRESSIONS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL NARRATIVE RESEARCHERS CONFERENCE “ERZÄHLEN ZWISCHEN DEN KULTUREN” IN AUGSBURG, 1.-5.09.2002

The committee for narrative research at the German Ethnology Society (Die Kommission für Erzählforschung in der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Volkskunde) organised under the leadership of narrative researchers Sabine Wienker-Piepho and Sabine Doering-Manteuffel on September 1–5, 2002, in Augsburg, Germany, the international conference *Erzählen zwischen den Kulturen* (Intercultural Narrating).

Einladung



„Erzählen zwischen  
den Kulturen“

Kongreß  
vom  
1.- 5. September 2002  
in Augsburg

The three days featured 45 presentations, mainly from European folk narrative researchers. Plenary papers were given by Wilhelm F. H. Nicolaisen from Great Britain (narrating as cultural recognition), Helge Gerndt from Germany (legend research in the contemporary globalizing world), Sigfried Neumann from Germany (the us and them contradiction in narrative types of refugees and local Mecklenburg habitants), Wolfgang Mieder from USA (proverb-like stereotypes and their intercultural distribution), Leander Petzoldt from Austria (phenomenology and regional features of demonic creatures), Helmut Fischer



*Prof. Dr. Sabine Wienker-Piepho opening the congress.*

from Germany (the eccentric influence of narrating), Hans Kuhn from Australia (Australian fairy-tales – a misunderstanding?), Jurjen van der Kooij from the Netherlands (the calendar in Dutch and German languages as the importer of international narratives in the Netherlands and North Germany). Evening session presentations were presented by the grand master Lutz Rörich from Germany (depiction of other cultures in ethnic jokes and anecdotes) and Klaus Roth, Germany (depiction

of cultural differences in everyday narration).

The main purpose of the conference was to acknowledge the possibilities and trends in ethnological narrative research for representatives of other research fields. Presentations concerned how heritage narratives reflect the society in which the narration tradition spreads and different points of methodical problems of what and how needs and can be researched.

Several presentations analysed stereotypes and intercultural communication. Culture can be regarded as a system of rules expressed in symbols, and the narrative tradition points to cultural borders by differentiating the *self* and *other*. The other often appears in narratives when the main character feels endangered. Both traditional as well as contemporary heritage is an aesthetic form of self-expression as well as an act of communication, used to get in contact with one's fears. In folk tradition, stereotypes are related to the *negative other* (ethnic jokes), while the *positive other* is connected to self-reflection (the need to be similar to the *other*; to receive him, also related to changing self-identity).



*The student-team. On the very right, Prof. Dr. S. Doering-Manteuffel.*

The question of right and wrong, with regard to heritage, often can be reduced to fears and stereotypes that help create a distance from strangers. This distance is necessary for getting used to the stranger. And it is also used to change the stereotype and assimilate the other among the *self*. The task of narrative research is to find the reasons of narrating: what is important in the society, what is feared, what are we protected from by narrating the fears or by visualising them. Herein lies the reason for giving value to the comments and narrating situation and the need to record both.

The papers revealed that within Europe we might rather talk about local features of intracultural narratives, especially in the case of stories concerning the relations of people and nature, Europeans and non-Europeans or even political relations. Intercultural narrating is related to national relations, migration and tourism. Narrating is limited to a fairly limited circle if the topic concerns conflicts that do not carry similar weight with other heritage groups (holocaust stories in Jewish families, deportations in Estonian families).

This information- and presentation-rich conference took place in St Ulrich's House. On the evening of the second conference day, the mayor Eva Leipprand received the participants of the conference in the golden hall of Augsburg town hall. The visit to the town hall and the Augsburg puppet theatre and museum "Augsburgen Puppenkiste" gave a rewarding opportunity to acquaint with the town's history and spirit.

## FOLK BELIEF SEMINAR AT KAREPA

Folk belief seminars that last for several days, and are sometimes shorter and sometimes longer, have been held since 1990. The seminars have been organised by the folk belief group of the Department of Folkloristics, currently part of the Estonian Literary Museum. The first seminar took place on April 10th-14th in Lohusalu, North-Estonia and was organised in cooperation with the Chair of Comparative Religion of the Helsinki University with chairman Juha Pentikäinen. Other participants came from the University of Jyväskylä, the Udmurtian Institute of Language, Literature and History, the Pedagogical University of St. Petersburg, several higher education schools and research institutions in Estonia. The seminar held in Lohusalu became known by intense discussions: it included only 19 lectures, but panel sessions and debates on various issues lasted through the night.

Many of the participants in the next seminar were also from Finland: guest lecturers from the Finnish Literary Society, the Universities of Helsinki and Jyväskylä (Janne Vilkuna, Leea Virtanen, Anneli Asplund, Juha Pentikäinen) and the Lahti Centre for Research and Study at the University of Helsinki. The third seminar discussed various ethnic groups of Estonia (Estonian Swedes, the Jews, the Gypsies, the Old Believers, and the Ingrian Finns), but also the current situation of the culture and education of the Finno-Ugric people in Russia, the revival of ethnic religions, the spread of Lutheran church in Mordovia, the identity of the Ingrian Finns in Komi and, again, the religion and identity of the Setu. Our Finnish colleagues lectured also on the fourth seminar (Anna-Leena Siikala and Veikko Anttonen).

The above overview shows that at the revival period of religious studies, before the Chair of Theology was re-established at the University of Tartu, the seminars brought together students and scholars. The participation and assistance of different Finnish scholars at that time was of great significance.

The lectures held on more recent seminars have also discussed a wide variety of topics, introducing guest lecturers from different countries, but the events are more oriented to professional folklorists and scholars of folk belief. The Karepa seminar Name and Nam-



*Participants of the seminar on their way to the Toolse castle ruins. Photo by A. Kuperjanov, 2002.*

ing took place on May 14–15 in North Estonia, was organised by E. Ehastu and M. Kõiva and focussed on the early history and archaeology of North Estonia. Seminar topics included the lore of Udmurtian forest spirit (Aado Lintrop), space models in runo songs (Madis Arukask), the name of the Helper in one fairy tale type (Ell Vahtramäe), dragons and monsters (Mare Kõiva), folklore publications, especially bibliography and issues related to marking (Karin Maria Rooleid), brachylogisms (Kristi Salve). A tour guided by Tõnno Jonuks introduced cup-marked stones, ancient fields, rural towns, the Order Castle of Rakvere and other archaeological and historical sights of the region. T. Jonuks' lectures refreshed our memories with facts from early history and provided new and interesting information. The small dimensions of ancient fields and the distribution of cup-marked stones in Virumaa were truly impressive. As usual, the first day of the seminar ended in overnight discussions. On the second day we visited the ruins of the Toolse castle.

The seminar was sponsored by the Estonian Culture Foundation.

Mare Kõiva