

NEWS IN BRIEF

10TH CONGRESS OF FINNO-UGRIC STUDIES IN THE REPUBLIC OF MARI

Kristi Salve

On August 15–20, the 10th congress of Finno-Ugric studies was held in the Republic of Mari. Since the congress is held in every five years, the tenth congress also marked a round anniversary of the most important event in Finno-Ugric studies. Remarkably, at the opening ceremony of the congress in Ioshkar-Ola, held in the theatre named after M. Shketan (a pseudonym of Jakov Maiorov (1898-1937), an ethnic Mari author and actor), the keynote speaker was Hungarian Péter Domokos (Budapest), who provided a reflective overview of all the previous congresses. This fact is noteworthy for the reason that Domokos has participated in all the congresses of Finno-Ugric studies ever held; at the very first congress held in 1960 in Budapest, Hungary, he was there as an undergraduate, the youngest of the congress participants.

Whoever listened to his tour in history might have agreed that the Finno-Ugric world, like the world in general, has changed considerably during this period. The Finno-Ugric world had already undergone a significant transformation in the first part of the twentieth century. Presently, the political scene of the Finno-Ugric world bears more resemblance to the period before the Second World War when cultural congresses were held together with the Hungarians, Finns and Estonians, but which soon ended in the tumultuous times of wars and occupations.

How have these changes then reflected in the Finno-Ugric studies and congresses? One possible answer is the place of the event: half a century ago, not to speak of a century ago, Ioshkar-Ola would definitely not have been considered a place where scholars from different countries could come together. Although many reputed linguists, folklorists, historians, etc. have emerged among the Mari people, the situation is not entirely positive. Throughout the year 2005, the international audience has focused on the deterioration of the status of the Mari language, the limitation of freedom of speech, and especially on the suspicious death of Professor Yuri Anduganov, the congress president, in a traffic accident in rather mysterious circumstances a few weeks before the beginning of the congress.

People who arrived at the congress were overcome with conflicting emotions and choices in advance – and very many of the registered participants cancelled their registration because of the situation. Of course, some had also personal reasons against participating in the congress.

On behalf of those who arrived, though, it must be noted with regret that the political situation in Russia and especially in the Republic of Mari had a negative impact on the congress work on more than one level.

Firstly, many of the presentations included in the congress programme were cancelled. There were more than 900 registered participants, while the number of presentations exceeded 500. This proportion inevitably hindered the congress' work, because on the one hand the organisers wished to follow the programme, but on the other hand there was the temptation to rearrange presentations, if two were cancelled in a row, and finish a workshop earlier, but this would have made it impossible for the participants to move between different sections and listen to the presentations or speakers that would interest them.

Secondly, another negative aspect caused by the tense political situation was the overorganisation of the time of especially foreign participants, and far too strict security measures, which complicated (but could not entirely rule out) the communication between scholars of different countries between the congress sessions.

In the following I will discuss the topics and presentations delivered in the folklore session which I primarily partook in, but also those of some other sessions that I managed to listen to or on which I received reliable information from my colleagues.

First I would like to introduce the members of the Estonian delegation. The congress participants included five folklorists from the Estonian Literary Museum (Anu Korb, Aado Lintrop, Janika Oras, Liina Saarlo, and the author), Vello Paatsi, a cultural historian from the same institution, and ethnologists Indrek Jääts from the Estonian National Museum and Aivar Jürgenson from the Institute of History. The rest of the Estonians among the congress participants were linguists from Tartu and Tallinn.

Each working day of the congress (i.e. August 16, 17 and 18) opened with two parallel plenary sessions with an already published presentation and an ordered and prepared comments to the presentation by another scholar. The plenary presentations discussed topics of linguistics, archaeology, and ethnology. Two of the plenary presentations were overviews: one on the development of Finno-Ugric studies in the Republic

lic of Mari, and the other a treatment by Tatiana Deviatkina (Saransk) on the situation in the study of the intangible culture of the Finno-Ugrians in Russia over the past 20 years on the basis of informants of various ethnic backgrounds.

Now I will move on to introducing the session presentations. For a folklorist like me, who is interested in various genres of oral lore, mythology and several broader topics, like ethnic relationships, there were interesting presentations in various sessions. The scope of this summary is far too small to overview all the heard presentations, and many presentations attracted attention in hindsight, either because of complimentary criticism or promising abstracts. For this reason the following notes are largely incidental.

The majority of speakers were ethnic Mari, but scholars from Tatar, Bashkiria and Chuvash had also taken active interest in the congress. These Turkic peoples have been in close contacts with the Mari, Udmurts and other Finno-Ugrians (such presentations on ethnic relations were held also by the Mari, e.g. the one delivered by Silanti Sabitov from Ioshkar-Ola), which, in a sense, justified their participation; on the other hand, however, their active participation was occasioned by the near proximity of the congress place.

Quite expectedly, the most informative presentations were those held by some Mari scholars of the older generation: for example, the reputed scholar of minor forms of folklore and editor Aleksander Kitikov (Ioshkar-Ola) with his overview on genre syncretism in Mari folklore. An interesting treatment of comparisons and epithets in Mari ritual folk songs was given by Ivan S. Ivanov (Ioshkar-Ola). As to younger speakers, the topics ranged from genre overviews of ritual folk songs and folktales resembling short stories to non-traditional oral narrative (a narrative about actual living persons of the nearest past, which are usually presented as a homodiegetic narrative, i.e. from the viewpoint of a participant, thus either a memorate or a narration) and to Internet humour and role play.

Some presentations may have been understandable for those familiar with the field, but which remained distant for someone outside the culture, such as the one discussing the poetics of a Mordvin epic by Aleksandr Sharonov (Saransk), which prompted a lively discussion on the ethnicity of this particular epic (*Mastorava*) and the authorship of its literary version. An extremely intriguing treatment was presented by Maria Magdolna Tatar (Oslo), a scholar of Mongolian studies, who discussed a specific style of the pentatonic scale. This style is characteristic of Hungarian, Mountain Mari and Chuvash folk tunes, and the speaker had discovered similar equivalents in the folklore of some ethnic Mongol groups.

Very intriguing, though I am not qualified in the area of research to express any opinion.

The topics of some presentations that were (fortunately for the audience!) cancelled proved downright frightening, such as that by a scholar with an Armenian name residing in Finland who promised to present mythological parallels between the Armenians and the Veps (*sic!*). The Veps were discussed, though, but by expert scholars. One of such presentations was an overview of beliefs connected with underground and underwater creatures by Irina Vinokurova (Petroskoi). Niina Zaitseva (Petroskoi) spoke about issues in the Veps literary language, focusing on the role of dialect. As a leading promoter and reformer of the Veps literary language, she has encountered all these problems in her research and has proposed solutions. My presentation discussed the historical layers of the Veps folklore and reverberations of ethnic relations in these.

Several interesting presentations were held in sessions on folk religion and traditional lifestyle. Differentiating between religion and oral lore which mediates it is definitely a complicated task. Topics interesting for a folklorist were also discussed at sessions on literature, since folkloric motifs and structural devices play an important role in the early literature of the eastern Finno-Ugrians.

As expected, the majority of presentations by Mari scholars discussed their ethnic religion that has in some form been preserved until the present day and has even witnessed certain revival in the recent past. Some of these presentations on one's ethnic worldview, ethics, lifestyle, etc., like those by other Finno-Ugrian scholars, were clearly apologetic, but they certainly have a positive psychotherapeutic effect. Presentations with a masochistic tonality about the disappearance of one's native language and Russianisation of the people represented the other extremity in terms of ethnic identity.

The congress offered an opportunity to learn about the research of Finno-Ugrian scholars from the Republic of Mari and elsewhere in Russia also on one's own. The fancy congress portfolio handed out to the participants included not only the congress programme, abstracts and full texts of plenary presentations (and some glossy prints), but also various reference books and bibliographies. Achievements in Finno-Ugric linguistics, folkloristics, ethnology, etc. could be followed at book display; some publications were also on sale.

Since the congress was held in the Republic of Mari, I should say a few words about the publications on Mari folklore. A positive development in this sense is definitely the initiated publication of the corpus of Mari

folklore, an anthology of all folklore genres with parallel Russian texts. Along with the already published volumes, the Estonians discovered other interesting publications. One heartwarming fact is that the Mari scholars of Finno-Ugric studies, some of whom were students of Paul Ariste (or students of his students), had not neglected the academician's centennial in February 2005, and had published a collection of articles, including also folkloristic material, in his commemoration.

This congress definitely marked the end of an era in the history of congresses in Finno-Ugric studies. The problems were probably present even before, and perhaps those that became topical on this congress were not as much the problems of Finno-Ugric studies as those of Russia. Still, a forum of this number of participants and the excessively broad range of topics cannot be academically productive, but as it is often emphasised on academic events, establishing and renewing personal contact is worthwhile. I personally had the chance to communicate with already familiar scholars of the Veps studies and make agreements, but also enjoyed meeting other scholars of Finno-Ugric studies, some of whom I had not met in ten years.

What might happen next? For now, the present situation remains the same. Why should not the scholars of Finno-Ugric studies come together in every five years, when people sometimes meet for even more trivial reasons? On the concluding event of the congress, the place for the 11th Congress of Finno-Ugric Studies was announced. According to the tradition, this place is the Catholic University of Pilszaba in Hungary.

For someone like me, who has last visited Ioshkar-Ola a dozen years ago, it was interesting to compare the past and new experiences. Unfortunately, the scope of this overview limits exploring these in more detail, but I would like to mention that after returning from the congress I found myself spending many evenings with the folklore publications and church magazine in Mari language which I had brought along, attempting to understand these by means of the Mari-Russian dictionary purchased from the congress book sales desk, and was thrilled to occasionally come across a word I had studied some ten years ago.

Summing up all the impressions – academic and personal, pleasant and disagreeable – I am very glad to have had the opportunity to participate in the congress with the support of the Estonian Literary Museum, the Estonian Committee of Finno-Ugric Peoples, and the Estonian Cultural Endowment.

ISFNR 14TH CONGRESS SESSION *COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATIONS AND DATABASES*

Mare Kõiva

The topics of the ISFNR Congress session *Computer-Mediated Communication and Databases* pointed to the transformation of folk tales and narration. Next to stories that have adapted to the new environment there have been others that have disappeared, but entirely new genres and areas have been legalised. According to Donald Haase (Detroit, USA), changes in the paradigm of fairy-tale scholarship, literary studies, and technology have had an impact on the performance, but also the contents and context of tales. Other important sources of influence have been the electronic media and the Internet. Haase considered the latter a serious rival to oral communication in mediating and transmitting traditional narrative lore. But there have been also other interesting tendencies, such as the liberalisation of research of folk tales and the popularity of scholarships in folk narrative research. Considering the level and achievements in digitising, database and Internet research in Estonia, dedicating a separate session to this topic at the ISFNR Congress in Tartu was a logical move.

New databases in the humanities are opened almost on monthly basis. Presumably, all kinds of technical problems, including everything that has to do with metadata and issues of author's rights, are already solved and regulated by law by major corporations and centres. But what might be the main characteristics of folklore databases, what is expected of them, and what do they actually provide? Are databases and digitisation only instruments that have nothing to do with deeper theoretical context, or are they mere fashionable terms like 'morphology', 'structure' or 'structuralism', or is it a trademark like 'nylon stockings' or 'Winchester', was asked by Vilmos Voigt (Budapest, Hungary), key speaker of the session (further on Voigt's views see the video recording linked to the Congress web page). Whether a rifle is an adequate comparison in the discussion of databases created from the needs of research is an altogether different issue, but their effect was evident in the presentations on individual databases. One goal of many folklore databases has been rendering oral history available for the general public. Since the present time, only three per cent of Icelandic legends have been available for non-Icelandic speakers. Also, as there is no special legend register, the material for the database had to be collected from various manuscript collections and recordings of the Arnamagnæan Institute of Reykjavik. Terry Gunnell (Reykjavik, Iceland) introduced the gigantic Sagnagrunnur database (<http://www.hi.is/~terry/database/sagnagrunnur.htm>), compiled with the help



Photo 1. Terry Gunnell. Photo by Alar Madisson.

of his students, and the possibilities for its integration with other databases of this type, including possible linking to the geoinfosystem. The largest of the narrative databases of Estonian folklore introduced this year was Rehepapp (<http://www.folklore.ee/rehepapp>), an overview of which was presented by Liisa Vesik on the example of narratives about lumbago. Advantages and problems of presenting the text and its visual form were demonstrated by Blanka Henriksson (Turku, Finland). Katrien van Effelterre (Leuven, Belgium) spoke about the database of Belgian legends (www.volksverhalenbank.be), which enables the reader to add stories and comment on the existing ones. Last year the digitisation of sound recordings was initiated; these will be partly available in the Internet.

The role of databases as indispensable instruments in research was emphasised in the presentations by Piret Voolaid, Anneli Baran and Risto Järv. Piret Voolaid (Tartu) discussed the metamorphoses of a popular folk tale *A Wolf, a Goat, and a Cabbage* (ATU 1579) into riddles, IQ tests, and computer games on the basis of the database of Estonian droodles (<http://www.folklore.ee/Droodles>) compiled by her. The database is available in

Estonian and English, and is, as such, one of the few corpora of Estonian folklore materials that can be used also by international scholars.

Risto Järv (Tartu), who has compiled the database of Estonian folk tales, has sorted out proverbs from the database, pointing to the possibilities in finding minor folklore genres within texts of other genres. This enables to easily follow the location of proverbs in the structure of a longer narrative, their use in different types of narratives and by different performers. Anneli Baran (Tartu) explored how short can expressions be to still retain their meaning on the basis of the database of Estonian phrases (<http://www.folklore.ee/justkui>). Baran discussed the obligatory and facultative (or random) components of phraseologisms from the angle of their semantics.

The topic of databases was also discussed in several other presentations of the session. Here I would like to mention the analysis of a myth by Yuri Berezkin (St. Petersburg, Russia), where he comparatively linked Balto-Finnic motifs with North-American material, relying on his original database of 35,000 texts. Liisi Laineste's (Tartu) humour-theoretical treatment relied on a corpus of more than 30,000 texts and on digitised old printed sources. Discussions following the presentations were lively, discussing theoretical issues, the presentation of metadata, legal problems, the need for parallel translations and other topical considerations. Traditionally, Estonian folklorists are used to pay minute attention to information about the place of collection and informant, as the recognition of a folklore scholar often improves the social position of a narrative in his or her community.

Computer-mediated communication is a broad area of study: some of the topics discussed at the congress were also very general; others investigated online religion and online narration. Violetta Krawczyk-Wasilewska (Lodz, Poland) explored the relationship of catastrophe stories about the 9/11 attack and tsunamis with global fears (terrorism, ecological catastrophe, solitude) on the basis of online texts and Internet comments.

Reeli Reinaus (Tartu) analysed the typical structure of women's labour stories in the Estonian portal *Delfi Woman* and psychological needs behind these. The issues of soul travels, rebirth and death in the Internet and in written press (in the presentation by Marju Kõivupuu, Tallinn) suggest that lore on this topic is continuously active and has preserved its ties with the earlier layer.

The session concluded with a workshop on the functioning and future prospects of computer-mediated communication. The main speakers in the panel chaired by Maria Yelenevskaya were Rolf W. Brednich



Photo 2. Vilmos Voigt. Photo by Andres Kuperjanov.

(Göttingen, Germany), one of the leading scholars of urban legends, chief editor of the encyclopaedia of folk tales, chief editor of journal *Fabula*; scholar of online material Larissa Fialkova (Haifa, Israel), and Mare Kalda (Tartu), expert on Geocaching. The probabilities and topics of internet humour have constantly expanded; various developments in the genre that was traditionally transmitted only between men enable to speculate that these jokes were, in fact, created by women. An overview of the rich Internet lore of the emigrants from the former Soviet Union, its peculiarities and the social background led to the conclusion that abundant material requires continuous attention by researchers. The majority of the audience were proper “mugglers” (in other words, inexperienced) in Geocaching and were grateful to learn about the topic. The presentations triggered laughter and inspired thoughts, the following discussion ranged widely. Evidently, there is no doubt in the abundance of topics to research or methods of approach, or the future of the area. The session therefore concluded with founding an initiative group for an open discussion, exchange of experience and information and advancing research in the future.

SIEF BIBLIOGRAPHY WORKSHOP

Karin Maria Rooleid

The participants of the Bibliography Workshop (July 27-28, 2005) at the 14th Congress of ISFNR were primarily those who are involved in the activities of the SIEF Working Group for IVB (Internationale Volkskundliche Bibliographie = International Folklore Bibliography). Therefore, the participants called this seminar the 8th Meeting of the Working Group for IVB (1. Lilienthal 1990, 2. Neusiedl am See 1991, 3. Rheinfelden 1992, 4. Reinhausen 1993, 5. Petronell-Carnuntum/Kittsee 1994, 6. Amsterdam 1996, 7. Třešt 1998).

The aim of the Bibliography Workshop was to discuss the bibliographical terminology that we are going to use in the electronic catalogue of IVB. Karin Maria Rooleid (Tallinn) pointed out in her presentation *Ethnological Subject Words and Category Boundaries in English and German* the terminological problems she has encountered during her recent bibliographical work. She pointed out a large number of synonymous terms and concepts, used by ethnologists, folklorists, anthropologists, and cultural historians, which should be inevitably standardised in the IVB online version. Selecting the subject word from among close synonyms is a very complicated task (e.g. 'folk ~ ethnic ~ popular ~ traditional culture', 'association ~ society', 'cultural anthropology ~ social anthropology', 'urban ~ town ~ city' in English; 'Verein ~ Gesellschaft', 'Kulturanthropologie ~ Sozialanthropologie', 'Betrieb ~ Unternehmen', 'Fleischer ~ Metzger', 'Tischler ~ Schreiner', 'Töpfer ~ Hafner' in German). Klaus-Peter Busche (Bremen) presented the programme Bismas and the preliminary online version of IVB, which is based on the data from the Bremen University (1986-1998). He also discussed problems that may arise in connection with the online version of bibliography. Meri Kuula-Bruun (Helsinki) introduced the Finnish bilingual ethnological thesaurus *Thesaurus for Folk Culture Studies* (1994) and explicated problems associated with the application of its wordlist. Mattias Brundell (Stockholm/Gävle) gave an overview of a statistical study on the Swedish ethnological bibliography *Svensk etnologisk bibliografi* (SEB) and discussed the current position of this bibliography in the Swedish humanities. Bronisława Kopczyńska-Jaworska, Inga Kuźma and Małgorzata Wilbik (Łódź), compilers of the Polish ethnological bibliography, were unfortunately unable to participate in the meeting in Tartu, but had sent a presentation *The Voice in the Discussion*, in where they focused on the fact that the research fields of ethnology and anthropology have approached each other in the 1980s-1990s, and this has necessitated a need to partly update the terminology. Ernst J. Huber (Basel) concentrated in his presentation on the current

situation of bibliography in Switzerland. He pointed out that in Switzerland the ethnological material is registered in the bibliographies of other areas, such as history, arts, heritage protection, etc., which has resulted in differences in defining the field of ethnology and folkloristics (*Volkskunde*) by bibliographers, who thus arrange the ethnological material under different categories. Terminological problems in the Swiss context are associated with multilingualism - subject terms in German, French, Italian and Romansh need to be synchronised and translated into one language.

The various problems of terminology cannot be solved by itself, they need to be objectively examined and repeatedly discussed by specialists. This is the main reason why this topic will be continued on the 9th seminar of the IVB working group that will be held in Helsinki in 2006 or 2007.

MEDICA II. INTERDISCIPLINARY CONFERENCE ON MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Renata Sõukand

On May 18–19, 2005 the second interdisciplinary conference on medical anthropology MEDICA II was held in the main hall of the Estonian Literary Museum (ELM). The conference was organised by the Estonian Folklore Institute in cooperation with the Centre of Cultural History and Folkloristics in Estonia and the Department of Folkloristics at ELM, and with the support by the Estonian Cultural Endowment.

Quite recently, the concept 'medical anthropology' used to be associated mostly with physical anthropology, represented by the current Centre of Physical Anthropology at the University of Tartu. The relation of medical anthropology with cultural anthropology has not been easy to define. By the present moment, however, and owing to the joint efforts of many people, medical anthropology has begun to gain ground as an independent interdisciplinary area of study, which is mainly concerned with research in culture but has also become the object of study for scholars of widely different fields. The concept has become to cover folk medicine, ethics and history of medicine, doctor-patient relations, but also more recent discoveries in individual medicine and pharmacy. At the same time, medicine could be discussed in the context of religion and pedagogy, psychology and social studies.

Organisers of the MEDICA series have set out to bring together as many scholars studying the field in Estonia as possible, encourage them to establish contacts and find common courses of study. An important aim is also to promote medical anthropology among the general public, presently in the form of the conference, later also through academic and popular scientific publications.

This conference brought together folklorists, ethnologists, historians, semioticians, pharmacists and medical practitioners. Presentations held at the morning session of the first conference day centred on Estonian folk medicine and were delivered mostly by representatives of medicine. Folklorist Mall Hiemäe discussed the relations of calendar tradition and folk medicine in the context of folk calendar with a focus on changes in the attitudes towards beauty and health in the past centuries. Pharmacist and semiotician Renata Sõukand analysed the concept of folk medicine from the angle of different disciplines and discussed the evolution of folk medicine as a collector's imaginative product from the medicine of individuals. Pharmacist and professor of *materia medica* Ain Raal approached the Estonian folk medicine in the context of ATC Classification, comparing the therapeutic effect of medicinal herbs from the viewpoint of academic medicine and its correspondence to the suggested use presented in the HERBA database. Later during the conference the key-word 'meteorism' was introduced, which for many associated with matters of the stellar sky, but is, in fact, a medical term of 'abdominal gas'. Anneli Zirkel, doctor and MA of health services, introduced the use of medicinal herbs in modern times and analysed its topicality.

Presentations of the second half of the day, held by folklorists, were considerably more versatile in terms of the covered topics. Triinu Ojamaa discussed hyperventilation as a mechanism of trance. Mare Kõiva's presentation focused on a seemingly marginal practice from the viewpoint of academic medicine – namely, transferrals to folk healers given to patients by practitioners of academic medicine. The question of the needlessness of protecting personal medical information posed by Kristi Salve in the following discussion was vehemently opposed by the speaker and the audience. On the example of the Ryzhkovo village in Siberia, Anu Korb discussed healing skills as collectively transmitted heritage, which by migrating in time and space and feeding on the knowledge of other cultures, literature and other aspects has actively preserved an important role in the everyday life of this village community. Aimar Ventsel spoke about the institutionalisation of Shamanism in Yakutia and its correlation with national identity and politics.

Day 2 of the conference opened with presentations of the representatives of the Centre of Physical Anthropology at the University of Tartu.

Helje Kaarma provided an overview of the history of the centre. The following two presentations were held by Jaan and Tiiu Kasmel: the former analysed the changes in the average height, body mass and body mass index of Estonian schoolgirls in the age 12–18 in the 20th century, and the latter discussed the education of Karl Ernst von Baer guided by his interest in folk medicine and medicinal herbs. During the following discussion thoughts and ideas were exchanged about the role of culture in the formation of eating habits, whereas the author of this overview was left with a distinct impression that the speakers had problems with defining the concept 'culture' for themselves, or its relation with physical characteristics. This clearly points to the need for such conferences and discussions, as well as the need to agree on terminology in the present-day Estonian cultural scene.

The topics of concluding presentations could be described as miscellaneous. Folklorist Andreas Kalkun observed didactic popular medicine texts on the example of a formerly popular Estonian handbook for girls' health, analysing the examples and suggestions provided there. At the discussion later during the day, the topic inspired ample feedback and even recollections of the audience on personal experiences with analogous literature. Unfortunately, nobody remembered to bring a microphone to this discussion... Historian Kurmo Konsa analysed artificialisation of life and its influence on wellbeing and health of humans, focusing on changes in physical and biological environment. The final presentation was held by Marju Kõivupuu, who discussed disease as a status symbol, focusing on the defining of the nature of disease in biomedicine and in cultural and social context.

The day and the conference concluded with a common discussion with a retrospective view on the more intriguing aspects of conference presentations, establishing contacts for future cooperation and setting goals for future. All in all, the get-together was a success and offered plenty food for thought about the future of the discipline and for each participant individually. Abstracts of the conference have been published and further information is available at the conference home page (www.folklore.ee/medicaII), presentations held at the conference will be shortly published in a special issue of journal *Mäetagused*.

Conference organisers wish to thank the Estonian Cultural Endowment, all the speakers and people who made this conference possible: Andres Kuperjanov for preparing the conference home page; Liisa Vesik for preparing layout for the book of abstracts; Viire Villandi for editing the book of abstracts; Ave Tupits for heading sessions on one conference day, Mare Mölder, Salle Kajak and Eva-Kait Kärblane for taking care of coffee-breaks. Nature products were introduced and offered for degustation by Tervix LLC.

LIINA SAARLO DEFENDED HER PhD THESIS

Liina Saarlo. *Eesti rahvalaulude stereotüüpiast. Teooria, meetod ja tähendus* [On Stereotypicality in Estonian Folk Songs. Theory, Method and Significance]. Dissertationes Folkloristicae Universitatis Tartuensis 5. Supervisor Tiiu Jaago, opponent Madis Arukask. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 2005. 258 pp.

Important things, the most important things... Often it seems that we will never truly understand these, we are not even left with an illusion of clarity, if we take an honest and serious look at our striving towards these. Ever since I became enchanted with the beauty of Kalevala-metric folk songs during my student years, I have been troubled with the question of how these songs are created. The internal excitement about this question while thinking about Kalevala-metric folk songs is still there, even though I have abandoned hope to understand this decades ago. I simply realised that it takes more than my knowledge and abilities to solve a problem this complicated.

Then arrived the computer era, which opened new possibilities and coincided with the arrival of a new generation of researchers. Liina Saarlo became my colleague ten or so years ago, when she was still an undergraduate student. By that time, her scholarly interest had already settled on Kalevala-metric folk songs. Her first assignment at the Estonian Literary Museum was to digitise the Kalevala-metric folk songs of the Kodavere parish, which was to be published as an anthology in the *Old Psalter* publication series. The anthology has still not been published, but Liina Saarlo has completed her BA and MA theses, and has now defended also her doctor's degree. The fresh degree holder has said that the theses were inspired by her attempts to take the typological systematisation of folk songs – one of the most demanding stages at compiling the anthology – on a more objective level.

Liina Saarlo defended her PhD thesis (supervisor Tiiu Jaago, opponent Madis Arukask) on May 24, 2005. The thesis is an article dissertation. Its six articles, five of which have been already published and one will be published shortly, are preceded by an introduction, which sheds light upon the theoretical framework of the concept of stereotypicality and introduces the contents of the articles. An important part of the introduction entails laying the cards on the table – the author explains how she made the folk song texts compatible for digitisation, i.e. how she evened the dialectal language, or standardised roots of different inflections, etc. The introduction is followed by a summary in English. Various illustrative examples, including extracts of tables, on which the articles that constitute the majority of the thesis are largely based on, are presented

between the introductory part and its summary in English. The tables are quite informative and thought-provoking – consider, for example, the informative list of the most popular roots.

It is, I suppose, worth mentioning that in the past few decades the Estonian ethnomusicologists have termed these verses, verse groups and fragments that recur (almost) invariably in different contexts and different songs as *stereotypical* verses. In Estonian folklore studies the same units have been referred to as formulae or by other terms.

One of the most important earlier studies into formulae, which Liina Saarlo has occasionally given a nod to, is Udo Kolk's extensive and truly influential article published in 1962. Considering that Kolk's study is quoted forty years after its publication, it is regrettable that he never received a degree for his contribution in the field.



Liina Saarlo. Photo by Aivar Õepa.

The material analysed in the articles at different angles consists of Kalevala-metric folk songs of the Kodavere region (not including the entire corpus of the songs, but only those included in Jakob Hurt's collection). The reason for this selection is well justified. True, even though Kalevala-metric folk songs survived in the Kodavere region until researchers could record them by means of the 20th century recording devices, it is obvious that the repertoire of the most recent performers is considerably more narrow and random: the singers could no longer adjust their performance on the example of other performers, and had to rely on their own memory and poetic abilities. These songs are not even comparable to the ones included in Hurt's collection.

Computers have also opened up new opportunities in handling large corpora of data, and an application of the same macros to the material of other regions would yield interesting results. Rushing ahead, Liina Saarlo has already analysed the material comparatively. The first article in the thesis about the formulae of Kalevala-metric songs of the Kodavere region discusses formulae as the manifestation of stereotypicality on the

verse level. The author distinguishes between lexical and structural formulae and their subcategories. Saarlo has come up with interesting ideas on defining and determining a formula, e.g. in terms of the presence or absence of Kalevala-metric formulae in minor forms, or how a completely ordinary combination of words may transform into a formula.

The second article on the quantity and quality of formulae sheds light on this complicated issue. Liina Saarlo admits that this analysis cannot be conducted by computer alone. Computers may be able to sort large corpora of material and distinguish, say, alliterative phrases, but a scholar has to take a look at the results and decide upon which of the word combinations are formulae, or stereotypical combinations, and which are not. This involves, to a certain extent, the aspect of subjectivity, which may be questionable. Still, the foundation for the conflict of views is quite solid.

The third article discusses word pairs, units higher than single words, focusing on those word pairs that do not share initial rhyme or parallelism. The material of the Kodavere region is compared against other folklore and language corpora. This article is, again, an illuminating study. The use of terminology, though, seems questionable. The term *potentsiaalne sõnapaar* 'potential word pair' sounds confusing. The author has used the term for actual word pairs, which components are not adjacent in the verse. But a word pair (if not taken too automatically) cannot be potential – it is still a word pair, regardless of the position of its components. Furthermore, the folk song *The Brother's War Tale* is not a repetitive song (see p. 192) according to Oskar Kallas' typology, but is a song with repetitive episodes.

The fourth article entitled *Repeating Repetitions* discusses a phenomenon that may at first sight appear solely quantitative, but a search for an epithet naturally requires a selection, and the selected variant, which is usually in alliterative relationship with the key word, assumes additional value also in the semantic sense. Repetition is repetition – on the one hand a primitive stylistic device, but on the other hand clearly effective even for those who have not discovered the poetic value of a Kalevala-metric song. Many modern Estonian poets, such as Juhan Liiv or Paul-Eerik Rummo have effectively employed repetition in their poetry. Distinguishing repetition by means of a computer appears very simple, even automatic. But the results presented in the tables of the thesis do not conform with the theoretical context and the examples in Eduard Laugaste's reader and his lectures (before the reader was published) that the now middle-aged or senior folklorists have been accustomed to.

Liina Saarlo has started to fulfil the potential that I have referred to above – namely, the presenting a comparative viewpoint to the material.

The article entitled *Additions and Comparisons. On the Lexical Stereotypicality of Kalevala-Metric Folk Songs of the Kodavere and Jõhvi-Iisaku region* nicely sums up its contents. The author observes specific word combinations in both corpora and concludes that the most frequently occurring word combinations in the Kodavere song texts are also the most popular in the Jõhvi-Iisaku folk songs. The few shifts that occur could be explained by differences in the language varieties of these regions. Differences between folk songs and other genres of folklore (proverbs, idioms), however, are much more remarkable.

The last article entitled *Folklore, Stereotypicality, Ideology* may be better understood through the subtitle of the collection, edited and compiled by Tiiu Jaago, where the article was first published – *Oral History and Interpretation. Articles on the Theory, Methods and Research Practices of Folkloristics and Ethnology*.

I agree that this article does not exactly downplay the importance of an otherwise brilliant thesis but does not contribute much to it either. It appears that Liina Saarlo has here bitten off more than she can chew. How can she so confidently claim the parallel development of Estonian and Russian folkloristics? I believe, at least in terms of Kalevala-metric songs, the Estonian tradition has developed parallelly to that of Finland for obvious reasons – and owing to historical reasons the latter has always been ahead of us. An altogether different matter is that the Soviet period favoured the involvement of Russian authors, which, however, remained rather superficial. Next to the Russians, the article overviews other authors, but because of the relatively small scope of the article, the overview remains laconic. Empirical sources may have been more effective in treating issues like authorship, etc. Even reputed scholars sometimes write things that should not be taken as truth. For example, with all respect to Lauri Honko's brilliant scholarly achievement, the Stage 1 postulated by him is a theoretical construction rather than anything else. This evokes discussions about the origin of religion, and the joke about the activities of God before he created the world. Reference to M. Foucault in the article also triggered protest at the thesis defence.

But these faults are insignificant! Justified criticism always includes a touch of acknowledgement – it indicates that regardless of the extensive reliance on computers, the author herself has not become an automaton, but has remained an erring human being and definitely able to develop. Also, as I already mentioned, the last article, which far too courageously attempts to tackle the central issues in folklore, does not minimise the importance of the majority of the thesis. How folk songs are created became much clearer.

Kristi Salve

'A GLIMPSE INTO THE PAST': AN ESTONIAN VIEW ON A FINNISH FAMILY NARRATIVES' STUDY

Pauliina Latvala. *Katse menneisyyteen. Folkloristinen tutkimus suvun muistitiedosta* [A Glimpse into the Past. A Folkloristic Investigation into Oral History of the Family]. Opponents: Professor Seppo Knuuttila and Professor Annikki Kaivola-Bregenhøj. SKS Toimituksia 1024. Helsinki 2005. The Ph.D. dissertation was defended at the University of Helsinki on June 10, 2005.

Pauliina Latvala has studied Finnish family narratives since 1997 when the Folklore Archives of the Finnish Literary Society and *Suomen Kotiseutuliitto* and *Kalevalaisten Naisten Liitto* announced a campaign for collecting family narratives. The campaign was announced for the period of March 1 - August 31, 1997 and was dedicated to the 80th anniversary of independent Finland. The collection campaign received family narratives from 720 respondents, mostly women and mostly born in the period 1920-1940. The collection was entitled *Suvun suuri kertomus*, or 'The Great Family Narrative'. The contributed material amounted to nearly 40,000 pages and the texts are varyingly structured: starting with the text written for the collection campaign and concluding with diaries, letters, newspaper clippings, photographs and other recorded material, sometimes even including video-recorded material. During the three months that Pauliina Latvala worked at the folklore archives, her responsibility was going to be the systematisation of the material and providing help at deciding on the campaign results. Among her tasks was to review and compile summaries of all the stories contributed to the archives. Such summaries are included among the main page information of all the stories. Latvala also compiled a text anthology *Suvun suuri kertomus. Muistitietoa itsenäisen Suomen vaiheista*, which was published in the series of the Finnish Literary Society proceedings *Kansanelämän kuvauksia* no. 53 in 2001. Publishing analogous anthologies of contributed texts (or, to be more precise, of thematically grouped fragments of these texts) is a conventional practice, as is the compilation and inclusion of summaries to each text that was mentioned above. These main pages inform of the principal facts about the narrator and the text, including also comments on the authorial rights of the text. At the same time, Pauliina Latvala put down notes in order to decide upon possible research areas. Pauliina Latvala's research revolves around two topics – the representation of historical events in family narratives and idiosyncrasies of archive texts on family history.

How does Pauliina Latvala draw the boundaries of her research topic and approaches in a material of this scope? Her study is based on 448 narrative texts out of the total 720 texts. Her selection contains only



Photo 1. *Pauliina Latvala (front, left) with Estonian folklorists and amateur historians. Photo by Sirje Selart, 2003.*

these contributed texts that are written as a response to the announcement of the collection campaign. This choice proceeds from a central question in her research – how has the collection situation specifically shaped the stories contributed to the archives (from dedicating the campaign to the independence day of Finland to the ideas of the narrators in the late 1990s about what the archive expects from them)? Pauliina Latvala also discusses the role of her thesis in the context of studying the past and family history. Her goal has not been so much the exploring of the relationship of forgetting and remembering, or the social background of the family, as focusing on the ways of interpreting the past of the informants and how the informants perceive the past in the year 1997. This is archive-oriented study, but not in the context of text categorisation but in the context of the communication between the informant and the archive. From here arise ethical issues, such as whether it is ethical to use the names of the narrators or their tales' characters or not, and to which extent should the informants whose stories have been used by the researcher reread the manuscript and pass on their evaluation before the study is published. These questions, naturally, do not have uniform answers, but certain principles need to be applied in research. Pauliina Latvala had correspondence with the authors of these stories already at the time of compiling the anthology. In case a story was analysed in the thesis in its entirety or in closer detail, the author of a given story received a written contract that he or she signed before the publication of the thesis. Generally, Latvala does not reveal the names of the informants in references. The debate on ethics is currently quite topical in Finland and also came up at the dissertation defence. Pauliina justified

her choice not to reveal the names by claiming that the names of the informants are included in the anthology, because these are texts written by them. The texts included in the thesis are text examples, and other references to the texts are primarily associated with the researcher's interpretation.

The dissertation is divided in three parts: first, issues connected with terminology and methodology; second, textual analysis that would be more interesting for specialists in the field; and third, an overview of the topic suitable for the general audience. The theoretical part of the thesis is based on the constructional nature of oral narrative history, archive text and representation of the past: both the texts and the analysis are constructed within the framework of certain cultural norms and skills. Chapter 2, which discusses the writing of a family narrative, presents an intriguing methodological solution: some tales are selected and analysed as different styles of writing. Representations of the past comprise historical and family events, relationships between family members, the physical environment, including nature, the sphere of social relations and the domain of opinions. Based on how these actual phenomena are reflected in the stories, the past representations are divided into *idealistic*, *marginal* and *diversifying* "views", or ways of describing the past. The idealistic representation as a way of describing is characterised by a longing and nostalgia for an agrarian community in the narrative. The former peripheral village life appears to be a thing of the past; it is mysterious and idyllic. This particular way of describing appears to have been inspired by stereotypical motifs from Finnish fiction. The marginal representation is favoured mostly by younger and middle-aged informants who perceive their story as a part of family history, but do not identify it with the general narrative history – they juxtapose their story against the general family history. In this sense it is possible to speak about the 'small' not the 'great' family narrative. In the informants' approach the family is no longer a taboo, the writers attempt to explain their relationships realistically (not so much idealistically), even though childhood and the marriage of parents is generally described at an idyllic angle. A multilevel approach enables to analyse family history against the general cultural context. The same stories may represent tendencies to different representations, but this categorisation provides the researcher a starting point to analyse different texts. At the next stage Pauliina Latvala illustrates each of these representations with text examples. She utilizes M. A. K. Halliday's categories of three components of the text. These are ideational component (the thematic body of the text, main characters, the temporal and spatial settings of the narrative events), to the interpersonal elements belong the text's intentions, various positions of the respondents, shadow dialogue, the use of a distancing or sympathising stance; the textual level (the distribution of the themes, the

voices of the text, its models and sources, its direction and flavour, variation in linguistic forms and narrative devices.

While the texts sent to the archives are very varying in structure, it has been the researcher's task to determine the level that all these texts share. Pauliina Latvala proceeded first on the informant's general representation on the past (i.e. how he or she perceives the past), then she analysed texts of different representations at the same angles (considering the level of events, the idiosyncrasies of the narrator's role, stylistic devices) and concludes with a question: what is characteristic in writing oral family history in the 1990s in Finland. Some of the more important aspects are:

(i) the writing of family history is based on oral accounts as well as on widely different written texts (diaries, correspondence, postcards), also photographs, etc. (I might add from my own experience in studying Estonian family narrative history that this particular collection is clearly different from the family narratives of the Estonians: family history older than four generations is presented already as genealogical charts and family trees based on documents, not on narrations, which is usually the case in Estonian family narratives (e.g. stories in the Estonian National Museum collection *Home and Family*, or in some biographies in the collection *Eesti Elulood*).

(ii) The textual standards for family narratives as written narrations are either biographies or memoirs; a story is very rarely attributed a genre categorisation by the author (one story was called a statement, and another a family legend).

(iii) The narrations are usually written in prose form, only one response was in the form of poetry (the contributed Estonian material rarely includes poetry texts either; whereas I encountered two poetry texts among the twenty or so Russian biographies in the *Eesti elulood* collection).

Such a graded and at the same time systematic approach adds methodological structure to Pauliina Latvala's study, and renders it interesting (or useful) for even those who are not directly involved in the topic (i.e. studying narrative family history).

The chapter on reverberations of events in Finland's history in family history on the one hand draws attention to important events (the famine of the 1860s, the Civil War of 1918, the Winter War and Continuation War), but on the other hand compares the representation of these events against the official history printed in school textbooks, etc. Unlike other historical texts, family histories clearly emphasise the role and viewpoint of women and everyday life. Also, these narratives represent the experi-

ence of marginal members of the society (or, to be more precise, pose the question whether women are among the marginal members of the society?). There is, however, no conflict between different representations of history. (Exception: the everyday life and the experiences of the minorities are not often expressed in official history, e.g. Karelian evacuees, Finnish Russian, Ingrian families, etc.) In this respect the Finnish family history differs from the Estonian material, where the conflict between the official or public history and the private (family) history, which had formed by the end of the Soviet period, continued through the 1990s, when the dialogue between different/conflicting representations of history was resumed. And it has continued until the present day, which is particularly evident in the celebration of the end of the Second World War and other events related to it. The study of Finnish family history thus indicates that the representation of history in Finland was far more democratic than it was in Estonia.

Alongside historical events, family narratives reflect changes in the behaviour of family as a social group and transformation of the role of family. Family and home life at the beginning of the 20th century seemed to have followed an open-door policy, where family welcomed not only relatives but also servants and farmhands, as well as the evacuees of the war, in their homes. Another central theme of the period is infant mortality. By the second half of the century, home and family has become more private, whereas people continue to be open for the anonymous public.

An interesting way of reconstructing different periods, experiences and emotions that the Finnish narrators are increasingly adopting is perceiving oneself in the role of one's parents in particular situations, or imaging contemporary youth suffering the hardships that they once endured. This is done in an attempt to understand one's parents on the one hand, and on the other hand, to make present-day youth understand them. An approach where the story's main character is seen in the role of another character, or some other character is imagined in the position of the main character increases the level of empathy in a common true experience story (or the story about an event, which in this case is the story of an eye-witness). Sometimes, though, this represents the conflict of times – the hardships of the past are compared with the stable and secure present-day life.

The first two pages of Pauliina Latvala's thesis are entitled *Acknowledgements*. She concludes the section with the words of her six-year-old son: "Mother, stop being a researcher now, be a mother!" Pauliina notes that this sentence represents a combination of her area of study as well as the research process.

Tiiu Jaago

TAIVE SÄRG DEFENDED HER Ph. THESIS ON THE RELATIONSHIPS OF TEXT AND TUNE IN KALEVALA-METRIC FOLK SONGS

Taive Särg. *Eesti keele prosoodia ning teksti ja viisi seosed regilaulus* [Estonian Prosody and Words/Music Relationships in Old Estonian Folk Songs]. *Dissertationes folkloristicae Universitatis Tartuensis* 6. Supervisor Jaan Ross, opponents Karl Pajusalu, Žanna Pärtlas. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 2005. 264 pp., illustrations, notations.

Taive Särg's PhD thesis covers the range of topics that have captured the interest of many scholars of Estonian folksongs, but which have not been studied in such a systematic and versatile manner, or by applying different methods before. The link between the prosody of the Estonian language and the structure of Kalevala-metric verse with the structure of tune has been established a long time ago, while at the same time little is known about the specific mechanisms used for achieving the natural synthesis of the text and tune in a folk song.

A study of the topic requires academic competence in at least two areas of research – in folklore studies and in ethnomusicology. Taive Särg, who has an education in folklore studies, attempts to employ an approach of music analysis in her thesis, which enhances the significance of her work already in that this approach has not been sufficiently used in the study of Estonian folk songs so far. An important aspect in the thesis is also the historical approach, which is entirely appropriate in the study of the so-called historical folk music, i.e. the song tradition that has disappeared from active use. Aspiring towards scholarly meticulousness, Taive Särg sometimes employs the methods of acoustic analysis at resolving some issues, which adds another methodological dimension to the study. Dif-



Photo 1. Taive Särg, PhD in ethnomusicology. 2005. Photo by Jaan Klysheiko.

ferent methodological approaches effectively complement each other, creating what appears like a “spatial” view of the research object.

I would like to emphasise Taive Särg’s aspirations towards clarity and accuracy in the choice of research methods as well as in describing the course of study and presenting results and conclusions. The study is attempted to present in as reader-friendly form as possible: it has been organised into subchapters which precisely state the problem under discussion, the set goals and methods to achieve these have been formulated in each part of the thesis, the course of analyses are distinctly described, the results of analyses have been generalised and demonstrated by means of tables, and the presented conclusions are clear and logical. The introductory part of the thesis (Chapter 1) explicates the terms and concepts important for understanding the thesis, and the appendixes provide sufficient material for testing the author’s claims.

The main part of the thesis consists of three chapters (Chapters 2, 3 and 4), which are, in fact, three separate studies linked together by the prosody of the Estonian language and the issues associated with the structure of Kalevala-metric verse.

Chapter 2 discusses the history of research in the prosody of Estonian and Kalevala metrics, focusing mostly on the 17th – 19th centuries. The observations of past scholars appear particularly valuable in the research of Kalevala-metric folk songs because in this period, the Kalevala-metric folk songs were a part of active song tradition.

Chapter 3 examines the issues of scansion, which is an important approach in the study of Estonian Kalevala-metric folk songs, but may appear marginal for an outside reader (especially considering that the major scientific discussion was prompted by a not very scientific question whether a performer reciting a Kalevala-metric song text should emphasise the metric accents or word accents). This is, however, not only an issue of the past, but a topical issue deserving further study, as it would enable to better understand the way the mind of the transmitter of tradition works, as well as the perception of Kalevala-metric folk songs by people not involved in transmitting songlore.

Taive Särg searches answers for several problems related to scansion, the most important being the question of which acoustic features of sung broken lines make the audience perceive scansion. The comparison of physical and cognitive experiments revealed that a precondition for chanting was the structure of tunes which supports the metrical accents of the Kalevala verse, but the decisive factor in perceiving scansion was adding a dynamic accent to the tune accent. The result was anticipated, as it

could be assumed that subjects of the cognitive experiment were searching for dynamic accentuation, which is generally perceived as the most common one.

The main problem posed in Chapter 4 was the adaptation of a Kalevala-tune to verse lines of different structure. The basic tune, which mostly corresponds to the verse structure of the so-called traditional lines, is compared against other variants, used in broken and longer verse lines. Taive Särg first proves that the development of lines longer than octosyllabic ones (i.e. lines where the number of positions exceeds eight) depends on the structure of the given line (e.g. on the number of trisyllabic words and the position of long syllables). The author of the thesis observes the singing of the so-called problematic lines in two tune types, and points out similarities and differences in the performances of folk singers. These differences lead to examining the co-dependence of tunes corresponding to trisyllabic words first with specific tune passages and second with the value of melodic accents. In both cases the author has come up with regularities which explain the compatibility of specific tune passages to the prosody of trisyllabic words, whereas a distinction is made between the melodies compatible with trisyllabic words with the long initial syllable and the short initial syllable.

Taive Särg has exhibited remarkable ingenuity in employing different statistical analytical procedures, in striving towards as objective research results as possible. Taive Särg's reasoning and her aspiration to explore the problems thoroughly and arrive at honest and logical conclusions is impressive: if a question remains unresolved, the author admits it. In sum, it is an honest and reliable study.

Žanna Pärtlas

WHERE ARE RIDDLES?

Piret Voolaid. *Eesti mõistatuste perifeerne aines: Elektroonilised andmebaasid internetis* [The Periphery of Estonian Riddles: Digital Online Databases]. M.A. Thesis. Supervisor Arvo Krikmann, opponent Tiit Jaago. Tartu: Tartu Ülikool. 2005, 212 pp., illustrations.

In June 2005 Piret Voolaid defended her MA thesis in front of the council of the Department of Literature and Folkloristics at the University of Tartu. The thesis discussed the periphery of Estonian riddles and databases associated with these in the Internet. The thesis was based on material from five riddle databases (database of rebuses, *Eesti piltmõistatused* (<http://www.folklore.ee/Reebus>), compound puns, *Eesti (liit)sõnamängud* (<http://www.folklore.ee/Sonamang>), conundrums, *Eesti keerdküsimused* (<http://www.folklore.ee/Keerkys>), abbreviations *Eesti lühendmõistatused* (<http://www.folklore.ee/Lyhendid>), formulaic riddles *Eesti valemimõistatused* (<http://www.folklore.ee/Valemid>)), three of which have been completed and two are under construction. The first database in this list is also available in English.

In addition to the databases that already exist, the author presented a project for compiling another four databases, which would mean the systematisation and presentation of over 35,000 archive texts. The work with databases, and with their technological and scholarly-creative aspects, has been carried out solely by Piret Voolaid, and, as such, exceeds the scope of the thesis. It is not entirely clear to which extent do the databases constitute the source of the thesis or the thesis itself. The reason is obvious: working with the databases has provided the scholar a wide knowledge of sources, which, in turn, raises new questions – where can these minor forms of folklore (which in the Estonian folklore studies are viewed as riddle periphery, owing to their archival background) be encountered outside the archives; to which extent do the public digital databases influence the spread of the texts; what might have been the significance of the archive texts before they became archived; or which meaning may be attributed to these subcategories of riddles at different periods? In her thesis, Piret Voolaid refers to and searches answers to these very issues. Her study focuses on the needs and possibilities of systematisation and characterisation of the material, which result from practical archiving work, and not so much on the in-depth analysis of other “life” stages of these particular riddle types. The most interesting parts of the thesis, however, are these detours into the various “life” stages of riddles, for which the genre-centred approach forms a central axis representing the archival stage of riddles.

The approach of the core and the periphery is based on the changes in oral lore over the period of active collection of folklore, i.e. over the past 120-130 years. (Collecting minor forms differs from that of other genres of folklore in that the first texts that are now categorised as minor forms were recorded as early as in the 17th century, at the time the Estonian literary language began to develop, whereas narratives and songs recorded during that period are extremely rare). The concepts of *periphery* and *core* reflect the archive context: the core entails the sc. riddles proper (Piret Voolaid also uses the term *traditional riddles*), the number



Photo 1. Besides the defended MA thesis, Piret Voolaid has created many riddle databases.

of which could be roughly estimated to 130,000 riddles, constituting 75% of all riddles, and the periphery includes 25% of the texts, even though outside the archives, in actual performance context, the peripheral material most likely surpasses the core material in number.

Riddles proper are largely, and usually, acquired from children's books or textbooks. The thesis, however, does not discuss this aspect in particular, as the focus of the study tends to turn to the semantic meaning of the peripheral riddles, which, in turn, poses a question of the functions of riddles, and the nature of the development of riddles as a genre as manifest in archive texts, taking into account the time and amount of their collection in a specific period. (Chapter 1 in the thesis). This leads the author to ask what brings on changes in the texts?

Piret Voolaid emphasises the thematic aspect: it is the objects that have to be recognised on the visual puzzles that are unfamiliar to the younger generation. Next to the thematic aspect, or right after, come the changes in the function of riddles. This necessitates the developing of other types of categorising methods (which in this case has been function-centred), and the author arrives at an even more interesting starting point – the form of riddles. An imminent perception of form enables to quickly and effortlessly create new riddles about objects that may be seen in a visual puzzle. This, in turn, leads to the issue of methodology of structuring and creating riddles as a genre. The reader of the thesis must inevitably agree with Piret Voolaid in that an effective way of systematising large corpora

of texts is the categorisation based on the coherence of contents and form, to which the author of the thesis recurrently returns after various detours, intriguing questions, and references to the different “lives” of riddles.

The presence of these detours and references in the thesis attests Piret Voolaid’s open attitude regarding the task: her aim has not been the systematisation of archive materials behind close doors but an attempt to understand the texts on the level of the different “lives” of folklore as formulated by Lauri Honko (i.e. in the natural context of oral use, the archival context, as texts that have entered the active use from the archives; in different functions such as entertaining, didactic, cross-communicational, etc.). These topics are covered in Chapter 3, which discusses the changes in the function of Estonian riddles over time, and are specifically addressed in Chapter 4, where the genre borders and relations of riddle periphery are discussed, and where the historiographic, archive-contextual and referential aspect is more prominent than elsewhere. Chapter 4 also provides a more detailed overview of the modern aspects of the distribution of the texts and the textual analysis provided by the defender.

I would like to return to Chapter 1, which, in addition to the above-described aspects, discusses the historiography of the texts (both manuscripts and published), whereas the overview is rendered more dynamic by the genre-centred approach. First, the author of the thesis presents information on how and to what extent have this peripheral material been understood as subcategories of riddles, and second, provides an overview of the accounts and comments added to the riddle texts that have been submitted to the archives, which, in turn, help to understand the former meanings and uses of the texts.

In Chapter 2 of the thesis, which discusses the peripheral archive material of Estonian riddles, an overview of the periphery and core of riddles is presented once again, and, it must be agreed, very effectively, owing to the clearly understandable figures. The riddle periphery is described in subchapters, each dedicated to one subcategory of riddles (partly based on the scope of riddle material in each subcategory): conundrums, in which the internal categorisation is based on either characters, location, life stage, socio-political attitudes, abstract phenomena; compound puns, abbreviations, visual puzzles, and other subcategories of riddle periphery ranging from anagrams to computing tasks.

Chapter 3 of the thesis, discussing the archival material and digital databases *anno 2005*, introduces the main principles for compiling databases ranging from the systematisation and entering of the material to the methods of constructing a programme. The author contem-

plates on which might make a database more effective and functional (considering the needs of the target audience, the possibilities of feedback, etc.), and outlines the genre specificity of riddles, which was the basis for creating the search engine – namely, the dialogue-like nature of riddles (combination of a question and answer), which enables to search the text by the question or answer.

The search engine, unfortunately, is not flawless. For example, while the user will logically conduct the search on the basis of semantic units (for example, on the basis of character, such as *bear*, etc.), conundrums are systematised on the basis of form (*Which? What?* clauses) which usually remains elusive for the general user. There are other problems: such as, for example, the fact that the texts are separated from their natural performance context, so that no additional data complements the texts, which, in turn, creates the need for academic comments.

Next to the reciprocal relations of the texts, Chapter 4 also illustrates the relationship of folklore and other manifestations of culture by means of riddles concerning these topics. The transgression of the borders of form and usage by a recognisable part of the text, thus constructing increasingly new phenomena, is a complicated, though, no doubt, rewarding topic of research. One way to understand and describe these transgressions is to perceive these as mechanical relations. This is particularly effective if the lore landscape, or cultural landscape at large, forms a homogeneous and stable context. Piret Voolaid, however, has chosen to describe the dynamics of the text against the moving and instable background (i.e. in a changing cultural environment). This, again, introduces the question of the several “lives” of folklore (with a reference to the theoretical approach by Lauri Honko). A subchapter analysing the story, known over generations, where a man has to take a wolf, a goat and a cabbage head across the water, nicely associates the topic of the relationships of folklore genres to the digital world.

Piret Voolaid appears to have started the work by categorising archive texts, relying on the already existing theoretical and methodological knowledge. The problems encountered during the study have forced her to make detours to the domain of semantics, interpretations and functions of riddles, or the domain of the interrelations of (cultural) texts, but these detours have guided her, equipped with acquired experience and self-confidence, back to the specificity of archival work. Evidently, in order to understand one “life” stage of folklore (the archival stage), a cursory glance at the other “life” stages of the genre is useful. This, in turn, enables to view this relatively clear-cut study of databases in the broader cultural context.

Tiiu Jaago