

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### CHILDREN'S LORE AND FOLK MUSIC IN THE FIELD OF INFLUENCE OF DIRECT EXPERIENCE AND MEDIA: THE THIRD WINTER CONFERENCE OF FOLKLORISTS

The winter conference of Estonian folklorists was held on January 24–25, 2008 at Kopra tourist farm in central Estonia. This year's conference was dedicated to the memory of Estonian ethnomusicologist Anu Vissel (16 Dec 1952 – 6 Sept 2005), who would have turned 55 on 16 December 2007. The topics discussed at the conference were chosen according to Anu Vissel's research interests, so the focus was on contemporary children's and youth lore and folk dance and music tradition.

The central discussion pertaining to children's lore was the analysis of the country-wide campaign for collecting school lore in Estonia, carried out in spring 2007. Since the campaign was to continue the analogous collection of school lore in Estonia and Finland in 1992, the papers held at this conference were largely comparative analyses of similarities and changes in the material of both campaigns. Anu Vissel was involved in the organising of the 1992 collection and the study of the materials and has published so far the only dissertation on children's lore in Estonia (*Lastepärimus muutuvast ühiskonnas* 'Children's Lore in the Changing Society', 2005).



*From the left: Kanni Labi, Anneli Kont-Rahtola, Jaan Tamm and Liisi Laineste listen to conference papers. Photo by Andres Kuperjanov, 2008.*

The twelve papers of this conference, mostly by folklorists of the Estonian Literary Museum, thus focused on children's and youth lore, whereas five of these were based on the 2007 collection campaign. Other topics tackled the role of lore culture in education, censorship in public discourse, and calendar tradition among children. Folk music was discussed from less studied angles: folk dance and instrumental music and the recording of Estonian music lore before the 1940s; in connection with children's lore, also printed songbooks and discussions of music in online portals.

The main aim of the folklorists' winter conferences is to unite folklorists researching Estonian material but affiliated with different institutions (speakers were from Estonian Literary Museum, University of Tartu, Teachers' Seminar of the University of Tartu, Viljandi Culture Academy, Tallinn University, and University of Budapest) on a neutral ground and encourage dialogue and reduce tensions in the period of fierce competition. The topics of speakers at this two-day conference and the opinions voiced in the concluding discussions suggest that a friendly dialogue between Estonian folklorists has been established.

The conference was organised by the Department of Ethnomusicology and the Academic Folklore Society at the Estonian Literary Museum; the conference programme and abstracts are available in Estonian at <http://www.folklore.ee/rl/inste/ars/tk08>. The conference was supported by Folk Culture and Tartu Foundation of the Estonian Cultural Endowment, hosts at Kopra tourist farm, The Centre of Folkloristics and Cultural History in Estonia and many others.

Piret Voolaid

Taive Särg

## **2007 FOLKLORE PRIZES OF THE PRESIDENT OF ESTONIA**

On February 29, 2008 Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia handed over the Folklore Prizes of the President of Estonia to the best voluntary contributors of folklore. The events of the 90th Anniversary of the Republic of Estonia have taken a retrospective look at the creation of the republic and the first years of independent Estonia, and have focused even more on the country's future. Future outlook has been important also for the Estonian Folklore Archives which celebrated its 80th anniversary in 2007.

The archive work has remained the same, year after year, and it is quite astonishing how modern the thoughts and problems voiced in the first decades after the establishment of the archives sound today. One thing that has not changed in the work of the Folklore Archives is the network of voluntary contributors. There are still people who dedicate their time to remembering and writing down oral lore, interview other people, and today also record and film folklore.

This year, three folklore collectors were acknowledged for their work. All three are of different age and different background, which is perhaps somewhat unconventional for folklore collectors, and so is the lore material they have contributed.



*Maret Lehto, Anna Rinne, Toomas Hendrik Ilves and Jaan Malin. Photo by Alar Madisson, 2008.*

Anna Rinne, a former schoolteacher from Võru, South Estonia, has been a prolific contributor of lore material to the folklore archives, the Estonian National Museum and the Estonian Life Histories Association and has taken part in various collection campaigns. Anna Rinne has lost sight of reading and writing and has to ask other people to write down things, which is why for her collecting material is twice as demanding for her as it is for others. The material handed over by Anna Rinne is condensed, competent and well-written, describing things that she has experienced, heard and remembered herself: birthday and funerary traditions, celebrating Christmas during the Soviet time, etc. In 2006 she sent to the archives material about plant lore. Her contribution of 2007 contains memoirs, beliefs and narratives connected with people's names.

The second folklore collector recognised at the event was Maret Lehto. She lives in a town, but the material – recordings, photographs and manuscripts from the Muhu Island, her childhood home – reflects her personal relationship with the material. Maret Lehto's material also includes seven audio tapes with songs and interviews recorded in 1991–2002. Accurate lists and other relevant data complement the material. In 2002 Maret Lehto and researchers of folklore cooperated in recording the singings of folk singers in their home villages and farms on the Muhu Island, which resulted in five videotapes of valuable material.

Jaan Malin, who has lived in Tartu, has made almost daily visits to the Estonian Folklore Archives and always took along some lore material: a funeral description, account of a student ritual, or a wedding songbook. In 2007 he handed over to the archives more than 300 pages of material of contemporary lore, mostly student and student camp lore. Jaan Malin was awarded the Folklore Prize also in 1998.

At the event, which was held for the fifteenth time, Estonian Folklore Archives thanked their more active contributors, people who have recorded and collected folklore. Entertainment was provided by the folk group *Munuksed*.

Astrid Tuisk

## INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ESTONIAN SKY, VOL. 2

On May 22–23, 2008 the Department of Folkloristics at the Estonian Literary Museum, the Astronomy Group at the Tartu Old Observatory and the Estonian Folklore Institute organised an international interdisciplinary conference *Eesti taevas II. Aeg ja ruum*, ‘Estonian Sky, Vol. 2. Time and Space’ which discussed the different areas of study in folk astronomy. The conference was a sequel to an interdisciplinary conference *Eesti taevas. Erinevaid vaatenurki* ‘Estonian Sky. Different Perspectives’, which was held four years ago and celebrated the publication of the book on beliefs and interpretation about Estonian folk astronomy by Andres Kuperjanov – *Eesti taevas. Uskumusi ja tõlgendusi* (2003).

The conference topics centred on the popularisation of astronomy and the related topics, knowledge of the sky and beliefs associated with stellar sky, also earlier time-reckoning systems. The conference celebrated the bicentenary of the Tartu Old Observatory as one of the main centres for popularising and educating of astronomy in Estonia and also 50 years of placing the cornerstone of the Tartu Observatory in Tõravere on May 26. Furthermore, 260 years ago the description of the occurrence of solar and lunar was published in the 1749 calendar; 190 years ago short articles about astronomical phenomena by Otto Wilhelm Masing and descriptions of the activities of the Tartu (Old) Observatory were published; in 1841 *Wunderbau des Weltalls, oder populäre Astronomie* was published by Johann Heinrich Mädler and seven new editions of the



*The two centuries old Tartu Old Observatory is one of the extant triangulation points of Struve Geodetic Arc, inscribed on the World Heritage List. Photo by Andres Kuperjanov, 2008.*

book were published before 1885; 160 ago a book by Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald, *Ma-ilm ja mõnda, mis seal sees leida on* [‘The world and those things inside it’] was published; 120 years passed from the beginning of the collection campaign praising ethnoastronomical information; a century passed from the birth of Roopi Hallimäe, Estonian populariser of astronomy; 85 years ago the first issue of the Observatory calendar was published, which has been issued ever since; 60 years ago the Astronomy Group of the Tartu Old Observatory was founded; most importantly, 50 years passed from the birth of Andres Kuperjanov, organizer of the conference and scholar of the Department of Folkloristics; 20 years ago the Zeiss planetarium was set up in Tartu; and 10 years passed from the first exhibition of AHHA Science Centre. This very impressive list, which is directly associated with popularising astronomy, determined the topics of the first conference session.

In his paper, Jaak Jaaniste (Estonian University of Life Sciences) introduced the traditional observation nights at the Tartu Old Observatory and meetings and activities of the Astronomy Group, Mare Ruusalepp (Tartu Observatory) gave an overview of the activities of the popular educational centre *Stellaarium* at the Tõravere Observatory, and Tiiu Sild’s (AHHA Science Centre) paper reviewed the ten years in the activities of Estonian science centre AHHA. In sum, the first session gave a thorough overview of the situation and history of the popularisation of astronomy in southern Estonia. The paper by Jaak Jaaniste revealed that since the moving of astronomers from the Tartu Old Observatory to the new observatory in Tõravere in 1964, Professor Vladimir Riives, researcher of comets, and the indefatigable observer Hugo Raudsaar continued the activities of the Astronomy Group in Tartu Old Observatory and by ignoring official orders and prohibitions kept the Old Observatory accessible for the citizens of Tartu and tourists. An average public observation night brings to the Old Observatory 150–300 visitors, and the number is even larger when special phenomena can be observed in the sky. Mare Ruusalepp informed that during the past eleven years, more than 2,380 groups (*ca.* 63,500 visitors, nearly 4,5% of the Estonian population) have visited the observatory. Tiiu Sild argued that promoting astronomical knowledge can be considered one of the most valuable directions in the AHHA centre’s activities, the portable Starlab has made it possible to broaden the range of promoting astronomy in Estonian schools, the Zeiss planetarium is still in use, and Raivo Hein has donated to the Observatory a decent Meade telescope. In the new building of AHHA science centre currently being constructed, one of the attractions will be the dome of a permanent planetarium.

After a coffee-break, Aado Lintrop (Estonian Literary Museum) introduced a highly important though little known religion – the cult of munkhtenger. This is a religion created by Genghis Khan, which eternalised his heavenly descent and was popularised once as a universal world religion. Eve Kikas (University of Tartu) discussed the results of a survey conducted among preschoolers between ages 5–7 about their explanations of the sun, wind, rain and rainbow. While the children’s descriptions of the rain and clouds as atmospheric phenomena are very versatile and are based on their own experience, rainbow, which occurs less commonly, is interpreted through the explanations of adults.

The first speaker of the afternoon session was Enn Ernits (Estonian University of Life Sciences), who observed the possible motifs of a cosmic hunt in the rock art of

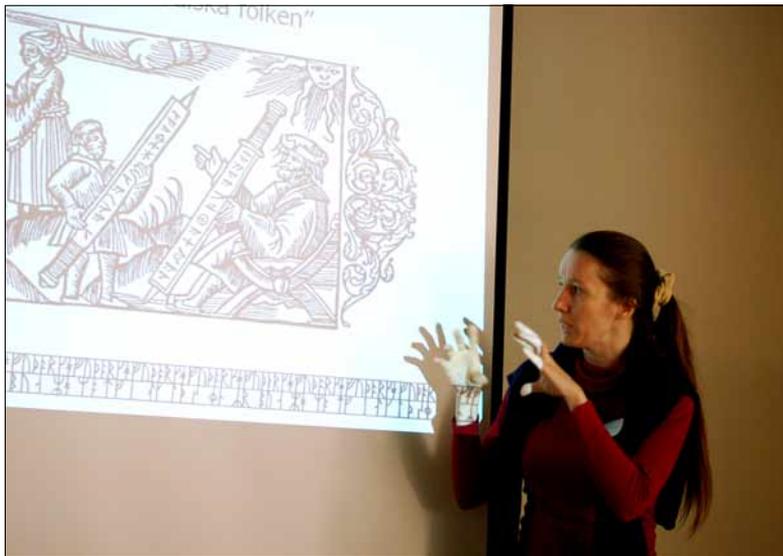
Northern Eurasia. Similar motifs are known among the petroglyphs of Lake Onega and near the White Sea, which were compared with the representations of stellar objects on rock promontories in Siberia. Tõnno Jonuks (Estonian Literary Museum) analysed some archaeoastronomical studies, carried out within the past ten years, the majority of which deal with observatories that were supposedly used in a distant past and the argumentation used as evidence and discussed differences in the perception of time among representatives of different disciplines. In his paper, Alar Puss (Tartu Observatory) discussed the peculiarities in the movement of the Moon in our latitudes, which sometimes may result in perceiving that the Moon's position in the sky is faulty.

During the last session of the first conference day, Yuri Berezkin (Kunstkamera, St Petersburg) spoke about the various relations of Eastern Baltic astronyms and estimated their speculated age. Evidently, in Eastern Baltic the Pleiades is "a sieve", across most of Europe they are seen as "hen with chicken", with "water-carrier on the Moon" being the most widespread motif, although parallels to the Balto-Finnic and Baltic names can be found elsewhere in the world, for example, in North America, Japan and Polynesia. Andres Kuperjanov (Estonian Literary Museum) dedicated his paper to the constellation of Ursa Major. The paper focused on the motif *Hunt Härja kõrval* or 'Wolf beside the Ox' and touched upon hagiographic names of the constellation.

The conference continued with a modest celebration in the Health and Sports Centre in Elva, Tartu County and new presentations were held in the following day.

The first session of the second day dealt with the second central topic of the conference: calendars, time-reckoning, and more specifically wooden calendars that were predecessors to the printed almanacs. The discussion did not entail these age-old runic calendars that were known to have been used by old Estonians and were invented in about 16th–17th century in Sweden, but dealt with the wooden staff calendars that had a more global spread. The staffs represented a unique version of a so-called eternal calendar and their use requires specific skills.

The first presentation was by Vesselina Koleva (National Astronomical Observatory "Rozhen", Bulgaria), who introduced Bulgarian wooden calendars. In Bulgaria, wooden calendars were used mainly on the territory of South Bulgaria, the most numerous group of about 20 calendar sticks was found in the Central Rhodope Mountains. While the earliest date fixed on one of them is 1783, the sign system used on the staffs is older. The type of symbols used on some calendars speaks for a pre-Christian and early Christian writing tradition. Some of the signs have counterparts among Proto-Bulgarian ideographic signs that have been found also on archaeological artefacts from the 7th–8th century. Of the three types of wooden calendars, the most archaic are those of the April/May type. Anne Pöyhönen (Ursa Astronomical Association, Tampere) introduced the most interesting of the 150 wooden calendars held in the Finnish museum collections, which are usually dated to the period 1500–1800. Finnish rune calendar staffs are mostly 59 cm in length, equalling Finnish 'kynnära' or 'arm's length', divided in quarters 'kortteli'; and one of these sometimes divided into inches 'tuuma'. The calendars have symbols carved on them for each day of the year, festival days of the year and sometimes phases of the Moon in its 18.6 year cycle. Nikolai Sivkov (Regional Historical Museum, Pernik, Bulgaria) introduced a clay ram



Anne Pöyhönen from Ursa Astronomical Association. Photo by Andres Kuperjanov, 2008.

head, found in West Bulgaria and dated to the 1st–3rd century AD, which represents a lunisolar calendar of parapegmatic type.

In the last conference session, Mare Kõiva (Estonian Literary Museum) gave insight into the origins of Estonian nineteenth–twentieth-century prophesies about the end of the world and Ülo Siimets (Estonian National Museum) discussed more popular destinations of pilgrimages, focusing in his paper on the Loreta pilgrimage but drawing parallels with pilgrimage destinations from all over the world, from Vastseliina to Allahabad and Mount Kailash.

The conference concluded with a tour at the Tartu Observatory in Tõravere, where Alar Puss introduced the activities of professional astronomers, the *Stellaarium* and showed the main mirror of the largest optical reflector in Northern Europe.

In the course of the conference programme, an exhibition of wooden calendars held in the Estonian National Museum was displayed in the main hall of the Estonian Literary Museum (compiled by Helen Hanni and Ülle Jäe) and a selection of publications on popular astronomy held in the Archival Library (compiled by Asta Niinemets and Kait Tamm) remained open in the entrance hall of the Literary Museum until June 23, 2008.

The conference had a pleasant and informative atmosphere. Representatives of different disciplines and institutions, whose areas of study often overlap, gathered new ideas through personal communication and exchange of experience and information. The successful conference was supported by AHHA Science Centre, and Finnish Institute in Estonia, the foreign exchange programs of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the Estonian Academy of Sciences, and A. le Coq. The conference abstracts are available at <http://www.folklore.ee/ri/fo/konve/2008/taevas2>

Andres Kuperjanov