

NEWS IN BRIEF

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE “NATURAL HOLY PLACES IN ARCHAEOLOGY AND FOLKLORE IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION”

On 2–4 May 2008, the international conference on natural holy places was jointly held by the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore and the public agency Vita Antiqua in Kernavė, Lithuania. The discussion on natural holy places which was initiated by Estonian archaeologists and folklorists in 2007 had moved from Tartu to Kernavė. Geographically, the forum had expanded with researchers from Belarus, Russia, Poland, and Germany and the number of conference participants had increased. Besides archaeology and folklore, disciplines such as history of religion and environmental archaeology were represented.

The presentations focused on the variety and typology of natural holy places, research experience, and the current situation of the research in these countries. Some research projects were presented as well. In addition to the general discussion by Tõnno Jonuks (Tartu, Estonia), the most important point revealed at the conference was that natural holy places in the Baltic area are extremely similar in character and researchers have to tackle the same problems while learning more about these. This became the key inspiration and at the same time formed the foundation for discussion about concepts and terminology about natural holy places, methodology, and interpretation of data.

Interaction between archaeology and folklore in the research of natural holy places was presented and discussed in many conference papers. Place legends about natural holy places are known in all countries, although in different ways. The most common questions related to this phenomenon are the origins of motifs, their dating, and sources.

Some presentations in which the analysis was based on folklore material deserve to be separately mentioned. Anna Wickholm (Helsinki, Finland) overviewed the holy wells of South and West Finland. The motif of hidden treasures is particularly prevalent in these legends. Often the idea is reflected in place names, as, for example, Golden Well. It is believed that at full moon, treasures can be seen but they are available for sincere men only.

Tõnno Jonuks discussed the natural holy places of Northeast Estonia, where the most traditional type is represented by woodland hills surrounded by arable fields. These are marked by ancient sacral name, *hiis*, and numerous place legends, the most remarkable of which relate the character of pre-Christian rituals to researchers. Next to an accurate description of what used to be sacrificed at *hiis* sites and when, Jonuks discussed legends that are characteristic of mythological places, where violation of certain rules led to punishment.

Sandis Laime (Riga, Latvia) discussed the results of interdisciplinary research which focuses on mythological beings called *raganas*. Outside villages and single farmsteads, *raganas* like to appear on tops of hills, in the woods, nearby rivers and ponds,

the names of which are sometimes characteristic of natural holy places as well (e.g., *Raganu grava* and *Veļupīte*). Usually *raganas* are seen bathing, combing their hair, singing or dancing, but they are very afraid of thunder and wolves. Relying on data recorded in North Vidzeme, Laime concluded that the character of the *raganas* corresponds to one of the souls of the dead. In terms of her name and concept, *ragana* might be explained as someone who is seen by others instead of her being able to see the surrounding beings herself (which used to be a previously prevalent explanation).

Marge Konsa (Tartu, Estonia) presented data obtained in the course of the project in which folklore and archaeological data connected with lakes were analysed, compared, and merged for further research. In the framework of this project, lakes about which place legends are available were identified, the dominant motifs of dwellings and churches sunk in these lakes and archaeological sites in the surroundings were listed. There is no doubt that the abovementioned lakes and prehistoric burial sites are connected. From a topographical point of view, burial sites are located directly on lakeshore or sometimes at a certain distance from it while the most important factor, the visual connection with the lake, was preserved. The next task of the project will be to carry out special underwater research.

Juris Urtāns (Riga, Latvia) introduced an alternative practice of lake exploration in Southeast Latvia, combining the analysis of folklore texts, landscape archaeology, and aerial photography. This has led to the discovery of some new important points –



Participants of the conference. Photo by Vykintas Vaitkevičius 2008.

the link between a lake's shape and its name, and between former and present-day location of the lake (according to place legends, lakes are travelling beings).

Aleksiej Dziermant (Minsk, Belarus) presented a mysterious group of sacred stones that are regarded as shoemakers (*шаўцы*) and tailors (*краўцы*). According to this motif, people used to bring material to the stone, asking it to make boots or sew clothes. The distribution of the natural holy places of this kind does correlate with the area of Striated Ware Culture on the territory of present-day Belarus and Lithuania from the 2nd millennium BC to the 3rd and 4th century AD. According to Dziermant, the abovementioned stones might be interpreted as cult places, and the use of the stones has continued even to the historical times.

Vykintas Vaitkevičius (Klaipėda, Lithuania) drew attention to the local peculiarities of the motifs of Lithuanian place legends: namely, 'to burn sacrifice (somewhere)' and 'to constantly burn holy fire (somewhere)'. The key distribution area of these motifs covers the Samogitia region in western Lithuania and overlaps with the area of prehistoric natural holy places called *Alkos kalnai* ('Alka Hill'). The second, more isolated area of the above motifs covers the Utena Land in East Lithuania and concerns hillforts that were sometimes used during the 1st millennium BC – 1st millennium AD.

The conference participants were also introduced to some natural holy places in the environs of Kernavė and Vilnius. The creative folklore group Sedula provided entertainment in the conference's cultural programme, and Ms Beatričė Laurinkutė presented a special art installation "Wells in the Baltic Culture".

In 2009, the conference on natural holy places in the Baltic Sea region will be held in Turaida and organized by the Latvian Academy of Culture.

Vykintas Vaitkevičius

THE SECOND SEMINAR OF ESTONIAN AND LITHUANIAN FOLKLORISTS: "TRADITIONS AND INNOVATIONS IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY 2"

On the last days of September in 2008, the Department of Folkloristics at the Estonian Literary Museum welcomed colleagues from the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore. Two years before, the Estonian folklorists had visited the Institute in Vilnius where Lithuanian colleagues introduced their research activities and hosted the first joint seminar in the series "Traditions and Innovations in Contemporary Society".

While the first seminar had been based mainly on the papers of Estonian folklorists, on the second seminar seven out of ten papers were delivered by Lithuanian folklorists, who introduced the current situation in Lithuanian folkloristics and the main projects carried out at the institute. Estonian folklorists discussed the recent

trends in the study of minor forms of folklore, and described the situation of digitising archive materials in Estonia as well as the significance of this activity in contemporary folklore studies.

The opening paper “The Tradition of Lithuanian Verbal Charms” was delivered by Daiva Vaitkevičienė, head of the Department of Folk Narrative at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore. The paper explored the traditional Lithuanian charms and provided an overview of the main characteristics of Lithuanian charms, proceeding from the broader genre context of Lithuanian verbal magic.

Dalia Zaikauskienė, PhD student at the Department of Folk Narrative, analysed Lithuanian proverbs in her paper entitled “Development Tendencies of Lithuanian Proverbs and Proverbial Sayings”, touching upon anti-proverbs of more recent origin and their regional peculiarities. So far, anti-proverbs have received little attention among Estonian scholars.

The first session concluded with presentations by scholars of minor forms of folklore at the Department of Folkloristics, Estonian Literary Museum: Arvo Krikmann discussed the issues of the geographical distribution of Balto-Finnic proverbs and Anneli Baran spoke about phraseology in the language use of Estonian youth. Krikmann took a retrospective look at “Proverbia septentrionalia” (PS), the major project for publishing and studying common Balto-Finnic proverbs. The first volume of PS was published in 1985. The publication of the following volumes has been delayed; nevertheless, the manuscript includes all the necessary variants of Finnish, Karelian, Estonian, Votian, Veps, Livonian, Russian and Baltic (mostly Latvian), German and Scandinavian proverbs and is currently at the stage of technical editing. Compared to the first volume of PS, the quantitative and statistical data of the proverb corpus has significantly changed. Krikmann introduced in more detail the different aspects of the geographical distribution of common Balto-Finnic proverbs. Anneli Baran’s paper was based on the material collected during the most recent large-scale school lore collection from Estonian youth. The collection campaign resulted in anti-proverbs, newer quips and catchwords (derived mostly from commercials, films, and television shows), slang, etc. and the speaker analysed the developments, changes and tendencies of the material.

The second session opened with a paper by Lithuanian folklorist Povilas Krikščiūnas, who discussed chain letters, analysing the differences in what has been considered traditional folklore and contemporary folklore. Among other things, the paper posed a question about the systematization of traditional texts and the varying types of chain letters mediated in electronic channels under a single genre.

Relying on versatile source material, Dovilė Kulakauskienė observed children’s drawings as a part of children’s lore, emphasising the aspects, motifs and stereotypes that can be studied by folklore methods. Visual material is as good for analysis as verbal information and helps to follow the patterns of a child’s worldview which has been influenced by age, sociocultural factors, family values, peer relations, or phenomena of mass culture and media.

Aušra Žičkienė presented the commented edition of winter holiday songs (including folk songs about Christmas mumming and Christmas songs), which was recently published in the series *Lithuanian Folk Songs*. The book, which took five years to complete, forms a representative corpus of winter calendar songs with its unique features. The edition includes two academic articles which discuss the linguistic and musicological

aspects of the songs and provides an overview of the general character of the genre and the old and new development of the songs.

The paper “Current Folkloric Fieldwork in Lithuania: Individual Experiences” by Bronė Stundžienė explored the most recent fieldwork projects in Lithuania, especially in the regions of Samogitia in the northwestern and Dzūkija in the southern part of the country. The field research has expanded the material held in the local folklore archives and reflects the contemporary situation of folklore. This is manifest in the survival of traditional folklore, but also in the fact that contemporary cultural context exerts strong influence on folklore and this leads to a need for completely novel fieldwork theory and collection methods.

Rūta Žarskienė’s presentation “Collection of the Lithuanian Folklore Archives and their Digitization” offered a brief insight into the electronic ways of preserving folklore collections in Lithuanian Folklore Archives, an activity which enlivened in the second half of the 1990s. Žarskienė demonstrated the technical solutions of digitisation projects and used software (for instance, in 1998 the first digital database of audio-recordings was established).

The seminar day concluded with the joint paper “Dialogue between Digitisation and Contemporary Folklore Research” by Mare Kõiva, Liisa Vesik, and Piret Voolaid from Estonian Literary Museum, which focused on the beginning of folklore databases in Estonia. The aim of the paper was to give an overview of the set of problems encountered in the course of compiling folklore databases, which were established to serve different purposes and were targeted at different audiences. These problems are connected with archiving, recording material, the compatibility of databases, and achieving a user-friendly result. Several genre-typological, thematic and culturological databases, which have been recently completed at the Department of Folkloristics, Estonian Literary Museum, confirm that folklore archives are able to respond to new socio-cultural processes and challenges.

The seminar clearly revealed the emergence of a new generation of scholars in Lithuanian folkloristics, and addressed many exciting contemporary research topics.

Participants of the seminar were invited to a tour in Lääne-Viru County, North Estonia, where under the expert guidance of Tõnno Jonuks they visited the Emumägi observation tower, the churches of Väike-Maarja and Viru-Nigula, the sacred natural places in Tõrma and Kunda, the holy site of Tammealuse in the Samma village, the Toolse stronghold and Pada hillfort, and had a chance to admire the North-Estonian limestone cliffs on the coast, and the Valaste waterfall. The tour ended with a visit to the Old-Believers’ (Staroverets’) villages of Kolkja and Kasepää at Lake Peipsi. Lithuanian folklorists also visited the Department of Folkloristics, the Estonian Folklore Archives, and the Chair of Estonian and Comparative Folklore at the University of Tartu.

Participants of the seminar agreed that the friendly relations between the two Baltic countries would be conducive to a fruitful cooperation, which could be enhanced together with colleagues in Latvian Folklore Archives, and also that it is always a good idea to keep an eye on the achievements of colleagues in the neighboring countries.

The seminar was organised by the Department of Folkloristics at the Estonian Literary Museum. Further information about it is available at <http://www.folklore.ee/rl/fo/konve/2008/eelt/>.

Piret Voolaid

20 YEARS OF THE ESTONIAN SOCIETY OF PREHISTORIC ART

The Estonian Society of Prehistoric Art (ESPA) was founded in autumn 1988 by members of the research group of petroglyphs at the Estonian department of All-Union Astronomy and Geodesy Society and by other enthusiasts. By this time, the research group had been active for seven years. The main aim of the society has been the study and promotion of prehistoric art in Finno-Ugric areas. The emphasis has been on the study of Lake Onega rock art: in 1986 a new site (on Cape Swan) was discovered and a dozen years later, the first volume of the catalogue of petroglyphs has been published in English. ESPA has departments in Estonia, Finland, and Russia (St Petersburg). Overview of the former activities of the society can be found in English in journal *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore* (Vols. 18/19, 2001).

Events to celebrate the 20th anniversary of ESPA were held on 24–26 October, 2008, in Tartu, Estonia. On the society's annual meeting, Väino Poikalainen overviewed the society's activities in 2008. This year and in previous years the activities have centred not only on research but also on organising expeditions and exhibitions.

EPSA's summer expeditions have traditionally turned attention to prehistoric and younger sights of a particular region in Estonia. This year the expedition took the society's members to Rebala, the Viimsi Peninsula, Prangli Island, Iru hillfort, Lahemaa National Park, and elsewhere in North Estonia. The most impressive of the visited places was the small Aksi Island in the Gulf of Finland with its cobblestone labyrinth. Expedition participants visited Karula, where they explored figures discovered on the local church wall and collected daub samples for the purpose of dating the images (Fig. 1).

Members of EPSA took part in various events organised by other societies and institutions. Ülo Kestlane, Ants Kraut and Jüri Peets were involved in the excavations of a Viking Age boat in Salme village on the Saaremaa Island. Väino Poikalainen and many members of the Finnish department of the society took part in fieldtrips in Åland/Ahvenanmaa (organised by Eeri Siljander), Armenia, and Spain. In the latter

country, participants of the trip became acquainted with rock art in Levanti near Barcelona and Valencia and cave art in the Pyrenees (Fig. 2).

Loit Jõekalda, together with a group of artists who belong to the group *Musta Joutsen* ('Black Swan'), visited the Valcamonica rock drawings' site in the Alps and took part in the tour

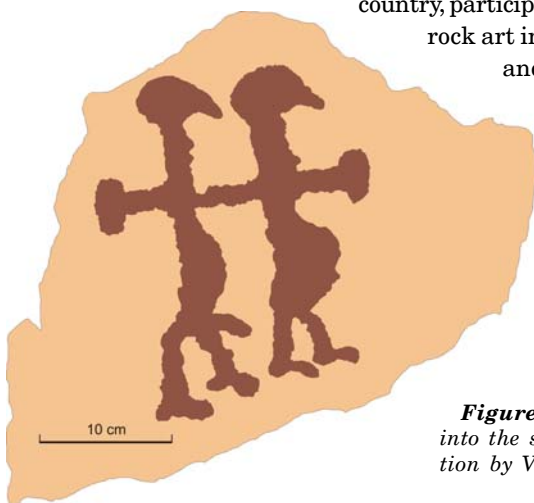


Figure 1. Anthropomorphic figures carved into the stone wall of Karula Church (Reproduction by Väino Poikalainen).

Figure 2. A Neolithic image of a honey bearer on rock at Cueva de la Araña site in Spain (photo by Väino Poikalainen).



organised by Mikk Sarv to see rock carvings at Alta in Lapland and the Sámi culture.

An exhibition of Karelian rock carvings by photographer Igor Georgiievski and archaeologist Nadezhda Lobanova, also a member of the society, was displayed in Palmse manor, North Estonia, in summer and autumn of 2008. From May to December, an exhibition of photographs and rock carving reproductions by Väino Poikalainen during his 2005 and 2006 expeditions to Lake Onega was set up in Saatse, Southeast Estonia. On the international Biennial of Graphic Art in Kaunas, Lithuania, Loit Jõekalda was awarded the first prize for his exhibition “Stone Age Graphics” which consisted of photos and reproductions of rock art found in Karelia and on the Kola Peninsula.

Pekka Kivikäs, the eminent Finnish scholar of rock art, opened a permanent exhibition in the Museum of Central Finland. Väino Poikalainen delivered a paper on the 10th anniversary celebration of the Finnish Society of Prehistoric Art. Members of both societies, Juhani Grönhagen, Pekka Kivikäs, Rauno Lauhakangas, and others participated in the seminar in honour of the centenary of Claude Lévi-Strauss and a seminar celebrating 40 years from discovering the rock paintings in Astuvansalmi, Finland.

The society’s members from Estonia and Finland also visited the Tartu Song Festival Museum. A smaller conference was held at Tartu Nature House. The opening speech was given by Tõnu Viik, member of EPSA and president of the Estonian Naturalists’ Society. Greetings were brought from EPSA’s sister society in Finland by Liisa Vartiainen. Then followed conference presentations: Enn Ernits gave an overview of systematisation of Karelian rock art, Väino Poikalainen discussed the petroglyphs on Cape Karetsky at Lake Onega, and Eero Siljander overviewed medieval paintings in churches of Finland. The joint paper by Enno Tanilas, Eero Siljander and authors of this news piece focused on the anthropomorphic and cross figures discovered by Tanilas on the wall of Karula Church. Ülo Kestlane spoke about the Viking Age ship of Salme and introduced the course of archaeological excavations and find material. The event concluded with a slide show of photos from Gunnar Jaadla’s trip to Santorini Island in Greece, and Väino Poikalainen’s travels to Armenia and Spain.

The anniversary events ended with a sightseeing tour in Tartu: the society's members visited St John's Church, the Dome Hill, the Botanical Gardens of the University of Tartu, and other sights of Tartu. The next year's plans will include a summer field trip to the islands of Saaremaa and Ruhnu, an expedition to Lake Onega, and several exhibitions. It is high time someone started compiling the chronicle of the society's members' experiences, and, fortunately, Eve Selisaar has taken on the task.

Enn Ernits
Väino Poikalainen

2008 PRESIDENT'S FOLKLORE AWARDS

On 27 February 2009, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves presented the Folklore Awards of the President of the Republic of Estonia to Urmas Haud and Taisto-Kalevi Raudalain, the best voluntary folklore collectors of 2008. The head of state's award to the best folklore collectors was reinstated in 1993 on the initiative of the Folklore Archives of the Estonian Literary Museum and with the support by the President's Cultural Foundation.

In 2008, a call to compile a Kalevala-metric song to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the Republic of Estonia was made by an initiative group in Viru County (Rein Sikk, Urmas Tamm, Marge Lepik, Viivi Voorand, Kai Tingas, Kadri Mägi, and Igor Tõnurist). In response to the call, 650 people sent self-authored verses and the result was a long and beautiful song which was performed in Rakvere Church of the Holy Trinity on Independence Day, February 24, 2008. The sent verses and the composed song text were handed over to the folklore archives.

Today's keywords are family, reflections, and the lost worlds. The laureates of this year's President's Awards sent to the archives lore material connected with their family and kinship, their roots. This material reflects the rather sad fate of small nations, villages and farms in the 20th century. It is inevitable that the old is replaced by the new and settlement patterns change, but difficult to accept when this happens by force or violence, destroying people's lives and homes.

The material collected by Urmas Haud comes from the villages of Riisa and Tõramaa, situated between Pärnu and Viljandi County in central and southern Estonia. Urmas Haud, astrophysicist by profession, has collected and systematised the folklore of his home region and family, and has made it available online for the general public (<http://www.aai.ee/~urmas/riisa.html>). Haud handed over the website and its source material – local historical studies and 222 photographs with captions – to the Estonian Folklore Archives. The photos mainly come from the collections of Urmas

Haud's mother Leili, but also of others, who have complemented the material with personal recollections. Urmas Haud authors another website of lore material (<http://www.aai.ee/~tarmo/index.htm>), and both sites feature a large number of lore narratives.

Taisto-Kalevi Raudalainen has handed to the Folklore Archives audio and video materials collected since 2005. The collected folklore material represents the life histories of Ingrian Finns living mostly in Ingermanland, but also in Estonia and Finland. Raudalainen has also recorded material from Ingrian Finns, Votians, Izhorians, also Hungarians in Transylvania, and the Khanty in Kazym.

The work of other voluntary contributors to the archives is also remarkable. Kaie Humal has recorded stories about the history of the Valma village and the life of fishermen, oral history from Põltsamaa from the beginning of the 18th century to 1917 and later, family lore, etc. Anni Oraveer collected material from the Seto and the hearing-impaired. Terje Puistaja described events which took place at the camps and courses of Tartu Folk University. Larger bodies of material were sent by already experienced voluntary folklore collectors: expressions, practical beliefs, jokes, creative work, etc. by Leida Oesalg; tales, riddles/conundrums, newer folk and author songs by Tiit Birkan; rituals, jokes, song lyrics, proverbs, phrases by Kaleph Jõulu; and visual, audio and video material by many others.

Student fieldwork materials handed over to the Estonian Folklore Archives are from an expedition to Vihula, North Estonia (supervised by Marju Kõivupuu, Tallinn University, and Risto Järv, University of Tartu); from students studying Estonian and Estonian as a foreign language (supervised by Pille Kippar, Tallinn University); video material from a 2007 joint field trip to Estonian villages in Siberia by students of the Estonian Academy of Arts and folklorists from the Estonian Folklore Archives.



*Urmas Haud, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves and Taisto-Kalevi Raudalainen.
Photo by Alar Madisson 2008.*

Also, professional Estonian folklorists have given collected material to the archives: Anu Korb and Andreas Kalkun (from 2007 field trips to Seto villages in Siberia and the material recorded in Estonia), Eda Kalmre (material recorded in Sõrve in August 2008), Mall Hiimäe (fieldwork materials from Kuusalu parish in 2008), Aado Lintrop (photos of the Viljandi Folk Music Festival in 2007 and 2008, and a cultural event in the Seto region), Mairi Kaasik, Piret Voolaid, Rein Saukas, Taive Särg, Kanni Labi, and others.

The reasons why people collect folklore and hand the material over to the archives are always different and some collectors are more personally involved in the material, while others distance themselves from it. In addition to the significance of folklore collection to our society, it has a certain value to the collector. Some collectors like the emotional connection from communicating with another person, some rejoice over a new piece of information. As President Toomas Hendrik Ilves said while expressing gratitude to those who are dedicated to collecting and preserving oral lore: “This may be salaried work, but it is purely a calling, without any grand embellishments.”

At the event President Ilves also announced a writing contest for schoolchildren and university students on the topic “What can I do for Estonia?” The event’s entertainment was provided by folk musicians Marju Varblane and Toivo Sõmer.

Astrid Tuisk