

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### THE INNER AND THE OUTER IN THE RITUAL YEAR: TRADITIONS AND TODAY

The Ritual Year Conference 6, titled “The Inner and the Outer”, took place in Tallinn from June 4 to 7, 2010, convening the SIEF Ritual Year Working Group, formed in 2004 at the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore (SIEF).

The conference was prepared by the Estonian Literary Museum and the Estonian Institute of Folklore, under the guidance of Mare Kõiva, the chairperson of the organising committee. The theme of the conference allowed for an observation of the ritual year, proceeding from spatial indicators and oppositions (house–street, participant–observer, ours–other), instilling to rethink, conceptualise the above-mentioned and other oppositions in rituals. In addition, the conference also dwelled upon neo-paganism, neologisms and the transformation of customs and rituals in current times.

27 presentations, in total, on the subject matter of the traditional and archaic, were delivered during the conference, by researchers from Bulgaria, Hungary, Norway, Russia, Finland, Czech Republic, Poland, United Kingdom, Latvia, Lithuania and the USA.

The range of topics and methods included traditional attitudes, like in the Elizabeth Warner (United Kingdom) who talked about the beliefs connected with the beings in homesteads and the other ones inhabiting the outer reaches, focusing on the imagination of inner and outer space among the family members of the deceased person, and his or her soul leaving the house. The narratives analysed by the presenter showed that the presence of the soul is associated with certain places and items in the house.

The researchers developed also new directions, like Emilia Karjula (Finland) observed the rituals of a group with non-traditional orientation, Kinga Povedák (Hungary) talked about the development of religious music in contemporary Hungary and the use thereof in the church calendar.

Some of the presentations analysed the functioning of calendrical and other rituals in educational establishments: Taive Särg (Estonia) talked about the celebration of folk feasts in Estonian kindergartens; Carola Ekrem (Finland) about the dance of the “Elders”, students of upper secondary school, and about the semantics of school rituals. Bożena Gierek (Poland) focused on feast narratives among university students, taking a closer look at Christmas celebrations.

The first session of the conference was opened by Emily Lyle (Scotland) who dwelled upon the “being space” and “play space” in the Scottish winter-time “Galoshins” custom. E. Lyle drew attention to the main actors of the performance, the symbolic associated with the boys and the relevant semantics. Differently from other calendar feasts, galoshins involves house-visiting and also an active use of the space inside the house. The notion of threshold, as the distinct boundary between the inner and outer space, was first mentioned in this presentation and was also repeatedly discussed by the speakers who followed afterwards. Emily Lyle differentiated between the rituals associated with the crossing of the threshold (moving inside and outside) – one-directional

(e.g. funeral customs) and two-directional which is also intrinsic of galoshins. The boys acting the performance have clear-cut ritual obligations (roles), both when entering the house and when leaving from there (giving gifts).

Irina Sedakova's (Russia) delivery *The Inner Meets the Outer: The Ritual of First Footing in the Wider European Perspective* provided a detailed description of two main types of celebrating the New Year. All European peoples know the belief associated with the first visitor on the New Year day and the relevant impact on the entire year. The other ritual is the one associated with the reception of the first (random or invited) guest, known in the Carpathian region of the Balkans as *полазник*, with surprisingly similar parallels in the complex of rituals "The First Foot", well-known in Scotland and Northern England. During the discussion inspired by the presentation, a number of participants stepped up as informants. It turned out that the "first" rituals are still present in many countries and develop according to the current circumstances. In Estonia, for example, there is a belief that if the first person who calls on the mobile phone at the beginning of the New Year is a boy, the coming year is going to be a happy one. Thus, the traditional belief that a male (boy) would bring luck in the house is transmitted into new situations.

In her presentation, *Pagan Ritual Practices and Magic for Protection from Illnesses in Bulgarian Orthodox Folk Ritual Calendar*, Katya Mihaylova (Bulgaria) analysed the ritual practices during the days of honouring Orthodox saints (St. Barbara, St. Harlampi and St. Catherine), calling for the protection and leniency, identical with the healing rituals in folk religion whereby diseases assume an anthropomorphic shape. These rituals are based on the clear distinction between the *outer* (illness, epidemic) and *inner* (house, yard), where the *outer* should in no case enter, but once it does, it has to be expelled.

Nancy McEntire (USA), in her presentation, *St. Brigid's Day in Ireland: Crossing the Threshold*, took a closer look at the threshold as such in the folk beliefs surrounding the activities on St. Brigid's Day, opposing these to contemporary time-wise and spatial boundaries *own-other, inner-outer, new-old, etc.*

Tatiana Minniyakhmetova's (Russia–Austria) presentation, *On Structuring of Spaces and Boundaries*, touched upon the boundaries of "owned" and "foreign or strange" space in Udmurt folk tradition, characterising everyday and feast-time rituals associated with crossing the boundary of *own* and *other* by entering the gate, stepping into the house, etc.

Evy Johanne Håland (Norway) provided an insight into the Markopoulo village on the island of Kephallonia where people believe snakes to have a healing power during an annual festival – the serpents come to the sacral place at the beginning of August and disappear by the Dormition festival when a lot of pilgrims gather in the vicinity to be healed by touching the snakes. Relying on her fieldwork, the researcher juxtaposed the Greek rituals with similar celebrations in Italy (Cocullo village in Abruzzi). The cult of serpents and the belief in their healing power was observed by the presenter from the ancient Greco-Roman mythological context.

Kinga Gaspar (Hungary) examined death and funeral ceremonies – not only from the aspect of mourning but also from the process of remembering the deceased connecting these with the places inside the house.

The presentation by Arkūnas Vaicekauskas (Lithuania), *Semantic Field of the "Outer" in Lithuanian Masking Custom*, probed the image of "the others" in Shrovetide carnivals in Žemaitija (Samogitia), relying on his fieldwork experience.

Within the series of papers on neo-paganism, Leon van Gulik, a specialist in psychology, referred to the fact how neo-pagan groups borrow, openly and eclectically, rituals from other religious trends. Whereas in other religious groups the religion prevails over the ritual, but in the case of the neo-pagans, it is the ritual that is predominant. Therefore, it necessary for the leaders and the participants in the ritual to be creative. On frequent occasions, neo-pagans use archaic methods and relevant adaptations in designing their rituals.

Kamila Velkoborská (Czech Republic), in her presentation *Neo-Pagan Winter Solstice: Three Examples*, relied on her personal experience and compared the eclectic rites of a druidic group, an ethnic pagan ritual grouping, and the practitioners of magic. All these three groupings are popular in the Czech Republic, whereas the third group unites healers and those in awe of magic.

Molly Carter (United Kingdom) talked about the remembering of the dead in San Francisco and in Salem, a location renowned for witch-trials. These rituals are actively participated in by neo-pagans who attempt to re-enact archaic rites and create new, reflecting, by way of these rituals, their attitude towards death as transformation

Several presenters talked about the transformation of old customs at the present time. István Povedák characterised the process of filling the mental vacuum, relying on calendar-based pilgrimages in modern society. The syncretism of religious and other similar views (this tendency is also observable in Hungarian Catholicism), together with national and commercial endeavours, affects the emergence of new sacred places and the relevant development in Hungary. His presentation focused on the concept of alternative science – pseudo-scientific historical, cultural and linguistic searches attempting to perpetuate the connection of the Hungarian people and culture with Sumerian, Etruscan and other cultures. Similar "alternative" tendencies can also be noticed in Russia (cf. A. Zalisnyak's articles on amateur etymology).

Mare Kõiva talked about women's holidays and porridge rites and showed how, in the course of revival, traditional rituals merge into other customs according to the present-day needs. The almost forgotten tradition of making porridge is currently being revived in Estonia, inspired by esoteric healers and present-day shamans, and acquiring new ritual nuances.

A similar process was also described by Helena Ruotsala (Finland): the Orthodox Karelians' custom of ritual tapping (*virpominen*) on Palm Sunday is mixed with the ritual of scaring off witches during Easter time. As a result, disguised children walk from house to house, and their appearance is in accordance with the modern urban "witch-parties". The presenter noted that this tradition has created a huge debate in the media and on the Internet.

Laurent Sébastien Fournier (France) analysed the current tendency to use vegetal and animal figures in contemporary local festivals. In his opinion, this can be associated with commercialisation and the desire to develop tourism, borrowing elements from other cultures and rendering significance to decorative components.

Aida Rancane (Latvia) contemplated on how the ritual format of celebrating the turn of the year has become more important. She is of the opinion that the secularisation

of society, withdrawal from traditional faith and the emergence of person-centred religiousness, causes people to turn to the space, archaic paradigms, founded on respect towards nature and the change of seasons. The role of the mass media should not be underestimated in the revival and inventing of traditions.

Ekaterina Anastasova's (Bulgaria) presentation was on the modern cult of saints and the relevant reflections in the church calendar, using the example of the Ukrainians and Bulgarians living in Odessa, and their current feasts for honouring St. Cyril and St. Methodius; she also compared secular and ecclesiastical feasts associated with these saints within the diaspora and in the metropolis.

Aado Lintrop and Janika Oras (Estonia) discussed inner outerness on the example of an ethnologist-researcher participating in a wedding ceremony. The authors of the presentation came into contact with the notions of *other* and *own* while filming a Seto wedding in South-Estonia, and described the emergence of a new role in the tradition – that of a photographer or operator. This person has definite functions as a professional, and with regard to his/her tasks, is involved in the teams of both the bride and the bridegroom (irrespective of the fact that men are not allowed to be present at certain particularly female wedding rites). The film about the three days long wedding of the Seto people was shown at the end of the day, after the presentations.



*Conference participants on an excursion to historical and neo-pagan places in Northern Estonia, Rebala burial site. Photo by Andres Kuperjanov 2010.*

A number of presenters showed videos and abundant illustrative material, incl. Mare Kõiva and Andres Kuperjanov in their deliverance on the masquerade festival in Pernik, Bulgaria, and David Stanely (USA) in his presentation on the customs of shepherds in the Trans-Carpathian region.

The members of the SIEF Ritual Year working group discussed further cooperation, joint publications and the distribution of subject matters. Among a number of research directions, great interest has been shown in the structuring of folk calendar in post-socialist countries – an international interdisciplinary project will be devised for researching these processes.

Conference programme and abstracts are available at <http://www.folklore.ee/ri/fo/konve/ritualyear6/abstracts.pdf>.

Irina Sedakova

## **22ND INTERNATIONAL HUMOR CONFERENCE IN HONG KONG**

At the time when Estonian people celebrated Midsummer night, more than 200 researchers from all over the world convened for the 22nd annual conference of the International Society for Humor Studies (ISHS) in Hong Kong, China, from June 24 to 27. The conference was organised by the Department of Applied Social Studies of the City University of Hong Kong. The four-day event provided an opportunity to listen to presentations in five concurrent sessions, in addition to several symposia with a more narrow insight into the subject matter.

Inter-disciplinary approach and new developments in humour studies were the key words of the conference, with the main focus on 1) the role of humour in psychological well-being, stress management, self-development and social interaction; 2) the role of humour in culture, education, creativity and management training; 3) the use of humour in business, media communication and advertising, and 4) humour in psychotherapy and psychological counselling. Proceeding from these foci, the subject matters of the concurrent sessions were specified as follows: culture, psychology, stand up comedy, society, linguistics, Chinese humour, with an emphasis also on the psychological, linguistic and socio-cultural aspects of humour.

The keynote address was delivered by Elliot Oring, the current President of the ISHS, his theoretical and extremely elegant speech was titled *Shaken, Not Stirred: Blending and Humor*. This title, inspired by the favourite drink of the secret agent James Bond, the character created by the British writer Ian Fleming, was ideally appropriate for the presentation focusing on the implementation of the contemporary metaphor theories in current humour research studies in the broader sense. Bearing in mind the fact that the conference took place in China, the peculiarities of Oriental humour were presented on a number of occasions during the four days of plenary and concurrent sessions. The keynote speaker of the second day, Xiaodong Yue, professor at the organising university and also the governor of the conference, gave a good overview about the past, present and future of Chinese humour therapy, elaborating on the four basic forms of this: joke therapy, clown performance therapy, ridiculing therapy and happy event therapy. The third day of the conference started with the plenary speech of Jocelyn Chey, professor at Sydney University, on *youmo*, the Chinese counterpart of the concept of *humour*, introduced by Lin Yutang in 1933.

During recent years, the Graduate Student Award has been granted to young outstanding humour researchers at the annual conference. The award winners in 2010, Clare Watters and Till Weingärtner presented their work during the last plenary session. C. Watters, who is involved in Italian studies at the Birmingham University, delivered a presentation titled *To the Streets: Italian Comedians and Social Protest*, and T. Weingärtner, a young japanologist at the Freie Universität Berlin, *Towards a Theory of Fictionality in Humor*.

Both these presentations were extremely fascinating and caused a lively discussion among the audience. Clare Watters observed as to how political comedy has obtained a central role in the cultural opposition of the government in Italy, since Silvio Berlusconi's gaining of power. This is not at all surprising as the social protest movement is deeply rooted in Italy where intellectuals and cultural figures have performed their relevant role with their activities and speeches. The presentation dealt with the two political comedians, Sabina Guzzanti and Beppe Grillo, in their critical performances against Berlusconi, and their great potential to use social protest to diffuse the borderline between comedy and politics.

Japanologist Till Weingärtner dissected the relationships of humour and reality, contemplating on the proportion of fiction in humour, and presented a question whether and how to measure the fictionality of jokes. The speaker observed both facticity and fictionality in Japanese humour and comedy and described fiction as variation from that reality. The presentation was also an initial deliverance about the theory of fictionality in humour.

Being a folklorist myself, I mainly participated in the sessions on culture and society (in my presentation I observed Estonian abbreviation jokes from a socio-cultural aspect), dwelling on humour in an extremely diverse manner. As the conference venue was Asia, the focus was frequently on the differences in the sense of humour, affected by the dissimilarities in Oriental and Occidental culture.



Participants of the 22nd International Humor Conference in Hong Kong, opening session.

Japanese researcher's Kimie Oshima's speech – *Why Japanese are not funny?* was a substantial overview of distinctive features caused by societal differences, taking a closer look at Japanese and Oriental culture as a high context culture, and opposing this to the culture of low context, this being primarily intrinsic of the social organisation in the West, where the messages are direct and clear, irrespective of the relationships between the sender and the receiver of the message. The words convey the main part of communication. In high context cultures the focus is on the context of the message: the sender, or the receiver of the message, is of greater relevance than the message, thus also affecting the reciprocal relationships, and the hidden meaning proves more important than the words. Likewise, the focus in jokes is also different – in Western societies it is mainly anecdotes that are being told, but in Japan, it is the personal level that is in the forefront, funny stories, told with an aim to enhance relationships or get to learn about the partner in conversation.

Dorota Brzozowska from Poland took a closer look at Polish jokes about Chinese and Japanese cultures, and presented somewhat all-European cultural stereotypes which can also be noticed in Estonian jokelore. The prevailing semantic fields therein are based on 1) external differences and peculiarities (specific racial features, large population figures, high-level technology); 2) specific eating culture, different nourishment (eating rice, using sticks, etc.); 3) linguistic puns accentuating fundamental differences in comparison with Polish and other European languages.

Globalisation of humour and intercultural similarities/differences were touched upon on a number of occasions, during a special session with presentations all well linked to each other. An inspiring presentation was delivered by Giseline Kuipers, researcher from the Netherlands, who observed how humour travels and the relevant implications on transnational culture. The Australian social scientist Jessica Milner Davis talked about cross-cultural challenges in studying humour, contemporary social attitudes and conventions about the use of humour in Australia, Japan and China. English humour researcher Christie Davies who has recently made in-depth studies of the transformation of jokes, looked at how jokes spread and how they change as they travel. The joint presentation by Limor Shifman and Mike Thelwall observed the impacts of globalisation on the media and world-wide diffusion of Internet jokes.

The presentations and standpoints were indeed from wall-to-wall, the ones worth mentioning comprised Kawakib Al-Momani's review of the comic strips and cartoons spreading in the media during the parliamentary elections in Jordan; Chaya Ostrower's two presentations on the forms and functions of humour among the Jews surviving the Holocaust; Władysław Chłopicki's cognitive-linguistic discussions on conceptual space in humorous interaction; Rolf Heimann's speech on the history of cartooning in Australia; the paper by Joseph Wu and Raymond Chan on the use of humour in coping with stress, among the secondary school teachers of Hong Kong, etc. The programme and the abstracts of the conference are available at the home page: <http://ssteach4.ss.cityu.edu.hk/~ishs2010/Home.htm>.

In 2011, the humour researchers of the world will convene in Boston, and as Władysław Chłopicki, Associate Professor at Jagiellonian University in Kraków, a long standing member of the ISHS, has already applied for the right to organise the conference in 2012, the 24th meeting will take place Kraków, the Pearl of Poland.

Piret Voolaid

## EUROPHRAS CONFERENCE IN SPAIN

The bi-annual conference of Europhras, the European Society of Phraseology, took place in 2010, from June 30 to July 2, in Granada, southern Spain. The organiser was one of the oldest universities in Spain, the University of Granada (founded in 1531), and more precisely, the Department of Linguistics, headed by Professor Antonio Pamies Bertrán.

The conference title was “Intercultural and Cross-linguistic Perspectives on phraseology and paremiology”, with an emphasis on intercultural and linguistic differences/similarities with regard to phraseology and paremiology. The conference with nearly 200 participants was structured into five plenary sessions, five workshops and 7 sessions, grouped according to the following themes: General Theoretical Issues; Contrastive Phraseology/Paremiology and Translation; Cognitive, Cultural and Rhetorical Motivation of Idioms and/or Proverbs; Diachronic Variation of Idioms and Proverbs; Synchronic Variation of Idioms and Proverbs; Corpus Linguistics and Phraseo-Paremiology; Phraseography and Paremiography; Phraseo-paremiology in Language Acquisition and Teaching.

The working languages during the conference were, as in earlier meetings, German, English, Spanish and French, each on an equal basis. German, which used to be the only working language in the beginning, has given way to English and the others as the circle of researchers has widened – the meeting that was at first meant to convene German philologists-phraseologists has now grown and is becoming an event for those interested in phraseology, yet with different professional backgrounds.

This year, there were more keynote speakers than in earlier times, all of them acknowledged phraseologists: Natalia Filátkina (“Manifestation of culture in the historical phraseology of German”), Dmitrij Dobrovol’skij (“Cross-linguistic equivalence of idioms: does it really exist?”), Annelies Häcki-Buhofer (“Collocations – theoretical and lexicographical aspects”), Carmen Mellado (“Valores semánticos y pragmáticos de la fraseología de CALLAR en alemán y español”), Angel López García (“The neural basis of phraseological constructions”).

Dmitrij Dobrovol’skij as the most outstanding theoretician-phraseologist of recent years, underlined that it is necessary to be flexible in finding counterparts for the phraseologisms in different languages, and stated that complete translations are not sensible as the result would be the so-called phraseological false friends, misleading in the mediation of cultures. This is a highly significant issue as the majority of phraseologists are also foreign language specialists who come across translations in their daily work.

Workshops in the conference programme were conducted in different languages, I would like to highlight the following presenters: Salah Mejri and Jean-Pierre Coulson (“Linguistique de Corpus et Phraséologie Contrastive”), František Čermák and Elisabeth Piirainen and Joanna Szerszunowicz (“Motivation, Culture and Phraseology”), Harald Burger, Ane Kleine and Natalia Filátkina (“Historische Aspekte der Phraseologie und Phraseographie”).

This year, the topics of particular interest for phraseologists concerned the use of phraseologisms on the Internet, phraseology-related terminology, the use of old phraseological expressions in the contemporary language, the position of phraseologisms,





*A view to the Moorish Albazyn district in the city of Granada.  
Further in the distance the Sierra Nevada mountain range.*

idioms and collocations in foreign language studies, analysability or non-analysability of idiomatic units, phraseological variability and modifications, corpus-based empirical treatments, problems regarding idiomatic equivalents, reflexion of cultural specificities in phraseology. The abundance of subject matters is a continuous proof of diversity in phraseological research which is indeed characteristic of this domain – instead of one predominant theme there are many areas to focus on.

In comparison with earlier times, more attention was paid to the research of proverbs, however, this trend was already observable during the previous Europhras conference two years ago in Helsinki, when paremiology was discussed in a separate panel. Several presenters in Granada introduced the EC funded project, SprichWort, targeted at creating an Internet platform for language learning. The actual content of this international project is to reflect the use of proverbs in various languages and cultures. Another major project, introduced during the conference, is the multilingual phraseological dictionary ([www.colidiom.com](http://www.colidiom.com)) which is still in its initial phase.

In addition, the contributors to the project “Widespread Idioms in Europe and Beyond” had one of their regular meetings during the conference. As an outcome of the project, the first part of a voluminous publication “Widespread Idioms in Europe and Beyond: Toward a Lexicon of Common Figurative Units” will be issued in spring 2011, compiled by Elisabeth Piirainen, project coordinator and manager. The mentioned collection is to contain nearly 200 generally known and widespread idioms of literary

origin, selected in the process of joint work of phraseologists from different countries (incl. Estonia).

The European Society of Phraseology elected the new board and chairman for the next five years – this being Jarmo Korhonen, Professor at the University of Helsinki. The next Europhras conference will take place two years hence in Maribor University, Slovenia.

Anneli Baran

#### **FROM LANGUAGE TO MIND 4**

The international conference – From Language to Mind 4 – that took place in Elva on October 15–17, 2010, was dedicated to the occasion of the 110th anniversary of academician and renowned folklorist Oskar Loorits, a researcher who set a cornerstone for various research subjects in folkloristics, and simultaneously updated and developed the methodology. The conference also celebrated the 75th birthday of Pille Kippar whose research and publications about fairytales are widely known. The past conferences, held to acknowledge the anniversary of O. Loorits (in 1990 and 2000), have brought a number of new valuable contacts and enriched the Estonian field of folkloristics in many ways. In the same vein, the present conference was remarkable because of the extraordinarily wide expertise of those researchers present.

The conference consisted of thematic panels of presentations followed by discussions. In addition to that, two plenary sessions were held and round-table discussions took place on both evenings in a more informal setting but nevertheless were filled with vigorous academic exchange of thoughts. A number of posters were presented to the conference delegates dedicated to the re-structuring of the ritual year during the post-socialist period in Russia, Bulgaria, Lithuania and Hungary (I. Sedakova, A. Vaicekauskas, E. Anastasova, G. Barna) and to the theories of the Tunguska catastrophe (N. Dmitrieva).

Together with the academic event in Elva, an exhibition, “Tsässons and churches of Setomaa in the 17th to 21st century” was opened at the Estonian Literary Museum in Tartu which includes 80 photos of all the 23 tsässons and 6 Orthodox churches located within the Estonian territory of Setomaa (Setoland). The central topics were humour, ancient mythologies, narratives and expressions of belief, and creating places and identities on the Internet.

Humour has a key role in media texts, first of all on the Internet. In online communication, television, personal communication and elsewhere, humour is used to tackle questions of identity that are especially topical in the post-socialist region. Playful and irreverent genres are equal to other, more serious-minded ones, and deconstruction of identity requires in addition to the study of economic and political aspects also the study of emotions and attitudes. From time to time, they provide the ground for politically incorrect (media) texts, analyzing of which leads us to the subjects of censorship,

globalization and identity creation. The humour sessions were opened by two young researchers, Ilona Piirimägi, from the ethnology department of Tartu University, and Liga Strazda, from the ethnology department of the University of Riga. Their presentations touched upon the way the environment shapes jokes – be it in a totalitarian society or during a live entertainment show in a stand-up comedy evening. Liisi Laineste's presentation was about the inter-war caricatures, from the 1920s to 1939, published in the Estonian daily papers. Arvo Krikmann gave a thorough overview of the huge and extremely heterogeneous corpus of tales about Hodja Nasreddin that have been, and continue to be, very popular and productive in the very large area of the Oriental world. His argument was directed towards defining the punch-line and, more than that, defining the essentials of a joke. Władysław Chłopicki presented an illustrated introduction to the stand-up comedy genre in Poland from its beginnings to the present day. His most interesting examples also continued to amuse the audience during the late evening session which compared contemporary trends in Polish and Estonian stand-up comedy.

The session on ancient mythologies and belief narratives was centred on the present-day conceptions of ancient beliefs. The presentations aimed at answering the questions about what time and religious system the myth was connected to and why have some myths pertained while others seem to have disappeared quickly, etc. For the purposes of research, myth must be situated in its historical contexts. It is clear that myths (however the term is defined) have been used by people in recent as well as ancient past, while it is unclear whether we are capable of studying these myths. The first presentation, delivered by Kaisa Sammelseig, described ways that a religion expresses itself through explaining the meaning of the term *hiis* (holy grove) for people living close to a (formerly) religious place, on the basis of ethnological fieldwork. The thought-evoking paper by Ester Oras concentrated on the possibilities of using a contextual approach for interpreting archaeological material. Archaeology was further revisited in the presentation of Tõnno Jonuks, which contemplated about the justifications of religious interpretations of archaeological source material, thus forming plenty of parallels with the previous paper. The topic was eloquently closed by the keynote, delivered by Jaanus Plaat from the Estonian Art Academy, with an insight into the rich cultural tradition of the *tsässon*s (chapels) of Setumaa in Southern Estonia.

The Internet session brought together a medley of approaches to this inevitably important source of contemporary folkloristic material. Mare Kalda, from the Estonian Literary Museum, described the tradition of geo-cashing and its expressions on Internet discussion boards. Eda Kalmre focused on contemporary romantic imagination of young girls who publish their novels online in a public portal [www.rate.ee](http://www.rate.ee). In addition to other remarks, she stated that these interactive love stores of the [rate.ee](http://www.rate.ee) blogs are very similar to their handwritten analogues from the second half of the 20th century. This kind of self-expression is also affected by the current role-models of contemporary pop culture and literature. Liisa Vesik concentrated on the formation of virtual communities on the websites dedicated to pets. Mare Kõiva and Andres Kuperjanov gave an interesting overview of YouTube clips of the former Yugoslavian leader “comrade Tito” in order to analyze myths and anti-myths in a popular visual media environment.

In addition to these presentations, some very interesting insights into archival material did not fall into any of the previous categories: Risto Järv, from the Estonian Folklore Archives, talked about the animal fairytales, dedicating his paper to Pille Kippar's birthday and attempting to outline the main characteristics of animals belonging to the fantasy world of fairy tales, and Katre Kikas, who concentrated on the topic of giving and receiving books as presents for collecting and sending pieces of folklore. The presentation by Renata Sõukand and Raivo Kalle discussed the folk ideas about healing with herbs, introducing the concept of a herbal landscape, which once created remains with the person or community and is constantly being upgraded by the knowledge developed within (community exchanged, personal experiences) or coming from outside (media, books).

The conference was held in a pleasant informal atmosphere, and as a result, a number of ideas for future academic events and publications were conceived.

Liisi Laineste