

NEWS IN BRIEF

DISSERTATION ON HIDDEN TREASURES IN ESTONIAN TALE TRADITION

Mare Kalda's Doctoral thesis, *Rahvajutud peidetud varandustest: tegude saamine lugudeks* [Hidden Treasures in Estonian Tale Tradition: From Deeds to Folk Legends] (2011), provides an extremely exciting and diverse insight into Estonian treasure tradition, encompassing relevant archival texts, media coverings of different eras, associations of treasure tales with literary language, personal experience and landscape. The introductory part of the dissertation is a voluminous theoretical overview of the main characteristic features of treasure lore, earlier research done in the field (pp. 15–26), archival context (pp. 27–59), genre related issues (pp. 60–93) and typology (pp. 94–105, 131–141), followed by four articles focusing on more specific subject matter: the relationship of the 16th century cobbler's treasure tale with contemporary and later imaginations of the supernatural (article I, Kalda 2007); (inter)textual context of Kreutzwald's folk tale *Whining Shingleton* (article II, Kalda 2008); connections between the media text and legends in journalism during the first half of the 20th century (article III, Kalda 2003); and the relationship of legends and landscape in the case of riverside communities (article IV, Kalda 2004). It is possible to perceive a slight discrepancy between the two parts of the dissertation: whereas the first part is aimed at setting limits to treasure lore as such, proceeding from rather traditional folkloristic theories and keywords; the articles, on the other hand, are primarily centred on the engagement of new source materials and theoretical options. Still, the common denominator for both parts of the dissertation is the author's diversity in her points of interest and broad approach, particularly evident when comparing the whole thesis with earlier treatments on this subject matter, given in the chapter on research history. Indeed, besides the purely treasure tradition related issues, there are several themes highlighted in the introductory part and in the articles which are also expressive and of relevance to wider folkloristics (e.g. genre related issues, relationship between the media and tradition, archival context).

Kalda underlines that she proceeds from the standpoint that folklore is an ongoing process, and quotes Lauri Honko's idea of folklore as an organic part of living culture which "is recreated [...] in new performances with individual features" (Honko 1998: 57, op cit p. 10). However, when Honko meant turning away from archive-centred folkloristics then Kalda asks as to what has been the role of archives (or more broadly, archiving and written recording) in the more general process of treasure tradition: how do texts end up in archives, how are they studied and exhibited there and what is the relationship of the archival texts with these outside archives (and with the reality and landscape), and what kind of events and circumstances motivate the re-actualisation of archival records (see, e.g., pp. 27–28).



As people are in the centre of such processes, the focus on the process would also mean that consideration is given to the reality of the informant (individual) (see p. 11): why have these stories been told and written down, read, listened to and delivered, and how and in what contexts has this happened. It is difficult (and also interesting) to detect the reality of the informant as the majority of sources at the disposal of a treasure tradition researcher contain the traces of the reality of several people – consideration has to be given to the viewpoints of the storyteller and the person writing it down (see pp. 39–59), the tradition bearer as the author of a journalistic (sensational) story (see article III), and to these of the true believer as a rational interpreter (see article I). In addition, it is necessary to bear in mind the era-wise, religious, institutional and social contexts wherein all these above-mentioned persons function, and who they want to speak to, and what kind of medium or genre do they use for conveying their message.

Kalda aims at understanding the motivating factor behind the different folklore collectors who participate in the treasure lore process, and has grouped them according to the ways/methods of textualisation, using the following indicators: the proportion, content and development level of treasure tradition texts in the contributions of folklore collectors, and the emphasis in the comments added by the correspondents (p. 41). Thus, she differentiates between six groups: those telling their story (pp. 42–43), frontal collectors (pp. 43–48), collectors oriented at local tradition (pp. 48–51), collectors achieving at self-accomplishment (pp. 51–54), and the socially active ones, engaged in several domains (pp. 54–56), and also schoolchildren (pp. 56–59). Intrinsically of any division in humanities, these types of correspondents are not fully exclusive and quite a few of the collectors might fall into several groups – e.g. the work-style of some schoolchildren is similar to that of frontal collectors (see p. 56), and the difference between frontal collectors and those aiming at self-accomplishment mainly lies in the bulk of collected material (see p. 51). Still, irrespective of this, the typology is indeed very detailed and comprehensive and is definitely worthwhile to be applied by archival researchers engaged in other subject matters, or at least be used as a source of inspiration. For example, I presume that the locally oriented collectors could also have another orientation (targeted at religion, history or fairy-tales, etc.) in other fields of research.

With an aim to underline the ongoing process, Kalda has convincingly implemented the intertextuality theory. For instance, in the article on Torsten Grön's personal narrative, the concept of intertextuality has been used on one hand to analyse the accordance of different tale elements with the belief context of the observed era – revealing that the motifs and beliefs expressed in the tale were actually part of collective tradition, although the tale itself was an individual textualisation. On the other hand, Kalda also highlights the intertextual connections of this personal narrative with the personal narratives of today, spread on the Internet (see article I).

In her treatment on Kreutzwald's legend *Whining Shinbone*, Kalda uses the theory of intertextuality, in order to analyse the archival texts with the implications of Kreutzwald's legend. This, in turn, is not intertextuality at the level of motifs and beliefs, but an intertextual field with a very concrete textualisation in its centre. Attempting to differentiate between these two options of intertextual relationships, Kalda

underlines that the observed phenomenon is intra-textual, rather than inter-textual: “The present study, however, focuses on intratextuality, a narrower and more limited field of intertextuality, since it explores the relations between the recurrent emergences of what is basically the same text” (Kalda 2005: 102–103; article II: 51). Although such a use of concepts allows the revelation that the textual field is based on a particular base text, I am not quite convinced in the meaningfulness of such a differentiation. In the end, we can never be sure of how direct is the relationship between the archival text and that of Kreutzwald’s textualisation – all the relevant written records in the archives do not only proceed from the text by Kreutzwald, they are also in relation to the textual experience of each individual recorder (and potential previous narrators, readers, etc.) – a fact that can be considered within intertextuality and what tends to be left unnoticed within intratextuality. (And it seems that Kalda herself is not too sure about the need to highlight the intratextuality of the text field – in the summary of the article within the introduction of the dissertation, she describes this as intertextuality (see p. 15, 108, 112.)

Thus, when reading these very impressive and detailed applications, it is somewhat unexpected that when presenting her theoretical and methodological standpoints in the introductory part of the dissertation, Kalda does not use the concept of intertextuality, and states modestly that she “continues with the traditions of Estonian folklore analysis by way of applying comparative research and source criticism” (p 13). As much as I can note, she mentions intertextuality (in addition to the content summaries of the articles) only once, in the conclusion (p.106), whereas if this theory had been tied with the highlighted analysis traditions, it would have been an opportunity to connect the first part of the dissertation with the articles. Likewise, it would have been interesting to see how the theory of intertextualisation could be related to genre theory or the localisation of the plots of migratory legends.

One of the issues concerning the reality of an informant is the relationship of treasure lore and the landscape. The landscape related aspect is indeed one of the dominant aspects of the dissertation and has been thoroughly dealt with in the introductory part (in connection with the collectors of locality-related tradition pp. 48–51; genre related aspect (pp. 65–73)) and also in the articles (being an ancillary in article I, yet relatively focal in the rest of the articles).

Part of this involves the question about the relationship between the story and reality as a large number of tales and notices refer to specific places where treasures have been or could be found. On several occasions, Kalda repeats the argument by Tõnno Jonuks, namely, that the immediate purpose of the treasure tales is to mark the significant places in the landscape, whereas the initial meaning of the locality might have been very unique (p. 71, 89; see Jonuks 2010: 69). She also refers to Kent Ryden’s idea that the physical, historical and emotional geography are of great significance in the localisation of internationally spreading legend plots (p. 66, see Ryden 1993: 83). Thus, the task of a folklorist is not to ascertain whether, where and what has actually been buried somewhere, but instead, to ask as to what is so special in the place concealed in the narrative, for a concrete person or a lore group, so that they need to highlight this specificity by telling the story; what has been this something in certain places that has facilitated the actualisation and localisation of the plots of migratory legends.

The second keyword here is identity: localised treasure tales, placed in local relationships serve as an interesting opportunity to observe the difference between the “our” and the “other”. Kalda argues that when studying the local variants of widely spread plots it is interesting to observe “how the narrators of these tales have commented upon the situations when it turns out that their unique story had also happened somewhere else” (pp. 66), and illustrates this with the reaction of one of Bengt af Klintberg’s informants: “Ah, the tale about grandfather’s gold coin has spread that far!”(af Klintberg 1990, op cit p. 66).

A somewhat different distinction, between the “own” and the “others”, seems to be intrinsic of the legends about unknown treasure hunters (see, e.g., pp. 70, article III: 116–121). Kalda notes that although the plots of these tales are widely spread internationally, it is not expedient to talk about migratory legends; it is rather a case where a similar, “initially a real-life situation” has inspired a “similar narrative” (p. 70). Still, the emphasis should not only be put on similar real life events – instead, this is a case where treasure tales are being used in order to explain the non-understandable deeds committed by unusual people (strangers). It is indeed quite exciting that even archaeologists and other researchers of heritage can potentially occur in the centre of such a narrative, in addition to land surveyors or persons who have actually been on the spot and trying to dig out the treasure.

As much as treasure tales are part of tradition, they have also been part of the meta-language which underpins the relevance of folklore. Both Jakob Hurt and Matthias Johann Eisen have used a metaphor – *old gold* – in the reports and appeals regarding folklore collection, and have referred to heritage collectors as *gold-diggers* (see, e.g., p. 29, and also Valk 2004: 268–269), relying, supposedly, on the more general use of the metaphor complex in the national-romantic treatment of the past (see references on p. 29). The use of such metaphors can be frequently seen in the letters sent by Hurt’s and Eisen’s folklore correspondents, and we can be quite sure that the collectors of folklore who used this metaphor actually interpreted this imagery proceeding from the local understandings and examples, from local treasure lore, rather than from the international background. Thus, the relevant reflections at grass-root level can be seen as a distinctive parallel to the localisation of the plots of international migratory legends.

To conclude, it is nice to see that the author of the dissertation is eagerly ready to apply the treasure-hunter metaphor to her personal field of research – Kalda notes that “the task of researcher(s) is to [...] rediscover the treasures which are as if hidden in archives” (p. 29). In addition to the continuity of research history, the adoption of such a metaphor is also a way to relate oneself to the informant’s level.

Katre Kikas

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THESIS DEFENCE: PIRET VOOLAID

ESTONIAN RIDDLES AS A FOLKLORE GENRE IN A CHANGING CULTURAL CONTEXT

Piret Voolaid: *Eesti mõistatused kui pärimuslik muutuv kultuurikontekstis*. [Estonian Riddles as a Folklore Genre in a Changing Cultural Context.] *Dissertationes folkloristicae Universitatis Tartuensis* 16. Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, Tartu 2011. 238pp.

Piret Voolaid's thesis is composed of an introductory chapter and six articles published earlier on different forums.

In the introduction Voolaid looks at riddles and the research on them from many different points of view and presents several theories that can be used in the study of riddles and, particularly, in the study of the special riddle genres, i.e. conundrums, compound puns, acronyms, droodles, that she herself is interested in. As Voolaid states in the introduction, earlier traditional riddles were considered to be in the centre and the above-mentioned subgenres were considered as peripheral. But now

