

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### SCALA NATURAE: SYMPOSIUM IN HONOUR OF ACADEMICIAN ARVO KRIKMANN

On August 18, 2014, an international academic event under the heading “Scala naturae: Symposium in honour of Arvo Krikmann’s 75th birthday” took place at the Estonian Academy of Sciences in Tallinn. This marked the 75th jubilee of Arvo Krikmann, one of the most versatile and productive Estonian folklorists, senior researcher of the Estonian Literary Museum, and member of the Estonian Academy of Sciences.

Arvo Krikmann, who celebrated his 75th birthday on July 21, is undoubtedly one of the most interdisciplinary folklorists, whose contribution has been recognised a number of times, most recently in early 2014, when he was awarded the Wiedemann Prize named after linguist Ferdinand Johann Wiedemann. This distinguished award highlights his work with short forms in Estonian folklore, advancement of linguistic folkloristics, linguistics of humour, introduction of Estonian literary cultural heritage, and promotion of the humanities in general. His main fields of interest have covered source history, historiography and textology of short forms in Estonian and Baltic-Finnic folklore (including the study of the older sources of Estonian phraseology and folk rhetoric); structural levels of short forms of folklore and their interrelationships: syntax, logic, modalities, and semantics of figurative speech; classification in paremiology; theory of figurative speech, humour theories and political humour; geographical distribution of folklore and dialect lexis, etc.

All the presentations at the symposium were, to a smaller or greater extent, associated with Arvo Krikmann’s main fields of research. Along with his Estonian colleagues, his academic friends from Finland, Russia, Poland, Austria, and the United States participated.

The festive day started with complimentary speeches from Leo Mõtus, Secretary General of the Estonian Academy of Sciences, and Peeter Tulviste, board member of the Academy of Sciences. These were followed by nine academic presentations. Linguist Joanna Szerszunowicz from Białystok University, in her presentation *Priamels as Carriers of Cultural Information*, discussed sayings in the form of priamels and their culturally specific nature. Priamels are utterances, in which a string of words, phrases or short sentences are followed by a point, explaining the enumeration of previously listed elements. The speaker focused, above all, on Polish, English and Italian priamels, the comparative analysis of which indicated several cultural differences emanating from ethnic and gender stereotypes.

Professor Ülo Valk from the Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore at Tartu University focused in his paper *Animals, Animism and Vernacular Theorising* on animal image in neo-animistic theories and Arvo Krikmann’s former research on animal proverbs and animal metaphors, also discussing proverbs as religious messages.

Professor Alexandra Arkhipova’s (Russian State University for the Humanities) presentation *To Fear Stalin, to Laugh at Fidel: Two Ways of Tabooing in Authoritarian Societies* focused on the official and popular discourse of name taboos on the example

of authoritarian societies. According to Arkhipova, earlier cases of prohibitions related to the name of authoritarian leaders (e.g., using the leader's name after his death) go back to the rule of the Qin dynasty (221–206 BC) in China. In this country, official name taboos persist even in the 21st century (e.g., the firewall preventing internet search of the family names of the members of the Politburo of the Communist Party). The presenter gave a brief overview of official name prohibitions and the popular nicknames of the great leader from the Stalinist period, paying special attention to the case of Fidel Castro, the influential Cuban ex-leader: the *Comandante's* private life concealed from the general public, several beliefs related to naming (e.g. saying the name out loud might evoke unwanted presence of the person or bad luck), and euphemistic (e.g. *el Caballo* 'horse') and dysphemistic (e.g. *el Camello* 'camel') nicknames. Widely spread verbal and non-verbal nicknames could serve as a favourable ground for alleviating fears and prohibitions; yet, according to Arkhipova, people in Cuba today use them rather for fun or from force of habit. In conclusion the speaker admitted that in Cuban tradition a kind of independent oral language emerged on the basis of these pseudo-taboos, euphemisms and dysphemisms, in opposition to the official political language. The presentation caused a lively discussion and questions about analogous taboos in the Russia of today.

Yuri Berezkin, Head of the American Department of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera) at the Russian Academy of Sciences, discussed in his comprehensive paper *Three Tricksters: World Distribution of Zoomorphic Protagonists in Folklore Tales* the image of the trickster as a zoomorphic character in the folktales of different peoples all over the world. Based on the database of the distribution area of folkloric-mythological motifs created by the researcher himself (available in Russian at <http://www.ruthenia.ru/folklore/berezkin/>), Berezkin pointed out the distribution and loan relations of three zoomorphic trickster figures – fox/jackal/coyote, hare/rabbit, and raven (crow) – in world folklore. As to geographical spread, the fox/jackal has no competitors in the whole of Europe, eastern and southern Siberia, central, south-western and southern parts of Asia, and northern and north-eastern part of Africa. In the New World, the trickster-coyote appears in the western part of North America and the trickster-fox in Central and Northern Andes, Chaco and Patagonia. Hare as a trickster appears in a major part of Africa as well as in south-eastern and eastern parts of Asia, and is widely spread also in the eastern part of North America.

Mare Kõiva, leading researcher of the Department of Folkloristics, the Estonian Literary Museum, in her presentation *Invented Sacrality* compared and gave an overview of Estonian holy places of today, describing the diversity of these cultural places and interpreting their re-evaluation with the help of Hobsbawm and Ranger's concept of *invented tradition* (1983). As an example of a recently invented tradition, Kõiva mentioned the benches dedicated to Wiedemann Prize laureates in Haapsalu (a seaside town in Estonia), one of which bears the name of Arvo Krikmann as of May 2014.

Professor Peter Grzybek from the Institute of Slavistics at Graz University presented his paper titled *Estonian Proverbs: Some Linguistic Regularities*. By using quantitative linguistic analysis, he tried to find an answer to the question about the linguistic organisation of Estonian proverbs: how long they are, how long are words in a proverb, whether the length of words depends on the length of the proverb, the position of the word inside the text, etc. Grzybek based his analysis on Krikmann's article from 1967 about the linguistic statistics of Estonian proverbs, which is one of the earliest and most remarkable works in this field.



*Research without friendship is worthless. Old friends: Arvo Krikmann and Wolfgang Mieder, professor of folklore and German at the University of Vermont. Photograph by Alar Madisson 2014.*

Professor Pekka Hakamies from the University of Turku gave a personal-style presentation entitled *Meetings with Arvo Krikmann*, in which he shared his reminiscences of proverb projects that he had carried out jointly with the jubilarian. Hakamies gave a detailed historical overview of a Baltic-Finnic proverb project, *Proverbia septentrionalia*, launched on the initiative of Matti Kuusi in the 1970s (the database was compiled in 2000), providing background information about the Soviet-period obstacles that the Finnish and Estonian researches had to overcome.

Władysław Chłopicki from the Jagiellonian University in Kraków presented his paper titled *Power of Metonymy*, in which he first summarised the difference between metaphor and metonymy, broadly explaining them in terms of the neck (metonymy), allowing access to the head (metaphor), and referring to Krikmann's contributions to the discussion of the role of metonymy in humour research.

The last academic presentation was given by one of the honorary guests of the symposium, Wolfgang Mieder, professor of folklore and German at the University of Vermont. His paper *Futuristic Paremiology: A Plea for the Study of Modern Proverbs* included a manifest to future paremiology. In his view, modern paremiology has not paid particular interest to the collection and study of modern proverbs; therefore this field is gaining more and more importance. The main problem (which the jubilarian has also tackled in his research) is how to find and detect new proverbs if it is considerably simpler to identify the old ones, which are well known and fixed in publications dedicated

to proverbs. Mieder maintains that researchers have to start a systematic creation of a modern proverb corpus, which, despite the developing IT support, is a complicated and time-consuming process.

The academic speeches were followed by book presentations. Anneli Baran, Liisi Laineste and Piret Voolaid introduced a collection of articles in English, *Scala naturae: Festschrift in Honour of Arvo Krikmann*, published by the Scholarly Press of the Estonian Literary Museum. Alexandra Arkhipova presented the 21st issue of *Antropologicheskii Forum* (Anthropological Forum), a scientific journal in Russian, published in St. Petersburg, which, as a tribute to Arvo Krikmann, included a chapter on short forms and humour, entitled *O znamenakh, drakonakh i anekdotakh* ('About flags, dragons, and anecdotes').

It should be mentioned that the heading of the symposium and the Festschrift, *Scala naturae* (literally, 'ladder/stairway of nature') is well in line with the direction of Arvo Krikmann's academic interests. This concept with a long history has served as a basis to a philosophical theory, which is known as the Great Chain of Being. The beginnings of the theory originate in antique philosophy, and according to this all matter and life in the world forms a certain hierarchical system. Those who have an in-depth knowledge of Arvo Krikmann's academic research are well aware of how strongly he has been inspired, since the 1990s, by the chapter dedicated to the metaphors of proverbs, *The Great Chain of Being*, in the book *More than Cool Reason* (1989), written by cognitivists George Lakoff and Mark Turner. If we apply the theory of the Great Chain of Being to proverb studies, we can say that the creation and understanding of metaphors in proverbs is based on conceptual distinctions 'human-inhuman' and 'natural-cultural'.

The symposium was organised by the Department of Folkloristics of the Estonian Literary Museum (research project IUT-2205) in cooperation with the Estonian Academy of Sciences. The programme of the event is available on the event's homepage at <http://www.folklore.ee/rl/fo/konve/2014/scalanaturae/>.

Piret Voolaid

## EUROPHRAS CONFERENCE IN PARIS

On September 10–12, 2014, two of the thirteen universities in Paris – Sorbonne Paris Cité and Sorbonne Universités – organised yet another conference of Europhras, the European Society of Phraseology, at Paris-Sorbonne University, under the heading *Phraseology: Resources, Descriptive Studies and Computational Processing*. Due to political instability, the conference that was initially planned to be held in Tunisia was transferred to Europe. The organising committee was headed by Salah Mejri and Ines Sfar, who represent the French-speaking researchers of Europhras recently active in organising phraseology events. This is proved by the fact that only a few years ago a paremiology conference in cooperation with Europhras took place in Paris. Despite the name of the organisation, it assembles researchers also from outside of Europe; this year, for instance, from Japan, Taiwan, Brazil, Nigeria, Egypt, Senegal, Tunisia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Madagascar, and Northern Korea.