

## FOLKLORE AND THE PUBLIC: ESTONIAN FOLKLORISTS' 12TH WINTER CONFERENCE

On March 2 and 3, 2017, the 12th Estonian folklorists' winter conference took place in Voore Guest House in Jõgeva County, Estonia. The conference was dedicated to the jubilee of the Department of Folkloristics of the Estonian Literary Museum; its predecessor, the Folklore Sector of the Institute of Language and Literature of the Academy of Sciences of the Estonian SSR had been established in 1947. Conference presentations were given by folklore researchers from Argentina, Estonia, India, Finland, Hungary, Belorussia, and Russia. Two conference days included 19 papers in Estonian, English, and Russian, as well as a film presentation, a concert, and a guided walk in the environs of the conference venue.

The theme of this year's conference was *Folklore and the Public*, and the speakers co-interpreted these two concepts from rather different angles. One of the topics dealt with in several presentations was the status of folklorists in today's society and in what way they can influence social processes. So, Mari Sarv in her presentation about folklore collections at the service of the public contemplated the changes in the meaning of the collections of the Estonian Folklore Archives. Eda Kalmre's largely autoethnographic presentation asked, on the example of Võnnu Borough, who our history and place names belong to, explaining how little a folklorist can do to influence the ongoing processes. Anu Korb in her presentation about Siberian Estonians and their community pondered how folklorists' interest in Estonian communities in Siberia has influenced their coverage in the media, and to what extent the media has highlighted aspects exotic for homeland Estonians.

Several presentations were dedicated to the observation of beliefs and the public. Mare Kõiva analysed a concrete collection case of belief material, highlighting different strategies used by the collector to obtain information otherwise unavailable to strangers. Mihály Hoppál in his presentation "Some Aspects of Shamanism" focused on shamanistic movements in today's societies. Baburam Saikia's presentation "Belief and Politics in Institutionalized System of Neo-Vaishnava Religion: A Study on the Image of Sattra in Contemporary Assam" focused on the relations between religion and politics in Assam, India, on the example of a concrete new religion.

Several of the speakers expressed interest in modern figurative speech and language use. Anastasiya Astapova in her presentation "Self-Reflexive Metaphors among Refugees in Estonia" analysed figures of speech which help asylum seekers from Belorussia interpret their situation (and also in case their application is refused). Liisi Laineste and Anneli Baran's presentation analysed the role of phraseologisms in hate speech against refugees, based on online comments to a New Year's Eve programme on Estonian television. Liisa Granbom-Herranen in her paper "Proverbs as Part of Common Language" analysed the use of proverbs in the Finnish press. Antti Lindfords' presentation "Performance of Moral Accountability and the Ethics of Satire in Stand-Up Comedy" could also be considered as a part of this group.

Yet another group (although rather diffuse) focused around narrativity. Lyudmila Lobanova's more traditional narrative treatment was dedicated to a concrete narrative

type – a reindeer legend in modern Komi tradition, and Anatoli Paniukov's theoretical presentation discussed the phenomenon of self-formation in folklore. Anastasiya Fiadotava in her paper "Sharing Humour within a Family in the Digital Age: A Case Study of Belarusian Dyadic Traditions" focused on narration in modern transmedial environment. Two presentations highlighted the therapeutic function of narration. Piret Paal discussed the influence of the media on the expectations of palliative treatment patients as related to their therapy. Bárbara Galarza's paper "The Crazy Man from War in the Context of Folk Therapy: A Case Study of a Storytelling Event from Argentina" discussed the therapeutic function of a concrete narrative type in historical context.

The papers included several fascinating retrospective analyses, which focused either on a moment of time or observed a certain event throughout a longer period of time. For instance, Merili Metsvahi's presentation about the motif of *ius primae noctis* asked why this particular theme was so widespread in Estonian media and literature of the 1910s–1920s. Mall Hiimäe discussed the changing role of the folk calendar in the twentieth-century cultural communication in Estonia. Ulla Savolainen in her presentation "Understanding Silence: Interplay of Personal and Public Memories of the Internment in Finland" talked about the internment of German women and children after the Second World War, analysing how the materials published in the media are linked to the reminiscences of those involved. Pille Kippar's autobiographic paper was dedicated to the jubilee of the Department of Folkloristics and provided an overview of folklorists' international relations in the Soviet period.

As the conference was dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the Department of Folkloristics of the Estonian Literary Museum, the first day ended on a festive note. Mare Kõiva, head of the department, spoke about the department's past, present, and future, and handed over letters of appreciation to the former colleagues and permanent contributors.

Katre Kikas