

## INTRODUCTION: SPORT CULTURE, GAMES AND FOLK DANCE

*Piret Voolaid, Kalle Voolaid*

The current issue is published in cooperation between the Department of Folkloristics of the Estonian Literary Museum and the Estonian Sports Museum. This is certainly not a coincidence that it happens exactly in 2013 – the year when the Estonian Sports Museum celebrates its 50th anniversary. As the aim of the Estonian Sports Museum is to foster and preserve the traditions of Estonian sport, the special issue of our journal is dedicated to sport and physical movement culture, games and folk dance. The writings deal with different problems of sport and traditional games phenomena in heritage (fan movements and traditions, different outputs of traditional sport culture, sports and games in new media, sport folklore and semiotics, etc.).

Here we should bear in mind that the broad definition of the term ‘sports’ considers, along with the development of physical shape and mental well-being, also facilitation of social interactions as a function of sport, which enables us to regard expressions of sports and sports-related activities (especially folkloric) as one of the forms of culture.

The issue begins with an article on an extremely topical theme – doping in sport. Piret Voolaid and Liisi Laineste (Estonian Literary Museum) analyse the doping scandal that broke out in April 2011 and concerned the esteemed Estonian cross-country skier and Olympic gold medal winner, Andrus Veerpalu. The doping case was a collective shock that attracted the attention of the media immediately and channelled into various stories, for instance, the newslore and contemporary sports folklore that was based on the fiery public discussion. The article provides a contribution to the evolution of an athlete as a mythic national hero on the Internet.

The first article is followed by two treatises on ballgames in traditional folk culture. We all know that the relationship between sport (football) and violence is a hot topic in contemporary sociology and anthropology. Laurent Sébastien Fournier (University of Nantes) suggests that the example of folk football in England and Scotland enables us to better understand the relationship between sport and violence. The violence that regularly appears in modern sport and hooliganism can be interpreted as an unconscious restoration of very old dual

cultural schemes, connected in a broad psychological perspective to the youth's universal taste for pride and parade.

Junwei Yu (Department of Physical Education, National Taiwan University of Physical Education and Sport) discusses in his article connections between baseball and magic in Taiwan, claiming that the Puyuma tribe in Taiwan indubitably applies its folk religion to baseball, and produces a unique sports phenomenon. This article examines the extent to which betel nuts were used as a vehicle for the expression of human relationships with the supernatural in baseball.

The next two articles in the issue are dedicated to folk dance. In the first one Sille Kapper (Institute of Fine Arts, Tallinn University) offers an interesting overview of the changes in the concept of 'folk dance' in Estonia, starting from the end of the 19th century until today. The author finds that her borderline position between the roles of a dance researcher and a dancer and folk dance teacher in practice makes it possible to switch between different discourses and find their intersections.

Eha Rüütel, Iivi Zajedova and Angela Arraste (Institute of Fine Arts, Tallinn University) in turn analyse interviews with Estonians living abroad and try to find answers to two research questions: 1) What incentives have guided Estonians' folk dance activity in historical perspective from World War II until today? 2) What qualities originating in Estonian folk dance have motivated people to carry on Estonian folk dance practices?

The section of research is completed by an article on playing culture. Sarita Sahay's (School of Political and Social Inquiry, Monash University, Melbourne) article aims at exploring how children, particularly in rural areas of Bihar, an economically poor but culturally rich state of India, enjoy their leisure with limited resources available to them. The author gives an overview of some popular games played by boys and girls in Bihar, which were selected in view of their popularity.

In addition to research articles, the special issue offers to the readers two writings in the discussion section. Kalle Voolaid (Estonian Sports Museum) introduces an interesting trend in the development of the School Olympic Games in Estonia – the use of traditional sports and games in the School Olympics programme. With the help of concrete examples the article gives an overview of a variety of colourful ideas used in Estonian schools, starting with popular traditional sports and ending with newborn disciplines.

Dmitry Belyukov (Faculty of Humanities and Socio-Economic Disciplines, Velikiye Luki State Academy of Physical Education and Sports) discusses the traditions of fisticuffs in the north-west of Russia from the Early Middle Ages to the modern era. The author explains that fisticuffs was one of the forms of physical training in the national culture of the East Slavs, which continued up to the second half of the 19th century, until it was banned by the authorities.