

FROM COLLECTING TO STUDYING THE FOLKLORE OF SIBERIAN ESTONIANS AND LATVIANS: BACKGROUND

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In December 2008, the joint conference of Estonian and Latvian researchers of culture, 'Compatriots in Siberia', was held at the Estonian Literary Museum (for the abstracts see The Estonian–Latvian Conference 2008). At the conference, an idea was put forward to compile a collection of articles based on the research of compatriots of these two countries in Siberia, to introduce the corresponding work and studies to a wider audience. The publication is now presented as a special issue of journal *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore*. The articles published in this volume are authored by folklorists and ethnologists from Estonia and Latvia. Among the conference participants were also linguists and teachers Lidia Leikuma, Alekseis Andronovs, Kristine Zute and Mara Mortuzane, who have carried out a study on the Latgalian language in the Latgale region of Krasnoyarsk Krai; Eta Nikolaeva and Solveta Logina, who have analysed the activities of winter workshops in Achinsk, Krasnoyarsk Krai; and ethnologist Igor Tõnurist, who has studied folk music practices and folk musicians in Siberia. At the conference two documentaries were screened: Liene Linde and Dainis Juraga's *No Country for Catholics*, and Andres Korjus's *On Foreign Lands: Native Estonians in Siberia*. In the White Hall of the University of Tartu History Museum, joint exhibition of the Estonian Literary Museum and the Estonian Academy of Arts, titled *Siberi eestlased / Estonians in Siberia*, was displayed (the curators of the exhibition were Anu Korb and Kadri Viires).

ON SETTLEMENT HISTORY

During deportations and forced migration to Siberia (which intensified in the first part of the 19th century) and at the peak of emigration (1890–1918), Estonia and Latvia were part of the Russian Empire. The destinies of the Estonians and Latvians who settled in Siberia are closely interrelated with each other and with other Lutheran peoples in Russia – Germans and Finns. The establishment of colonies consisting of Lutheran peoples mainly served the interests of the clergy, as Lutheran ministers were needed to care for the religious needs of the newly settled peoples. The Lutheran confession of faith, with which they had grown up, had always had an important role in the identity construction of the settlers (Jürgenson 2002: 226–229).

MEDIA COVERAGE AND OVERVIEWS OF COMPATRIOTS

Discussions about the Estonians' and Latvians' migration and descriptions of their life in Siberia abounded in the newspapers of the second half of the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries (see Jürgenson 2002: 83–100; Reinsone in this volume). Often the first ones to provide such information were Lutheran pastors and vicars/schoolmasters (e.g., Jaan Nebokat, Georg Eduard Luiga). In 1900, **Jüri Meomuttel** was the first to write an overview on Estonians, entitled *Eesti asunikud laialises Vene riigis. Esimene katse sõnumid kõikide Eesti asunduste üle tuua* ('Estonian Settlers in the Great Russian Empire: The First Attempt to Spread News about all Estonian Settlements'). By this time, migration to Siberia had not yet reached its peak. In 1918, when the majority of Estonian villages in Russia had already been established, **August Nigol**, a gymnasium teacher and active supporter of Estonian settlements in Russia, published a more extensive overview, *Eesti asundused ja asupaigad Venemaal* ('Estonian Villages and Places of Residence in Russia'). The book provides statistical data on the settlements (incl. name, location, population, presence of school and church, etc.) arranged by regions, information about the natural conditions and cultural life of the place.

The first attempt to give an overview of Latvian settlements in the diaspora was made by K. Škilters in *Latkoloniju vēsture* ('History of Latvian Settlements')

in 1928, and ten years later, in 1938, by Vilbert Krasnais in the comprehensive *Latviešu kolonijas* ('Latvian Settlements'), the latter of enlists all the known Latvian settlements in the world by region, with additional information on their schools, churches and social life (see further in Lielbardis in this volume).

RESEARCH ON THE SETTLEMENTS IN THE SOVIET PERIOD AND AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET UNION

With the annexation of Estonia and Latvia by the Soviet Union in 1940, the study of compatriots in these countries withered. After the Second World War, the Estonians and Latvians who lived in different parts of Russia, except for border zones which required a special visiting permit (e.g., in the Middle East, at the Pacific Ocean), could be visited, but the authorities did not look favourably upon conducting research on compatriots. After independence was restored in Latvia, Latvian journalist and dissident Ingvars Leitis, historian by education, published material on his attempts to study Latvians in Siberia during the Soviet period. When he and photojournalist Uldis Briedis set a goal to visit all the fifty villages in which Latvians had settled in Siberia, as Škilters claimed in his book *Latkoloniu vēsture* in 1928, the endeavour was soon declared forbidden (see Lielbardis in this volume). Nor was the study of compatriots favoured in Soviet Estonia: for example, Nigol's book on Estonian villages and settlements in Russia was held in a special archive fund and was accessible only to researchers who had earned the "trust" of the authorities (Korb 2007: 19). Some works, such as the monograph, *Uut elu ehitamas: Eesti vähemusrahvus NSV Liidus (1918–1940)* ('Rebuilding Life: Estonian Minority in the Soviet Union, 1918–1940'), by historian Viktor Maamägi, were written to the tune of Soviet propaganda, but the worth of his work lies in the extensive use of Russian archive materials.

An important moment for Estonian folklorists was the field expedition led by Igor Tõnurist, an ethnography student at Moscow University at the time, to the Estonians who lived in the Minusinsk region in Siberia in the mid-1960s. Through Tõnurist's mediation and with his help, the Department of Folklore of the Estonian Literary Museum established contacts with Rosalie Ottesson from Verkhnaia (Upper) Bulanka village in Siberia. Ottesson became the department's long-term informant, sending nearly 3,000 pages of folklore material between 1969 and 1976 (Korb 2013: 7–26). The material recorded by a woman

who had received a Soviet upbringing and was living in a traditional community is of high research interest.

Since the 1980s, after the situation became less oppressive, interest in studying Estonians in Siberia and collecting materials associated with them started to gain impetus. At the time, it remained the initiative of a few enthusiasts. More serious collecting and research in Estonia was done by linguists Jüri Viikberg and Lembit Vaba (see, e.g., Viikberg & Vaba 1984: 145–156; Viikberg 1988: 284–288), who collected material mainly in the Siberian villages, in which the north-Estonian language variety was spoken. From 1987 onward, ethnologist Mare Piho (see, e.g., 2002: 171–185) and others took up studying the Seto communities in Siberia. During the years under the Soviet rule, opportunities to carry out fieldwork largely depended on the management of a given research institution, as alternatives to apply for research funding were not available.

With the alleviating pressure of Soviet ideology and the growing interest in one's ethnic roots and history, diaspora research gradually gained popularity both in Estonia and Latvia. Initially, interest was shown in the compatriots who lived in the Western countries (e.g., the United States, Canada, Sweden), because during the Soviet regime normal contacts with them had been impossible to maintain. Interest in our compatriots in Siberia began to grow as late as in the early 21st century.

Also, some Russian researchers have taken interest in the ethnic processes in Siberia. Ilia Lotkin, ethnographer from Omsk, published two monographs (1996; 2006) on the basis of Estonian and Latvian settlements in Siberia. Lotkin's works rely heavily on the material held in Russian archives, but lack insight into Estonian history, language and culture; also, his work bears clear traces of the impact of Soviet ideology. This seems to be a pervading problem of all researchers in Russia, who have grown up and been educated under considerable ideological pressure (see Jürgenson 2002: 19).

ESTONIAN FOLKLORISTS' FIELDWORK IN SIBERIA IN 1991–2013

More or less simultaneously with the restoration of the independent Republic of Estonia, the Estonian Folklore Archives started organising field expeditions under the leadership of Anu Korb to the Estonian settlements in Siberia. First we received financial support from the Estonian National Culture Foundation and the Cultural Endowment of Estonia, later on from the Compatriots

Programme and the national programme “Estonian Language and Cultural Memory”. As there was no comprehensive overview available about the current situation of Estonian communities in Siberia, we aspired to carry out a statistical and cultural descriptive mapping and collecting of folklore material as versatile as possible. Before that, Estonian researchers had never worked in one-third of the existing Estonian settlements.

The geography of destinations has been as follows: Verkhonii (Upper) Suetuk and Verkhnaia (Upper) Bulanka (Krasnoyarsk Krai) in 1991 and 1992; Berezovka and Liliengof (Tomsk Oblast) in 1993; Yurievka, Koidula (Kemerovo Oblast), and Vambola (Tomsk Oblast) in 1994; Zolotaia Niva, Semionovka, Ivanovka, and Kovalevo (Omsk Oblast) in 1995; Mikhailovka, Yurievka, Lileika, and Estonka (Omsk Oblast) in 1996; Tsvetnopolye, Staryi (Old) Revel, Novyi (New) Revel, Orlovka, and Kovalevo (Omsk Oblast) in 1997; Estonka, Borovushka, and Oravka (Novosibirsk Oblast) in 1998; Nikolaevka, Rosental, and Uskiul (Novosibirsk Oblast), Ryzhkovo (Omsk Oblast) in 1999; Ryzhkovo and Zolotaia Niva (Omsk Oblast), Verkhonii Suetuk and Verkhnaia Bulanka (Krasnoyarsk Krai), Estonia (Altai Krai) in 2000; Berezovka (Tomsk Oblast) in 2004; Khaidak, Bulatnovka, and Krestiansk (Krasnoyarsk Krai) in 2007, Khaidak, Bulatnovka, and Novo(New)-Pechora (Krasnoyarsk Krai) in 2008; Khaidak, Bulatnovka, Krestiansk, Verkhonii Suetuk, and Verkhnaia Bulanka (Krasnoyarsk Krai) in 2012; Verkhonii Suetuk and Verkhnaia Bulanka (Krasnoyarsk Krai) in 2013.

The aim has been to document folklore in its current state and observe the changes that have occurred in the tradition of Siberian Estonians under the influence of multicultural environment throughout times. The publications compiled on the basis of the material collected in the villages have helped to support the identity of Estonian communities in Siberia.

COMPLEX EXPEDITIONS OF LATVIAN CULTURE RESEARCHERS IN SIBERIA IN 1991 AND 2004–2008

Siberia has become a fieldwork platform also for Latvian folklorists, ethnomusicologists, linguists and historians that represent such institutions as the Archives of Latvian Folklore, the Faculty of Philology of the University of Latvia, Latvian Academy of Music, and the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia, to name but a few.

Until today, the Archives of Latvian Folklore in cooperation with different organisations have undertaken six expeditions to Latvian villages in Siberia.

The geography of destinations has been as follows: Nizhnaia (Lower) Bulanka (Krasnoyarsk Krai) in 1991; Timofeyevka (Novosibirsk Oblast) in 2004; Malinovka and Borzunovka (Tomsk Oblast), Sukhonoia, Imbezh, Ostrovki, Kirza, Kamunno Gornovka, Krayevaya, Schastlivoye, Bogatoye, and Bychki (Krasnoyarsk Krai) in 2005; Timofeyevka, Shargari and Shchipchino (Novosibirsk Oblast), Bobrovka, Kurliano Dubovka (Omsk Oblast) in 2006; Bobrovka and Kurliano Dubovka (Omsk Oblast) in 2007; Ryzhkovo (Omsk Oblast) in 2008. In addition to the materials of these fieldworks, the Archives of Latvian Folklore also store some tapes recorded by Ingvars Leitis and Uldis Briedis in Ryzhkovo in 1975 and in Nizhnaia Bulanka in 1976.

There are two facets to Latvian folklorists' fieldwork in Siberia. First, the aim has been to document folklore in its current state, to explore the folklore layers that have been inherited from previous generations, the transformation of this material as a result of intercultural contacts, the absence of different kinds of contexts that have been lost after leaving Latvia, the adaptation of new kinds of traditions, etc. Second, folklore has been explored as an instrument of preserving Latvian identity and demonstrating it on stage at different festivities and festivals of national minorities in Siberia (Laime 2008: 8).

ARTICLES ON COMPATRIOTS IN SIBERIA

The authors of this special issue of *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore* all share a common fieldwork experience among their compatriots in Siberia.

Aivar Jürgenson's first contact with Estonians in Siberia was in 1996 as a member of the fieldwork team of the Estonian Folklore Archives; later on he started to organise his own fieldwork expeditions to Estonian communities in Siberia. He defended his doctoral thesis under the heading *The Identity and Territoriality of Siberian Estonians* at the then Tallinn Pedagogical University in 2002. In his article in this issue, Jürgenson analyses the Siberian stereotypes of Estonians.

Sanita Reinsone participated in the 2004 expedition of Latvian researchers to Timofejevka village, Novosibirsk Oblast, Siberia. In her article, Reinsone offers an insight into migration and diaspora studies on the example of migration texts of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and also analyses the stories of the descendants of emigrants in the 2000s.

Astrid Tuisk has visited various Estonian communities in Siberia since 1991. Her main field of interest is the local lore of Estonians in Siberia and their

relations with the neighbouring peoples. Tuisk's article explores how Estonians in Siberia perceive their neighbouring Turkic peoples.

Sandis Laime has conducted fieldwork among various Latvian communities in Siberia since 2004. He has studied local narrative history, which can be traced from the modern perspective to the more distant past. The article is based on materials gathered during fieldwork in Siberia, and focuses on the local narrative history in one Siberian village – Timofeyevka.

Aigars Lielbardiš has been a member of several expeditions to Latvians in Siberia since 2004, and has authored documentaries (e.g., *Vera and Janis Lacis*) based on the material recorded during the fieldwork. In his article, Lielbardiš discusses the relationship of religion and magic on the example of the material collected in Timofeyevka village in Siberia.

Anu Korb has organised and supervised fieldwork among Estonians in Siberia, visiting various local Estonian communities between 1991 and 2013. She defended her PhD thesis entitled *Estonian Communities in Siberia as a Source for Folkloristic Research* at the University of Tartu in 2007. Her article in this special issue discusses the transformation of Siberian Estonians' death culture over time, on the example of Estonians living in a specific region in Siberia.

Andreas Kalkun's first contact with the Setos in Siberia was during the 2007 fieldwork of the Estonian Folklore Archives. In his article, written in cooperation with ethnomusicologist **Janika Oras**, Andreas Kalkun explores the singing tradition of the Setos in Siberia.

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