

NEWS IN BRIEF

CULTURAL CONTEXT IN ARCHAEOASTRONOMICAL MONUMENTS AND ECHOES OF CATASTROPHIC COSMIC EVENTS REFLECTED IN CULTURE

Astronomy is one of the oldest areas of study, which is interrelated, often invisibly, with various cultural fields. The fact was once again confirmed at the international colloquium “Cultural Context in Archaeoastronomical Monuments and Echoes of Catastrophic Cosmic Events Reflected in Culture” held in Tartu, Viluste and Tõravere in August 2002. The event was the tenth annual conference of the European Society of Astronomy in Culture (SEAC). SEAC was founded in Strasbourg, France in 1992. Carlos Jaschek, the recently departed French astronomer, is justly attributed the honour of being the godfather of the society. Since 1992 SEAC has functioned as an umbrella organisation coordinating research activities in archaeoastronomy and ethnoastronomy in Europe and elsewhere, bringing together astronomers, archaeologists, ethnographers, historians, philosophers and scholars of other fields.

Archaeoastronomy is an interdisciplinary line of research. As sky with all its luminaries is regarded a source of culture, the research objects in the field are (i) ancient monuments, burial sites, sacred places, petroglyphs, settlements, etc. and their possible connection with celestial phenomena at equinoxes, (ii) the origin and development of calendars, calendar systems, chronology of historical events in the cosmic context and their connection with socio-economical systems, religion and philosophy, (iii) the origin and etymology of constellations in different cultures, and (iv) conceptual aspects, their reflection in myths and legends among different nationalities.

The SEAC 2002 colloquium was organised by I. Pustyl'nik (Tartu Observatory, Estonia) – foreman, the president of SEAC S. Iwaniszewski (Poland, Mexico), K. Barlai (Hungary), J. Belmonte (Spain), M. Blomberg (Sweden), R. Frank (USA), M. Kõiva (Estonian Literary Museum, Estonia), T. Potyomkina (Russia), C. Ruggles (England).



Participants of SEAC 2002, Tartu, at the Ilumetsa meteorite crater. From the left: Laurits Leedjärv (Estonia), Clive Ruggles (England), Ülo Kestlane (Estonia), Bo Sommarström (Sweden), Juan Antonio Belmonte (Portugal), Michael A. Rappenglück (Germany). Photo by A. Kuperjanov, 2002.

More than 40 scholars from 15 different countries (mostly from Europe) participated in the 10th annual conference of SEAC-2002. Russia was represented by 6 scholars, Sweden, Poland and Hungary each by 4 scholars. During the four conference days nearly 40 academic presentations were delivered and seven scientific sessions were held. The topics covered virtually all the above mentioned main lines of study in archaeoastronomy and ethnoastronomy. In addition, a panel discussion on the etymology of constellations was held. The academic program concluded with the meeting of the Organising Committee, where future conference locations (namely, England and Hungary) were announced.

Since the event was interdisciplinary, the local Organising Committee was formed of representatives of different organisations, mostly of researchers of the Estonian Literary Museum and the Tartu Old Observatory. For the opening day the collection of conference abstracts was published (eds. M. Kõiva, H. Mürk, I. Pustynnik).

The most reputed authority on archaeoastronomy, Professor C. Ruggles (University of Leicester, England) delivered a prearranged presentation on the ethnoastronomy of Polynesia. Russian astrophysicist N. Bochkaev (Sternberg Astronomical Institute, Mos-

cow) introduced and presented a video documentary of a relatively little-known archaeoastrological monument in Carahunge, Armenia, which appeared to have been an ancient observatory. The famous Norwegian astrophysicist Professor J.-E. Solheim (University of Tromsø) gave an informative presentation on the observation of Aurora Borealis in the areas north of the Polar Circle, the history of these observations and reflections of northern lights in legends and modern art. Lithuanian scholar J. Vaiskunas introduced a colourful world picture, derived from the patterns on old spinning wheels, our guest from distant Kazakhstan, N. Bekbassar told about the legends connected to the stellar sky among some Turkish nomadic tribes and the origin of their 12-year cycle animal calendar, etc.

Many Estonian scholars delivered presentations as well – folklorist A. Kuperjanov (Estonian Literary Museum), astronomer J. Jaaniste (Tartu Old Observatory), astronomer I. Pustylnik (Tartu Observatory), archaeologist M. Mägi (Institute of History, Estonia), and folklorist M. Kõiva (Estonian Literary Museum).

Several art exhibitions on the topic were held during the conference (the photographs of rock art by the Finnish artist Erkki Luoma-Aho, exhibitions by well-known Estonian artists Kärt Summatavet and Loit Jõekalda). Conference participants made a sight-seeing tour to the meteor craters of Ilumetsa. The conference ended with the concert of cosmic music by composer Urmas Sisask at the Museum of Tartu University and the two-day excursion to Saaremaa with insightful comments by archaeologist Marika Mägi and astronomer and geologist Ülo Kestlane.

SEAC-2002 presentations will be shortly published as a prereviewed collection.

The conference was supported by the Estonian Science Foundations and the Estonian Cultural Endowment Foundation, the Tartu Observatory and the Estonian Literary Museum. The official patron of the conference was the Estonian First Lady, ethnomusicologist Ingrid Rüütel, who also delivered an opening speech at the opening ceremony of the conference.

Izold Pustylnik

THE ISFNR INTERIM CONFERENCE 2003

The ISFNR Interim Conference took place in Visby, Sweden, on August 13–17, 2003. One hundred folklorists from 27 countries in five continents made 60 presentations. The conference home page is here: <http://mainweb.hgo.se/Conf/ISFNR2003.nsf/> Summaries of two sections can be found at the conference home page; a third is here.

The summary of the cultural heritage section

Rainer Wehse

Ever since its beginning folklore research has been influenced by a sequence of theories or paradigms. To name only a few: the mythological theory of the Grimm brothers, or Theodor Benfey's Indian theory, the Finnish School, Vladimir Propp's structuralism. Or – who of the older colleagues among us does not remember – a one-man-theory named Alan Dundes firing -emics and -etics at stunned congress audiences.

In the past most of us have followed one or the other theory. Does this also hold true for the Gotland meeting of the ISFNR? No, it does not. There were hardly any dominant directions.



The Estonian delegation at the Visby conference. From the left: Merili Metsvahi, Tiiu Jaago, Risto Järv, Mare Kõiva, Eda Kalmre, Andres Kuperjanov, Marju Torp-Kõivupuu, Pille Kippar. The next ISFNR conference will be held in Tartu, Estonia, in 2005. Photo by Risto Järv, 2003.

The convention may even be characterized by the *absence* of obvious theories. Instead there were individual research results, due to individual perspectives on folkloristic phenomena, perhaps at the utmost borrowing fragments from existing theories, or inventing own little theories (which might rather be called analyses). Scholarly patchwork?

It reminds me of Gotland as seen from an aeroplane: an island landscape of ever so many detached areas with winding paths and roads. Wandering along them little isolated figures: folklorists perhaps? Will they ever find their way to the next patch? Are they getting anywhere? Will the isolated figures ever meet? And: will they ever understand the overall system in which all those patches, paths, roads, dwellings, and streets are embedded? Will they successfully be able to establish relations between local, regional, national, international, and global phenomena reaching far beyond the island?

Another issue is what makes a particular cultural heritage worth regarding it as a scholarly field? Or, to put the question differently, what has the respective section thought worth while to select from the wide range of cultural heritages? To demonstrate this I will here list the presentations actually given at the Visby interim conference.

There was **Marju Torp-Kõivupuu's** (Estonia) paper on “cross-trees” in Estonia and neighbouring areas, trees, into which relatives and close acquaintances cut a cross on the way to the graveyard. **Christina Sandberg** (Finland) applied Propp's morphology on commemorative verses in obituaries, **Torunn Selberg** (Norway) concentrated on the revitalisation of the 1000-year-old St. Sunniva legend, reinacted and/or kept alive in narratives, rituals, pictures, and pilgrimages, **Karen Bek-Pedersen** (Scotland) looked at Danish Valhalla comics and their relationship to the “real” mythology, **Ilna Nagy's** (Hungary) report on the relationship between apocryphical gospels and oral legends had to fall back on unadulterated oral communication with her audience because her luggage, including the conference manuscript had landed at a completely different airport (a true example for the globalization of folklore).

Lina Bugiene (Lithuania) depicted the stereotype of the Swedes in Lithuanian folklore from the 7th century onwards, **Véronique**

Campion-Vincent's (France) paper "Wolves and Predators: Transforming Cultural Heritages" treated the modern reenactment of historical situations connected with a reenactment of stories concerning the subject and their social implications, **Daniel Boyarin** (U.S.A.) showed how one single Rabbinic narrative could be changed to propagate two opposed ideologies, **Blanca Henriksson's** (Finland) theme was "Friendship Verses and Writings in Children's Autograph Albums as Windows to Childhood", **Manorama Biswal Monopatra** (India) confronted the audience with a poet's approach concerning the impact of folktales in shaping the cultural heritage of the Indian province of Orissa, **Sabina Ispas** (Romania) chose the topic of water and earth in a Romanian cosmography of the 17th century and followed their traces up to modern folk tale traditions.

Guntis Pakalns (Latvia) presented a chronologically comparative study of the legend situation in a Latvian parish 120 years ago and nowadays, **Lena Marander-Eklund** (Finland) talked on childbirth narratives as a mixture of tradition and idiosyncrasy, and finally **Idit Pintel-Ginsberg** (Israel) reported on the nature and functions of new narratives intertwined with recent rituals and customs based on old sources in Israel, using the example of the so called "Festival of Trees", a new nation-wide custom of planting young trees on barren land.

An "aside": Are folklorists doomed to investigate only the yesterday (including its present day ramifications) or are we likewise allowed to anticipate which of recent phenomena *might* become traditional in the future and to analyze them right now in order to perceive changes and processes from the very beginning? This might open up a new window for folktale research avoiding too much of an "antiquarian" image. But what are the criteria for a decision what might become traditional? And: is tradition/traditionality *the only* guideline for folklore research? These are matters which should be discussed in more theoretically orientated papers than we have listened to this time.

The Visby presentations showed an widening geographic horizon, especially as the once separated East and West are growing together more and more. A widening horizon in the respect that here is a greater diversity of countries and regions in which and on which

research is done. What seems to be missing, however, are encompassing projects linking or coordinating geographically or otherwise isolated individual results. Where are the big enterprises like international (or even national) atlases, catalogues, or global handbooks? Is the present day academic discipline of folklore too uncooperative or perhaps too small to initiate such “heroic deeds”? Or is it typical for folk narrative research to proffer a plurality of individual approaches, to describe the world as reflected in a teaspoon, and to invent little theories concerning parts of that teaspoon microcosmos? On the other hand, do global theories often divert from the perception of reality because you are confined to a cage-like structure?

Perhaps folklore is still busy – as it was the case in the 19th century – filling hitherto neglected white spots on the map of an ever-changing folk culture, in order to create a comprehensive survey. Patchwork so far, patchwork of which the single elements have yet to be connected in order to recognize big characteristic patterns.

A few words of criticism. To me it seems that, generally speaking, the quality of the individual presentations has decreased as compared to former meetings of the ISFNR. There was also little genuine discussion, and *none* which really aimed at *solving* a problem. Where are the fights over vital issues concerning our discipline? Maybe there is too much harmony in the close-togetherness of the folk narrative scholars’ family. Maybe this is also the reason that there were too few young scholars and students present (except, of course, the young talents president Galit Hasan-Rokem brought along). Only if there is more liveliness, more confrontation, more real discussion, more enthusiasm, will the younger generation be attracted by folktale research.

But perhaps I am focusing on research results too much (which might better be spread by publications). Maybe the main function of such a meeting is getting to know the (research) mentality of colleagues from near and distant countries, to create networks and personal bonds, to hint at or exchange information and materials, to share scholarly and other experiences. In this respect I have left Visby much richer than I have arrived – also due to the very successful conference organizer Ulf Palmfelt and his crew. We enjoyed being in Gotland. Thank you!

ANDREAS KALKUN DEFENDED HIS MASTER'S THESIS ON THE BIOGRAPHICAL SONGS OF THE SETU WOMEN

Andreas Kalkun. *Setu naiste eluloolaulud. Autobiograafiad ja utopiad* [The Seto Women's Autobiographical Songs. Autobiographies and Utopias]. Master's dissertation. Supervisors Kristin Kuutma and Paul Hagu. Chair of the Estonian and Comparative Folklore of the University of Tartu. Tartu 2003.

Andreas Kalkun's master's thesis on the biographical songs of the Setu women, with the subtitle *Autobiographies and Utopias*, is a valuable insight into the Setu runo song tradition and the world of the Setu female singers in the early 20th century. The thesis was defended in 2003 and is based on five articles in Estonian ("Anne Vabarna "Koolulaul" kui mäss" [Anne Vabarna's "Koolulaul" as Rebellion], "Sonsu Anna elulood" [Sonsu Anna's autobiographies], "Pihtivad naised. Seto naiste eluloolaulud" [The Confessing Women. Seto Women's Autobiographical Songs], "Anne Vabarna nina. Tõest ja valest seto naiste autobiograafilistes lauludes" [Anne Vabarna's Nose. About Truth and False in Seto Women's Autobiographical Songs] and "Seto naisautobiograafia maailm" [The World of Seto female autobiographers]). An extensive introduction and a brief summary has been added. Andreas Kalkun has introduced a new term in contemporary Estonian *regilaul* 'runo song' research, namely *eluloolaulud*, or autobiographical songs. The author uses the term to refer to autobiographical improvisations, though he also concedes that features characteristic of autobiographical songs may also be found in death and bridal laments, herding, widow and orphan songs, and in several other traditional song types.

A. Kalkun also analyses the utopian passages in the structure of autobiographical songs and points out the importance of these so-called Utopias in the general pattern of autobiographical songs. Readers are introduced with the intriguing personalities of female singers and the previously unpublished songs sung by them, which have been retrieved from the archives specifically for this thesis. Kalkun's study sheds light upon the neglect of gender issue in the folklore studies and provides evidence that runo song and its creator belong together, as well as the fact that disregard of the singer's gender would be a mistake comparable to the disregard of the genre peculiarities of a folklore text.

Kristiina Ehin

TÕNNO JONUKS'S MASTER'S THESIS ON PRE-CHRISTIAN FOLK RELIGION IN THE LIGHT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS

Tõnno Jonuks. *Eesti metalliaja usundi põhijooni* [Principles of Pre-Christian Religion in Estonia during the Metal Ages]. Master's dissertation. Supervisor Valter Lang, opponents Tarmo Kulmar and Andres Tvauri. Tartu: University of Tartu.

Tõnno Jonuks, archaeologist and scholar of pre-Christian folk religion, has reached several important results in his master's thesis on the ancient Estonian folk religion in the Metal Ages: (i) the author has established substantial grounds for reconstructing the evolution of the ancient Estonian folk religion in the Metal Ages; (ii) the author has reasoned the stages of development of the religion and describes the changes the religion has undergone at different stages; (iii) the author has presented convincing evidence on the Germanic-Scandinavian influence on the Estonian territory during the different periods of the Metal Ages; (iv) he has been the first to rightly suggest the idea of collective spirit, or *Sippensee* and sacral kingship in the pre-Christian Estonian folk religion.

The text of the thesis is dense in facts and in well-grounded lines of argument. T. Jonuks illustratively demonstrates the change in the burial types during the Metal Ages on the Estonian territory, and how it has brought along a change in ancient religious concepts or the emergence of new ones. The chapters are so extensive that readers would benefit from summaries. An extensive list of references (216 titles) indicates a thorough work with resources.



Tõnno Jonuks at Kiltsi manor excavations. Photo by Anu Lepp, 2002.

The introduction proposes the research object, introduces basic terminology, sources, methodology and determines the length of the study period.

In the conclusion Tõnno Jonuks points out the developmental stages of the Estonian folk religion in the Metal Ages:

Period 1 (10th–2nd c BC): collective spirit, a wider spread of cremation burial, corpse burials of chiefs, sacral kingship, genealogies, bone rituals, skull cult, idols, early divine cults;

Period 2 (5th c BC–1st c AD): collective spirit and other above phenomena were retained, except for sacral kingship (this leads to the question, why the phenomenon of sacral kingship was of such short duration on the Estonian territory);

Period 3 (1st–6th c AD): collective spirit and most of the previously mentioned phenomena were retained, except for sacral kingship, cremation burial began to dominate, cult of chief's power, skull cult;

Period 4 (6th–9th c AD): reawakening of individual spirit and the increasing prominence of conceptions of the other world, re-emergence of corpse burial, withdrawal of death cult, transference of ritual activities from burial grounds probably to the settlement or a sacred grove;

Period 5 (9th–13th c AD): increasing importance of individual and individual spirit, a wide spread of corpse burial, rituals are centred to sacred groves or settlements, spread of pendants, divine cult (*anima* and *deus*), the emergence of early traces of Christianity.

The presented structure of development is convincing and well-grounded. The study, however, remains one-sided in its focusing mainly on the Scandinavian material, less so on the material of the Baltic area, even less on the Finnish material, and virtually no reference has been made on the Russian material. Tõnno Jonuks's dissertation was graded *cum laude* and the author was awarded the degree *Magister Artium* in the field of archaeology.

Tarmo Kulmar

MARIKA MIKKOR DEFENDED MASTER'S THESIS ON THE CHANGES IN FUNERAL TRADITIONS

Marika Mikkor. *Muutuvast matusekombestikust Kaukaasia eestlastel, ersamordvalastel ja isuritel* [On the Transformation of Funeral Tradition among the Caucasian Estonians, the Erza-Mordvins and the Izhorians]. Master's dissertation. Supervisor Mare Kõiva, opponent Marju Kõivupuu. Tallinn: Tallinn Pedagogical University.

Ethnologist Marika Mikkor's master's thesis *On the Transformation of Funeral Tradition among the Caucasian Estonians, the Erza-Mordvins and the Izhorians* is based on her four articles (two in English, one in Russian, and one in Estonian) on family traditions, specifically on funeral traditions, which were published between 1995–2001. The articles have been published in highly rated academic journals: two in an international prereviewed journal *Folklore: An Electronic Journal of Folklore* (“Funeral Customs of the Caucasian Estonians” and “On the Customs Related to Death in the Villages of Sabayevo and Povodimo”) and are available on the *Folklore* homepage. The article “Soikkola isurite matusetavadest” (On the Funeral Customs of the Izhorians in Soikkola), have been published in the Estonian journal *Akadeemia*, and an article in Russian



Marika Mikkor in a Caucasian Estonian village. Photo by Pille Runnel, 2000.

on the family traditions of the Caucasian Estonians was published in the article collection of the 9th International Fenno-Ugric Conference. The mentioned articles have been completed with an introduction and a summary, which provide complementary and necessary background information to the main part of the thesis.

In 1988 Marika Mikkor maintained bachelor's thesis *Inimese surmaga seotud tavad Kaukaasia eestlastel* (Customs related to human death among the Caucasian Estonians) at the University of Tartu. Marika Mikkor is an outstanding ethnologist, she is a productive author of extensive reading in the field with the ability to analyse independently and with good concentration. It is worth noting that most of her articles (and all her articles on death customs) rely on material collected by the author. In my opinion, the field work experience in ethnology and folklore studies is of great importance, it is absolutely indispensable. My own experience has shown that a study based exclusively on archive material may sometimes remain incomplete: archive information may prove fragmentary or inadequate.

Since Marika Mikkor has mainly applied the traditional comparative-historical method in her works, she has worked through extensive literature on the subject and comparative material on the neighbouring and kindred peoples.

Marju Torp-Kõivupuu

PIRET ÕUNAPUU'S MASTER'S THESIS ON THE EARLIEST HISTORY OF THE ESTONIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM

Piret Õunapuu. *Eesti Rahva Muuseumi vanem ajalugu. The Earliest History of the Estonian National Museum. Master's dissertation. Supervisor Mare Kõiva, opponent Ants Viires. Tallinn: Tallinn Pedagogical University.*

The master's thesis of Piret Õunapuu, the researcher at the Estonian National Museum (ENM), consists of four articles on aspects of the early history of the ENM, written in 1998–2003 and is based mostly on material from the museum's archives. The articles are complemented with the introductory chapter describing the main objectives, sources and approach, a long chapter on people who have shaped the ENM, a summary and three appendices: (i) People at the Estonian National Museum in 1909–1918; (ii) societies, who participated in the assembly of the full members of the ENM, and (iii) the statutes of the Estonian National Museum (1909).



Photo from private collection.

The study is very homogeneous and provides a detailed overview of the foundation, development and progress of the ENM to a museum and research institute of central importance in the past twenty years (1909–1928), first under the leading of Oskar Kallas and later under Ilmari Manninen. The focus is clearly set on the first ten years of the museum's activities: an overview of the following period is given in the last chapter of the thesis, under the title 'Then came the young Ilmari Manninen from Finland'.

The most informative of the chapters was the one discussing the recently published topical story of the construction of the ENM main building in 1909–1918. It is a sad story, especially in the view of the

approaching centenary of the ENM. The founders of the museum were clearly aware of the acute need for a main building, and this was one of their goals. But the dramatic events and circumstances at the time interrupted again and again. Contributions by ordinary people that began pouring in in 1917 were nullified by the rapid decrease in monetary value. As soon as a relatively good solution was achieved, the elegant museum building was destroyed in the World War in 1944. Almost a hundred years have passed from the founding of the museum, but our national museum is still waiting for a proper contemporary building.

This is an important aspect in studying the history of the ENM. Hopefully, further studies will be conducted on the recent history of the museum as well; the work has been laborious, but effective. Much like the fate of the entire Estonian nation.

Ants Viires