

NEWS IN BRIEF

OLLI KÕIVA 75

Kristi Salve

It would be indolent or even hypocritical of me to open this piece of writing with an expression of surprise – is it really true that Olli has turned 75? Of course it is. Even some PHD holders of the younger generation, not to mention MA or BA graduates, have not had the opportunity to work with her in the building on the Vanemuise Street in Tartu, the house in which the Estonian Folklore Archives was founded in 1928, and which has been the only workplace of hers. The PHD holders today are a little over 30 years old, but Olli Kõiva retired around 20 years ago, at the age of 55.

The expression of surprise, however, would not be just guided by hypocritical politeness: and I would never believe it to be. Has it truly been 25 years already since I had the honour to send my first article about Olli Kõiva's birthday to the Estonian journal of language and literature *Keel ja Kirjandus*?

So what new is there to say about Olli that I or others have not yet written about her? Some five years ago, Olli Kõiva herself spoke very interestingly about her childhood home and the musical and poetic activities her family was involved in there to Janika Oras and Kadri Tamm. I would like to add the observation that the mentality of her family is, in a way, also expressed by the fact that the girl born on February 4, 1932 to a large farmer's family was christened Olga-Ottilie. In Estonia, where name preferences have changed tens of times over the past 150 years, the more common girl names at the time were Aino, Asta, Leili, Lehte, or Laine. The choice must have reflected a deep sense of continuity, as Olli's mother's name was Ottilie.

Every article about O. Kõiva has touched upon her great fondness for the Kihnu folk songs. I have heard the story that Kalevala-metric folk song lives on on the Kihnu Island (and, of course, the Setu region) for at least 45 years; and for the last 20 years I have known that this is not true. But when Olli made her first field trips to the Kihnu Island, the song tradition was indeed still alive. It is relatively difficult to imagine what a young woman, who had been used to quite a different poetic and musical language at home and at school, must have felt while listening to the Kalevala-metric folk songs – wedding songs – of Kihnu. As these songs were principally different from the patriotic songs of the period of national awakening or love songs, then for her it must have been an entrance to a completely different creative reality.



Olli's school years coincided with the period when the entire nation also entered completely different political realities – it was the period of alternating occupations and wars. The other reality remained stable for a longer period of time: Olli attended secondary school at the end of the 1940s, and entered the university in the first half of the 1950s, a period of great oppression. Even after the end of the gory Stalinist period and the somewhat less oppressive time, the atmosphere was still distressing. In addition to the Soviet rule, the situation was difficult owing to the leading figures of institutions involved in folklore at the time and their conflicting – often even hostile – relations. It must have been a very difficult period for Olli as a young scholar to work at the literary museum and alternately as a postgraduate at the university while the senior and renowned male heads of the institutions were not exactly on the best of terms. However, in an interview given some five years ago, Olli does not recall her bitter experiences, and it would be inappropriate for me to pass judgement on the situation instead of her.

Owing to her talent and devotion, Olli Kõiva defended her PhD degree already in 1965 with a thesis *The Tradition of Kalevala-Metric Folk Song on the Island of Kihnu*. The bulky manuscript (about 500 pp + extra material), however, never appeared in print, as was often the case in those days. Fortunately, the important articles of the



*Olli Kõiva at a fieldwork expedition. Photo by E. Liiv 1959.
From Estonian Folklore Archives ERA, Foto 4128.*

thesis about the function and performing of Kihnu folk songs did appear in print. Most noteworthy here is the longer treatment about Kihnu folk singers published in issue 159 of the Tartu University Proceedings, which was published during my student years and which left an indelible impression to me. By this time I had been much deeper involved in folk songs and folklore in general.

In these days very little material was published on folklore studies. The number of publications was small and articles on folklore studies were published in journals of language and literature and other areas of the humanities. Also, the level of research was not always very high during the Soviet time. But the few articles published by Olli Kõiva are very thorough and are based on a vast amount of material and intense thinking, and much is said on few pages.

To sum up the topic of Kihnu songs, it is a pleasure to see that the years since the last article about Olli Kõiva have been very active for her and have, for example, resulted in the final publication of Kihnu songs (co-authored by Ingrid Rüütel) with volume 2 of the anthology.

I would like to add another, more general observation of Olli's work and activities. In retrospect, many of her works seem as if outdated and rendered pointless in the course of time – such as the typewritten copies of Kalevala-metric folk songs, for example. Yet, even these have immensely facilitated the ongoing digitisation of folklore collections. The usefulness of indexes, the compilation of which Olli Kõiva effectively improved during her work as the head of the folklore department of the Estonian Literary Museum, is also undeniable. Nobody talks about the long hours spent on submitting applications to various institutions and organisations to finance the replicating of the materials, but the work has been nevertheless effective.

As I do not wish to repeat myself, I cannot speak about all her activities and works. The time for counting chickens is yet to come – hopefully in a very far future. It is worth pointing out that in the light of the new wave of moral issues of our time, it is impossible to overlook the fact that Olli Kõiva has never enticed anyone to suspicious deeds, or led to temptation. Instead, she has always been encouraging, sharing good advice and offering help.

Olli has been a good child, a good wife, a good mother and grandmother, a good leader and employee, a good colleague and friend. It may seem that she has always given more than been given, not to speak of having taken. Nowadays there are few people of this kind. Latvian poet Janis Rainis has written a short poem, which in literal translation sounds as follows:

You can get while taking,
You can get while giving.
Noone can take what has been gotten while giving.

TIME AND SPACE IN FOLKLORE: THE SECOND FOLKLORISTS' WINTER CONFERENCE

Madis Arukask

On February 1–2, 2007, the second winter conference of folklorists, *Time and Space in Folklore*, was held in Torupillitalu, Riidaja village, Valga County. This conference was dedicated to the celebration of the 70th birthday of Mall Hiimäe, senior researcher at the Estonian Folklore Archives. Presentations had been asked from Mall Hiimäe's colleagues and students from the Estonian Literary Museum, the University of Tartu, the Finnish Literary Society and other research institutions. The presentations primarily touched upon topics that Mall Hiimäe has pursued throughout her scholarly career: calendar rituals, folk tales and beliefs, relationship of nature and folklore, local lore, historiography of folkloristics. Next to folklorists, several scholars of nature participated in the conference as speakers and among the audience.

The conference opened with bagpipe music by Ants Taul, the host at the tourist farm Torupillitalu (lit. 'Bagpipe Farm'). The first session of papers focused on (folk) calendar, with detours to other folklore genres and arriving at present day. The paper of ethnomusicologist Taive Särg focused on the possible relationships of Estonian Kalevala-metric creation song *Loomislaul* and the beginning of the phenological year. An important link here is swing and swinging, the motifs of which can be found in song texts; it is possible that the creation song was sung to the tunes of swinging songs. Linking the budding of nature each year with the origin of creation may have placed the singing of creation song at the centre of the corresponding tradition. The ritual marking



Mall Hiimäe and the hosts of Torupillitalu. Photo by Kanni Labi 2007.

of the significance of holidays was also discussed in the paper by Aado Lintrop, who juxtaposed the corresponding Estonian and Udmurt tradition and concluded that in the latter the focus on liminal periods (midnight, solstice) is sometimes greater than it is on fluency (cf. the all souls' period in the Estonian tradition). The Estonian period of souls (*hingedeae*, *jaguaeg*) and the Udmurt *vozho* period in late autumn share a similar ritual of riddle-making for bringing herding luck. Expectedly, in both traditions, luck in herding and cattle-breeding was associated with the benevolence of ancestors in the said liminal periods. The topic of calendar tradition was concluded by Marju Torp (Tallinn University), who introduced the transformation of folk calendar in a big city on the basis of non-Estonian students in Tallinn.

The afternoon session continued with presentations about animal and plant kingdom. Ulve Pihklik from the Institute of Pharmacy, University of Tartu, provided a systematic and statistically thorough overview of medicinal herbs in Estonian folk medicine. The focus of the paper was first and foremost on the medical properties of herbs and somewhat less on the other (e.g., magico-religious) aspects of popular healing with herbs.

With his exploratory paper about the similarities of humans and ants, Ants-Johannes Martin from the Estonian University of Life Sciences led the audience to an exciting journey into the world of ants as social creatures. The speaker introduced ants as the most intelligent invertebrate, the distinctive organisation the life of whom humans inadvertently imitate, though in many respects (e.g., in the efficiency of information exchange) have to settle for second best.

An intriguing paper on wolf in folklore was held by Ilmar Roosi from the Estonian Naturalists' Society. Roosi approached wolf motifs, found in folklore and historical literature, from the aspect of naturalism, and pointed out the changes in the social behaviour of wolves under the influence of human activity. Pille Kippar atomized, so to speak, the tale type ATU 158 in her paper focusing on the parallels in animal folk tales about a fox travelling about on a sledge found in the Estonian tradition and in other countries and observing the changes in the migration of the plot in time and space.

The evening session continued with two papers. Madis Arukask (University of Tartu) explored in his presentation the special features of the North-Russian and Balto-Finnic lamenting culture, focusing on the fear for the dead and defining mourning as the central issue in laments. Arukask speculated on the supposed disappearance of exhumation in the north and the complications that have occurring owing to this in the living lamenting tradition. Some motifs of the Setu death laments, however, as was indicated in the paper, enable to interpret possibilities of the assumed existence of exhumation, as well as ritual suicide, at one point in the culture area under discussion. Ergo-Hart Västriik (Estonian Folklore Archives) discussed the reflections of 19th-century Finnish scholars in Ingermanland concerning the life and mentality of the (Orthodox) Balto-Finnic groups in the area. The study revealed an anticipated conflict between the wishful thinking of the scholars and the reality; the cultural image of runo singers in the travelogues remained different from the ideals of those with other cultural ambitions.

The first conference day concluded with a versatile cultural program: the presentation of the recently published collection *Regilaul – esitus ja tõlgendus* (ed. A. Lintrop),

the concert of more contemporary folk music by Anu, Triinu and Tõnis Taul, discussions, sauna, a festive dinner, and a manly singing into the wee small hours.

The second day of the winter conference opened with papers on folk belief. Ülo Valk (University of Tartu) spoke about local lore in Hindu folk religion with examples from the material collected in Assam, Northeast India and Tamil villages in South India. The presentation offered a view of the support of the physical environment to religious lore. Then followed the presentation of Irma-Riitta Järvinen, who brought greetings from the Folklore Archives of the Finnish Literary Society, and focused in her presentation on the role of female saints St Anne and St Catharine in Finnish-Karelian lore. The temporal retrospective view of the paper dated back to medieval legends; as to folklore genres, the presentation focused on spells, sayings, and calendar tradition.

Heiki Valk's (University of Tartu) presentation about relics and locale memory discussed the relationship of an object and oral lore, and the specific nature of this relationship and remembering in exceptional cases. Valk distinguished between the period of the active use of a relic and the "fossilised" state, by which the relic's former topical meaning had been transformed. Popular memory, however, may value an object (a barrow, castle hill, etc.) throughout centuries, either by mythologizing or modifying its original meaning. Here, the type of the object is also decisive. After the disappearance of the object, oral lore about it is forgotten within a few generations. Jüri Metsalu discussed the impact of historical writing to local lore on the example of the Paka Hill near Raikküla village, Rapla County. Reports about the council meetings of Estonians taking place in the area in the Chronicles of Henry of Livonia have inspired new variants of "reports" in the 19th century both among the scholars of history and the local population. The topic of experiential tourism was explored by Reeli Reinaus, MA student at the University of Tartu. Modern enterprises offering entertainment and business opportunities are like time machines, which, however, may take the visitor to a strange transitory pseudo-world instead of the anticipated past reality.

The last papers of the conference were dedicated to the studies of specific persons. Andreas Kalkun (Estonian Folklore Archives) investigated the writings of Jakob Ploom, the purposes and significance of this creation, springing from his previous writing practices (or rather the lack of these), on the basis of soldiers' letters sent home from the military training and from the front during the First World War. This letter-writing culture with features that are distinctive of the period, or more general, definitely reveals new aspects in understanding the reality and self-expression of a person of the past. Merili Metsvahi's paper about the life of Ksenia Müürsepp, a Setu storyteller, and the temporal-spatial landscape of her tales revealed the importance of temporal category in the evaluations of the narrative material by the narrator, rather than the aspect of make-belief and reality (as genre) that interested folklorists.

In the concluding discussion, Ülo Valk pointed out that Estonian folkloristics is currently enjoying a good run. The successful conference was certainly a worthy event to celebrate the birthday of Mall Hiemäe, who actively participated in the commenting and discussions herself. Other participants of the winter conference shared their experience of the concentrated event and express their gratitude to the organisers – Astrid Tuisk, Eda Kalmre, Ergo-Hart Västrik and the Taul family at Torupillitalu.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH LORE: INNOVATIONS AND TRADITIONS IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

Piret Voolaid

Over the past 15 years, the Estonian society has undergone dramatically rapid and hypothetically reflective socio-cultural processes and globalisation also in intangible heritage; also, a huge part of the earlier oral repertoire has entered electronic media, like the Internet and mobile communication. Contemporary folklore links together elements preserved in human culture and the society's traditions, which have undergone considerable changes. New cultural phenomena (e.g. travelling, sports activities, watching television, online communication, etc.) have brought forth new types or genres of folklore. Youth have been of invaluable help in recording several facets of youth subcultures.

The development of contemporary socio-cultural processes can be observed on the basis of folklore repertoire of schoolchildren. In 2007 a new project to collect school lore in Estonian schools was launched. The project served as an experiment first for testing which part of the traditional lore repertoire is still in active use, and second, for defining newer forms of folklore. This campaign continued the 1992 joint campaign of collecting school lore in Estonia and Finland, which resulted in over 27,000 pages of diverse and valuable school lore from the total of 21,255 respondents. Now, during the period of March 1 – May 10, 2007, nearly 2,800 schoolchildren from 71 schools (grades 4–12) answered the questionnaire, the collection resulting in 15,600 pages of material. The number of pages, however, is not very representative, since unlike the 1992 campaign, to which responses were contributed mostly on A5 format sheets, this time responses were written mostly on A4 sheets.

The campaign was preceded by a pilot project, the aim of which was to test the preliminary questionnaire and determine the possible scope of the material. The questionnaire used in the collection campaign was based on that used in the 1992 campaign, and intended to result in submitting traditional folklore as well as that spread by modern media. Responses could be sent by e-mail or through a specially constructed online questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of six topics: (1) Leisure time and friends, (2) Jokes, (3) Fears, beliefs, prophecies, (4) Computer and television, (5) Holidays and festivities, (6) Games. The pilot project was tested in four schools. The contributed material was analysed on the seminar of the Department of Folkloristics, Estonian Literary Museum, held at Kiidi on January 23–24, 2007 (information at seminar web site <http://www.folklore.ee/rl/fo/konve/kp>). In addition to listening to papers, the seminar entailed improving and amending the questionnaire.



Logo of school lore collection campaign

The improved version of the questionnaire was used in the main campaign for collecting school lore. The open-question form was intended to encourage children to interview their peers. The aim of the questionnaire was, first and foremost, to describe the world, the interests and activities of schoolchildren today and how their everyday life is reflected in lore. In this sense, school lore is not always associated with school but represents the contemporary traditions of children and youth of school age. Also, the questions were adapted to current research topics of folklorists.

An analysis of the responses showed that the introductory topic 'Leisure time and friends' received eager and interesting responses from schoolchildren, while responses to other topics varied considerably in extent and significance. The key words 'friends', 'music', 'sports' and 'style' are important for most youngsters. Being involved in extra-curricular activities with friends and schoolmates enables them to express their identification with their peer group. Children also sent material on nick names and their origin. Nick names often express people's friendly and embracing, but also mocking attitude towards each other and often reveal the hierarchical position within a group.

Questioning about the style of youth groups yielded very broad results. Respondents often mentioned their parents as role models (indicating the importance of family for young people today), but also sports coaches, celebrities; some think highly of remaining themselves with no role models. The responses also revealed that pets are good companions to children, and were widely discussed. The range of hobbies was very wide. The responses show that the little free time children have after school is filled with hobby groups, and they have very little time for themselves. While discussing conversational topics, children mentioned that, among themselves, they mostly speak about life in general, but also specifically about serious issues, schools, joking, gossiping, etc. Contributions sent in May even touched upon topical political issues, such as the Bronze Soldier on Tõnismägi.

Responses to the topic of humour, a key notion in folklore, were of varying quality. Compared to the former collection campaign, humour topics have changed considerably. Though "Little Johnny" (Estonian *Juku*) jokes and ethnic jokes are still in active use, political jokes are disappearing from the tradition and there is a rise in the use of blonde jokes, as a satirical reaction to social (beauty) ideals. The topic of fears, beliefs and prophesying yielded next to new personal experiences also traditional lore material. The topic of computers and television is very novel in the questionnaire, as technology has become a natural part of today's schoolchildren. In the computer era, a large portion of a child's entertaining playtime is spent in virtual reality, but fortunately the games of the real world – traditional running games, hide-and-seek, hopscotch, ball games, and counting-out games – are still in active use.

The evaluation of the results of the campaign was based firstly on quality, the secondary criterion being quantity. All the winning contributions are both profound and bulky.

On May 26, 2007, the best contributors were recognized at a celebratory event at the Estonian Literary Museum in Tartu. The names of all the winners and those awarded special prizes are available at school lore website <http://www.folklore.ee/kp/parimad1.html>. An Estonian newspaper article ('Kes see ikka teeb, kui ise ei tee', *Maaleht*, June 14, 2007) features an interview with one of the winners of the campaign by Heli Raamets. Andre Tamm from Tallinn English College, who was considered by



The best contributors to the collection campaign for collecting school lore in Estonia: Front row (left to right): Sille-Liis Männik, Laura Valdma, Liis Arras, Marilyn Fridolin, Anastassia Mišenkina and Karoline Paide; second row: Astrid Pajur, Elis Kevvai, Raina Liiva, Omida Velviste, Andra Kütt, Reet Ristmägi, Silvia Teras, Tiiu Üksik and Andre Tamm; and in the third row organisers of the collection campaign: Ave Tupits, Astrid Tuisk, Piret Voolaid and Risto Järv.

far the best contributor of school lore in his age group, submitted 60 pages of interviews, photographs and 12 pages of texts about the photographs (about himself, friends and holidays), a short video about Kalevipoeg that he made with classmates and three other videos.

“It was my Estonian language teacher who told us about the collection campaign. I visited the website and the listed prizes inspired me to get on with it,” mentioned Andre. “I am very competitive; I also take part in Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Linguistics Olympiads.” According to Andre, there is no clash between the schoolchildren in cities and rural regions; everybody gets on well with each other. “Perhaps their involvement in different hobbies depends on what a particular school has to offer. But it is enriching rather than inhibiting.”

The best contributors were also offered a participation in the youth seminar on school lore. All the submitted materials will be held as original manuscripts in the Estonian Folklore Archives.

Schoolchildren value the scholars' interest towards themselves. Hopefully, their responding to the questionnaire helped them to perceive themselves as transmitters of lore and also challenge the view that folklore is old and outdated. The responses describe the modern world in its versatility, full of opportunities, while still embedded with traditions.

Estonian schoolchildren are citizens of the globalising world. Their lore is naturally influenced by the local environment, but also by the western culture, seeing that youth lore is often transmitted in English, and the Russian lore. School lore can be considered as rather uniform all over the country. But the important thing is that Estonian children have a stable and unique lore, which might be indicative of the vivacity of the nation.

The collection campaign was organised by the Department of Folkloristics at the Estonian Literary Museum, the Estonian Folklore Archives, the Chair of Estonian and Comparative Folklore at the University of Tartu, and the Estonian Folklore Institute. Persons responsible for the project are Mare Kõiva, Ave Tupits, Piret Voolaid from the Department of Folkloristics, Astrid Tuisk from the Estonian Folklore Archives, and Risto Järv from the University of Tartu. The campaign was supported by the Centre of Cultural History and Folkloristics in Estonia, the Estonian Cultural Endowment, ESF Grant 6824 and the Gambling Tax Council.