

Foreword

Academician Paul Ariste (February 3, 1905 - February 2, 1990) was the leading scholar of the Finno-Ugric studies in the world. He received honorary recognition from several academies and universities and was a member of many academic societies. Ariste was also an excellent professor: many of the students he supervised, including quite a number of representatives of our kinsfolk, have turned into reputed scholars. His wide range of interests included experimental phonetics, Estonian dialects and toponyms, language contacts, history of linguistics, general linguistics. Next to his Estonian and other Finno-Ugric language studies, his linguistic background led him to study the Yiddish, the Gypsy and other languages. Of all the Finno-Ugric peoples Paul Ariste was most interested in the Votians. He started to take interest in the Votian language and folk culture already in his secondary school years when he met the Votian singer Daria Leht. His early interest in folklore led him to meet M. J. Eisen. During 1927-1931 Paul Ariste worked at the Estonian Folklore Archives, and organised several longer collection expeditions in Estonia. Ariste's work was not limited to the Estonian material only - he also studied and collected the folklore of many other peoples. No doubt, his contribution to the non-Estonian files of the Estonian Folklore Archives is of great importance (Ariste 1932). He has recorded the folklore of ethnic minorities in Estonia, and later in his career increasingly more the folklore of other Finno-Ugric peoples. While Ariste conducted fieldwork among most of the Balto-Finnic peoples, his expeditions never took him to the Komi. Nevertheless, the Estonian Folklore Archives of the Estonian Literary Museum holds relatively extensive folklore materials collected by him among the Komi (files *RKM, Soome-ugri 2, 73/316*; *RKM, Soome-ugri 3, 9/256*, *RKM, Mitmesugused rahvad, 45/88* and *RKM, Soome-ugri 9, 1/169*), and this publication is based on these materials.

The Komi materials date back to the period of the World War II. Among the prisoners of war captured by the Germans there were representatives of several Finno-Ugric peoples.

"[---] There were particularly many Zyrians in Tartu. I met over thirty Zyrians from nearly every county in their wide native environment. Some came from the primeval forests of Pechora, near the Samoyeds' territory, others from the agrarian areas of the Perm District, thus representing different culture areas. Even though the prisoners of war were all young men, many of them would make fine informants or transmitters of folkloric and ethnographic accounts [---]."

(Ariste 1942: 6)

The Komi materials have been recorded over several weeks during the years 1941-1942. The informants were mostly men in the age of 20-33. Three young men came from the Komi-Permyak Autonomous Area, others came from various regions of the Komi ASSR (see the informant register). Among his informants was a Russian, on whom Ariste notes that he "...has attended a Zyrian school. His wife is Komy-Zyrian. He has a slight Russian accent, as he was using л instead of l, which is characteristic of even ethnic Komy-Zyrians under a stronger Russian influence." (*RKM, Soome-ugri 2, 244*). This young man has contributed a single lengthier text. The number of recordings from specific informants also varies (see the text register).

The file RKM, Soome-ugri 2 consists of 244 pages of folkloric materials collected from the Komi and recorded by Paul Ariste himself. The original texts have been written in transcription, and even though Ariste's texts exhibit inconsistencies, the original form of the texts has been preserved in the publication. In Ariste's original manuscript each text is followed by a translation into Estonian. The Cultural History Archives holds Ariste's draft manuscripts of texts collected from the Komi prisoners of war (see *EKLA*, f. 330, m. 233:2). The same notebook includes the translations of some recorded texts into Estonian and/or Russian, also comments, the explanation of certain grammatical peculiarities and explication of certain words in the Komi language.

We may presume that the translation was provided by Ariste while revising the texts with his informants, and through the means of Russian language. This, perhaps, explains why the translation sometimes diverges from the source text. Single texts have been only partly translated; also, no translation has been provided for the last text (*RKM, Soome-ugri 2, 316 (223)*). The original text may also be incomplete, missing a page or even more. The Estonian translations have been edited and slightly altered, mostly in terms of Estonian syntax. Missing verse lines and omitted parts of sentence have been added, and misinterpreted parts have been corrected. Even though the last text is numbered 223, the total number of entries is 219, as texts numbers 141, 142, 143 and 144 are missing in the original manuscript. Each text (in some cases several texts) in Ariste's original collection is followed by the place and time of collection and information about the performer, including his name and, at the first mention of the informant, also additional personal information. Even though information about the performer has not been added to the last ten texts, the file *RKM, Soome-ugri 9* (see further on this issue below) presents some of the ten texts together with the performer's name; therefore, considering their similarity in dialectal idiosyncrasies, we have reason to believe that the last texts of the file *RKM, Soome-ugri 2* have been recorded from the same informant.

The materials of the file *RKM, Soome-ugri 2* represent a wide range of genres, including Komi chastushkas, folk songs, riddles, jokes, legends, folk tales, etc.

“[---] *The Zyrians have known legends and folk songs, even though the newer folk song, which follows the example of Russian chastushka, has been widely adopted, and the humorous folk tale of the Russians has become predominant [---].*”

(Ariste 1942: 6).

Considering the contents of the texts we must bear in mind that the informants represented the younger generation of already educated men, who could not contribute all, especially older genres of folklore. Some texts recorded by Ariste are not even folkloric, but are the creation of known authors. The song *Чужи-быдми съод вөр шӧрын* (Estonian translation by A. Valton: *Olen süündind laane rüpes* (Enne koitu 1996: 124-125)) by Vittor (Savin) of Nöbdin, the founder of the Komi theatre and the first Komi composer, is represented in this collection in several versions (see texts nos. 2, 6, 44, 55, 86, 134, and 222). Also, Ariste has repeatedly recorded another song by Vittor of Nöbdin, *Ми́ча ны́вьяс* (Estonian translation by A. Valton: *Kaunid piigad* (Enne koitu 1996: 106-109)) (see texts nos. 4, 107, and 139). We may speculate that the performers regarded these as authentic folk songs, and it makes sense, considering that the song creation of Vittor of Nöbdins was very traditional, he himself was widely popular and the songs spread very quickly. Ariste himself comments on text no. 67 that it seems to have been taken from a book, and he is, of course, right. This

text is a reproduction of a part of the poem *Крестьянские дети* by the famous Russian poet Nikolai Nekrasov (cf. e.g. Nekrasov 1953: 145).

Some texts (nos. 1, 8 and 100) appear in many versions, although they are clearly the same texts. Since the performers come from different dialectal areas, the language of the texts differs considerably. The texts included in this publication are in Komi-Permyak and Komi-Zyrian varieties.

“[---] *The Zyrian literary language established in the previous century has not yet been able to eliminate the dialects; hence, the scholar had an opportunity to get acquainted with nearly all Zyrian varieties, since each prisoner of war spoke more or less pure variety of his home village. Particularly interesting is the information collected from the areas, where there have been no recordings previously published. Also, the war prisoners have very likely contributed to popularising the Zyrian vocabulary, even though the language of some younger men contained more Russian words than could be expected from a normal Zyrian of his home village*[---].”

(Ariste 1942: 6)

Paul Ariste managed to publish some texts included in this publication (see Ariste 1976: 92-115; 1978: 81-99; 1980: 25-29; 1990: 156-163). In the *Fenno-Ugristica* series (Proceedings of the University of Tartu) he has published in the Komi-Zyrian language 11 texts recorded from K. Ulyashev (in this book the texts are included under nos. 89, 93, 94, 103, 104, 105, 109, 113, 116, 117 and 120), 8 texts from K. Zhizhov (here nos. 82, 83, 85, 86, 97, 98, 99 and 100), 3 texts from P. Kustyshev (here nos. 135, 140 and 201), and also 7 texts in Komi-Permyak from N. Isaev from the Komi Autonomous Area (here nos. 16, 33, 35, 36, 37, 48 and 54). The texts in *Fenno-Ugristica* are published with German translations. Isaev's texts have been edited by an ethnic Komi-Permyak A. Gantman, therefore the same texts may somewhat differ in this book and *Fenno-Ugristica*. The rest of the materials have not been published until now.

Paul Ariste had also prepared other materials for publication. He had rewritten most of the texts of *RKM, Soome-ugri 2* and the already mentioned texts published in *Fenno-Ugristica* into a separate file (*RKM, Soome-ugri 9*). Even the structure of this manuscript, which was completed in 1943, follows that of a book, including a table of contents and a brief foreword in German. The original texts have been handwritten in a phonetic transcription, as are the same texts in the file *RKM, Soome-ugri 2*. During revision Ariste has altered the transcription of single letters. In the file *RKSoome-ugri 9* the texts have been presented in three separate groups: 32 narratives, 62 riddles and 68 songs (including *chastushkas*). Komi-Zyrian and Komi-Permyak texts are also presented separately. All texts are numbered and translated into German. The translations have been typewritten and presented to the end of the file, separately from the originals. For some incomprehensible reason, the text, which in this collection is numbered 36, appears even the third time in Ariste's files (see *RKM, Mitmesugused rahvad, 83/7*).

Paul Ariste's habit to collect folklore from everyone and everywhere is best illustrated by a recorded text in file *RKM, Mitmesugused rahvad*. This a children's counting-out verse, which has been copied from a letter by V. Lytkin, Ph.D. (November 23, 1946), and a variant of this verse is the text no.196 in the present collection.

In addition to the texts in the Komi and Estonian language the publication includes translation of the texts into Russian and English. It has been attempted to keep the translation as close to the source text as possible, providing verbatim translation wherever possible, but making larger alterations to avoid ambiguity and misinterpretation, if necessary.

The register of informants included in the book contains information about Ariste's informants (age, place of origin, etc.). In single cases Ariste has only pointed out the informant's village, but mostly he has included the detailed place name. Some locations have already become uninhabited (see Zherebtsov 2000). In the register of this publication, further information about the informants has been added. In the text register the name of the performer, the time of recording and in some cases also Paul Ariste's comments have been listed under the corresponding text number. Both registers are compiled on the basis of information included in files *RKM, Soome-ugri 2* and *RKM, Soome-ugri 9*.

These archival materials will definitely be of interest to folklorists and ethnographers, as well as to linguists and everyone else interested in the Komi language and culture.

This book has been prepared and the texts translated and edited by very many people, the entire family of the Department of Folkloristics at the Literary Museum. We are extremely grateful for their constant and earnest efforts in preparing this book!

Nikolay Kuznetsov

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