

Introduction to Part II

The materials of the second part of Komi folklore differ from those of the first part both for the contents and origin. While the texts in the first part were mainly folkloristic, this part focuses on the ethnographical material. The source material is retained in Estonian Folklore Archives in volumes *RKM, Soome-ugri 3*, pages 9-256 and *RKM, Mitmesugused rahvad*, pages 45-88. Two of the four letters presented in the appendix are stored in Estonian Cultural-Historical Archives (EKLA), *f. 330, m. 78:10*. The material is also distinguished for the fact that all the texts were written down by informants. Paul Ariste has written in the accompanying text:

[—] *Even today a large number of Zyrians is a nation of fishermen and foresters. If you go to these areas in your talking, from nearly every man the researcher can get important details based on his personal experience, how fishing and forestry is done with them. These occupations of Zyrians have been of great importance in the native culture of Fenno-Ugrians* [—] (Ariste 1942: 6).

More than 60 years have passed from the time these lines were written and the Komi lifestyle has changed a lot. By far not every man, particularly the young people, can give an exhaustive and detailed description of fishing or forestry. This makes the recorded archive materials all the more valuable.

The Komi material in the volume *RKM, Soome-ugri 3* originates from only one person. On 6 February 1960 P. Ariste said about this collection and the person who presented these materials as follows:

The Komi folklore and ethnographic materials were written down by Aleksei Rakov, who came from Komi ASSR, Syktyvdin District, Yb village community, Jol village. The records were made in Tartu. Aleksei Rakov had become a war prisoner and he was sent to work in AKS. I studied the Komi language from him. The young man had secondary education. Later he was sent to Latvia to a camp, where he probably perished. Enclosed is a letter in Komi and another in Russian about his life. The collected material is extremely valuable. (RKM, Soome-ugri 3, 231)

When he wrote these words, Paul Ariste did not know about the actual fate of his former informant. In 1980 he informs in his memoirs that Aleksei Rakov survived, came back from war prison to his home neighbourhood and that they were even in contact through a Komi dialect researcher (EKLA, *f. 330, m. 161:4, l. 285*). A. Rakov wrote to P. Ariste already years later from Komi. His two letters from the year 1988 are retained in Estonian Cultural-Historical Archives (see EKLA, *f. 330, m. 78:10*). The mentioned letters together with the earlier ones are printed in this publication (see letters). In the funds of Estonian Cultural-Historical Archives also notes about the texts of A. Rakov and other Komis are stored (see EKLA, *f. 330, m. 167:13*). These are mostly linguistic observations made while reading the informants' texts.

The material recorded from Aleksei Rakov is really extremely valuable. And this is due to several reasons. This contains very good descriptions of the Zyrian peasant culture and everyday life, abundant information about the earlier life conditions of the Komis. The ethnographical material is very rich. The informant gave detailed description of the ways

of hunting different animals and making hunting equipment, fishing methods and making fishing equipment, tools and implements used for field works and hay-making and household items, building a house and means of transport, clothes and preparing food, different works, children's games etc.

[—] *The received notes are even more valuable because the informant has added many drawings of ethnographic items, plans, sketches etc.* [—] (Ariste 1942: 6).

The drawings are really an important and informative factor at the ethnographic descriptions, the illustrations made by Aleksei Rakov are detailed and objective.

The texts are written down in the so-called Molodtsov letters. This alphabet was named after its author Vasili Molodtsov. This was based on the Russian graphic system but also included letters with “tails” and “hooks” added by the author to mark africates and palatalised sounds as well as letters of the Latin alphabet. This kind of alphabet was used in Komi in the years 1918-1932 and 1934-1936 (different sources give different years), probably when Aleksei Rakov went to school. This is why he used this kind of writing, although in 1941 it was not used any more. To publish his texts in this book a special font had to be created including all the specific letters.

The volume *RKM, Mitmesugused rahvad* includes relatively few Komi materials: some texts from the first volume are repeated, which has been noted already in the introduction to the first part of the book (See Kuznetsov 2005: 21). The original material is a text written on only 33 copy-book pages. According to P. Ariste's brief accompanying letter, “*part of the notes together with information about the origin of folkloristic elements have got lost in the tumult of war*” (RKM, *Mitmesugused rahvad*, 45). Consequently, also the data about the informants who wrote these texts are incomplete, only names can be found at the texts. While information about the background and age of one of the informants, namely Yevgeni Botalov can be found in EKLA (EKLA, f. 330, m. 167:13, l. 11; see also Kuznetsov 2005: 209), about others all that is known is the author's own laconic definition “*written by Komi man Kozlov Yegor Zahharov*”. According to the handwriting and spelling these texts are likely to originate from these two informants.

The texts by Y. Botalov and Y. Kozlov are written in uneven handwriting and in places are not easily legible. Reading is more complicated because mostly palatalisation is not marked or africate sounds are not distinguished etc. This is why the spelling and meaning of one word or another can just be guessed, which is not easy, however, in each case even for someone who knows the Komi language. Because of this there may also be inaccuracies in the deciphering and also the translation of the texts of both writers.

Like in the first part, the texts of this book have also been translated into Estonian, Russian and English. Most of the texts were only in the original language, except the ten first funny stories that were translated from the Komi language into Estonian by P. Ariste himself. As far as the spelling of the Komi texts is concerned, these are mainly presented in an unchanged form, except for the punctuation marks that have been changed and corrected.

The staff of the whole folkloristics department of EKM has been involved in preparing this book, translating and editing the texts. Great many thanks to all for your diligence!

Nikolai Kuznetsov

Bibliography

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Kuznetsov, Nikolai (koost) 2005 *Komi rahvaluulet: Kogunud P. Ariste I = Коми фольклор. Чукöртис П. Аристэ I = Коми Фольклор: Собрал П. Аристэ I = Komi folklore: Collected by P. Ariste I*. Tartu: Eesti Kirjandusmuuseum.