

# Women in the Culture of Kihnu

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*Summary.* Translated by INNA FELDBACH

This study is concerned with gender roles in the culture of Kihnu Island. The main carriers of mental culture in Kihnu are women. *The traditional culture of Kihnu* is viewed as a process: it continues today, changing in content and form, and having various connections with other forms and phenomena of culture, such as school, church, amateur forms of art, literary culture and media.<sup>1</sup>

The study is based on methods characteristic of qualitative research. Both emic and ethic approaches have been used. The research data have mainly been collected during my fieldwork in the years 1955–2009, additional data were received by correspondence with Kihnu people. I have also released a series of TV programmes *Kihnlased* (The Kihnu Islanders): *Suvi 1991* (Summer 1991), *Suvi 1994* (Summer 1994), *Käsitöömeister Roosi Karjam* (The Craftswoman Roosi Karjam), *Kihnu naise hommik* (The Morning of a Kihnu Woman), *Meeste mured* (Men's Concerns), *Naiste tööd ja tegemised* (Women's Chores), *Kaevandu Anni leivategu* (Baking Bread with Kaevandu Anni), *Kaevandu Anni lugu* (Kaevandu Anni's Story), *Marina Rooslaid, Järsumäe Virve ja tema laulud* (Järsumäe Virve and Her Songs), *Matused Kihnus* (A Kihnu Funeral).

## Historical and cultural background

Kihnu is a small island (16.4 km<sup>2</sup>) in the Pärnu County near the western coast of Estonia with four villages and 500–600 inhabitants. To some extent, the old traditional way of life has been preserved here up to the present time. Different cultural layers live side by side. Archaic pre-Christian traditions: the wedding ceremony, alliterative songs of Kalevala metre with very ancient musical style and round dances; newer folk songs (rhymed songs in strophic form) with newer musical style and dances of end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century; songs of the Greek Orthodox and Lutheran tradition; popular songs spread through literary sources and media in the 20th century and newer social dances; contemporary culture.

<sup>1</sup> On this topic, please see also: Rüütel Ingrid. Tradition and Innovation in Estonian Folk Music Today: On the Kihnu Traditional Culture. *Intercultural Music Studies 4. European Studies in Ethnomusicology: Historical Developments and Recent Trends*. Selected papers Presented at the 7th European Seminar in Ethnomusicology. Berlin, October 1-6, 1990. Wilhelmshaven: Florian Noetzel Verlag, 1992, pp. 237–244; Past and Present Gender Roles in the Traditional Community on Kihnu Island in Estonia. Moisala, Pirkko & Diamond, Beverley (ed.). *Music and Gender*. Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000, pp. 266–288; Wedding songs and ceremonies of the Kihnu island in Estonia. *The World of Music 44*. Traditional music in Baltic countries 3, 2002, pp. 131–151; Truth and ethics in visual anthropology. Media & folklore. Contemporary folklore 4. Tartu: ELM Scholarly Press, 2009, pp. 205–215.

Kihnu families got their main income from fishing, sealing and navigation. At the beginning of the 20th century there were more than 60 sailing ships in Kihnu which were destroyed during World War I. Men spent plenty of time away from home, so the household, cattle breeding and tillage (including ploughing, a traditional men's job) were women's tasks in Kihnu. Elsewhere in Estonia the father bequeathed the farm to his eldest son. In Kihnu, however, the farm was divided between all the sons, while the old mistress retained the role of the main manager of housekeeping. Therefore the real leader of a farmstead was the housewife who also had a significant role in bringing up grandchildren and transmitting mental values and traditions. Traditional education of children in Kihnu as in Estonian peasant society in general was mainly carried out through their participation in the working process. From early age, boys accompanied men to sea and fishing trips. Girls helped their mothers and grandmothers with housekeeping and farming. The most important thing for a girl was to become skilled in handicrafts, for girls started preparing their dowry since early childhood.

Men were the ones who introduced innovative elements to the society from abroad. They brought to the island the newer folk song style and dances; they also started wearing modern clothes earlier than women who preserved their traditional striped Kihnu skirts in everyday use up to the present, etc. Women were much more domestic and conservative. Still, some women worked on Estonian mainland farms and brought back new songs and dances from the mainland.

After the World War II a collective fishing farm was founded in Kihnu. Fishermen got modern motor boats and fishing devices and earned lot of money. New houses were built, motorcycles and cars were obtained. The previous image of the Kihnu Island – a woman ploughing with the horse – was replaced by a new one: a woman in a red striped skirt riding a motorcycle. Women worked at school, in the community centre, medical centre, dairy, cattle shed, fishing port, etc. while men kept administrative positions.

In 1957 the island was provided with electric power. Radio and TV sets, and then also tape and video recorders appeared in the homes of Kihnu people. In 1959 a civic centre was built and various groups of amateur art started their activity. At the beginning of the 1970ies the fish stocks of Pärnu Bay were seriously depleted, the Kihnu collective farm suffered financial loss, and in 1973 it was incorporated into a larger fishing farm Pärnu Kalur. Unemployment and alcoholism spread among Kihnu men. A lot of people left the island. Still, many cultural phenomena were preserved: the Kihnu dialect, traditional women's clothes, old wedding ceremony and calendar rites, although a noticeable regress was apparent in all of them.

To a great extent the concept of gender roles of the present Kihnu people corresponds with the historical one: the man earns his living at sea, while women's duties lie with housekeeping, farming, handicrafts and bringing up children. According to the general gender ideology, in Kihnu a woman should first and foremost be industrious and have good housekeeping skills. However, changes have begun to appear. The role of prominent women in this process is discussed below.

## Genres of traditional mental culture

### Beliefs, customs and traditional tales

Traditional beliefs and customs, spells, magic actions, tales and mythological legends are to some extent in everyday use among islanders even today. Men's beliefs, taboos and tales are connected with fishing and sealing, women's with housekeeping and handicrafts. Both know stories about mythological beings, hidden treasures, etc. Local heroes Lülle Lüll and Põdra Toomas, as well as the guardian spirit of ships are mainly subjects of men's stories.

### Wedding ceremony

The most essential event in Kihnu which brings together various genres and forms of traditional culture and enables them to be preserved to the present day, is the **wedding ceremony**. In Kihnu the wedding tradition which confirms the agreement between two lineages probably goes back to the clan system and was common to all Balto-Finnic peoples. The old Kihnu wedding customs are without doubt pre-Christian in origin, containing animistic features and other traits of ancient traditional beliefs as well as tribal practices. The so-called "two part" wedding is celebrated separately at the farmsteads of both the bride and the groom, while the main events take place with both families participating. The main ceremonies are performed accompanied by old ritual songs of alliterative verse and Kalevala metre (the so-called runo songs).

Traditional persons of the ceremony belong to the nearest kin of bride and groom. Women have the most essential role in the wedding ceremony leading the central rituals, yet also some men have noticeable roles. The bride's mother gives the permission to the wedding procession to come for the bride and performs the ceremony of sending her away from her parental home; the bridegroom's mother welcomes the bride at the door of her new home; the *iron hand's wife* puts the ritual headwear *uig* over the bride (it had to protect her on the way from her parental home to the house of the bridegroom); the bridegroom's mother removes the garment, sets a special coif on her head and puts the apron over her skirt, which are both marks of a married woman. *Umbrukad*, the bride's assistants, are young girls from among her relatives and friends.

The main male persons are the *iron hand*, a married relative of the bride, who protects and takes care of her until she becomes a married woman, the bride's brother and the best man, an unmarried young relative of the bridegroom who assists in carrying out some ceremonies and fulfils acts of protection magic. The bride's father brings the dowry chest to the bridegroom's courtyard. The bridegroom's father has no duties. In old times, an essential person was the *saajavanem*, probably the clan chief.

The wedding singers were and are only women. There are traditionally two wedding choirs, one from the bridal lineage, and the other from the groom's. They accompany (and in many cases lead) the most essential events of the wedding ceremony. There used to be only one melody for all songs which varied noticeably with different singers as well as in the course of one song. The tune is monophonic; heterophony may arise due to simultaneous sounding of different variants (see p. 65).

Although people do no longer remember the meaning of ancient rites, the symbolic meaning of rituals has been preserved, helping to strengthen the alliance concluded. In addition, such symbolic actions help to prepare the bride for her new social status and entering the new family, thus facilitating future cohabitation. Belief (even if subconscious) in the power of words and the effect of a ritual is preserved longer than the beliefs underlying them.

The retrogression of wedding ceremonies and especially songs started in the middle of the 20th century. The last traditional wedding (in a simplified way) was celebrated in 1994 and then followed a period when traditional weddings were not arranged. Unregistered marriages were common or small wedding parties were arranged. But the apron as a mark of a married woman is still obligatory, yet only women officially married are permitted to wear it.

### *Traditional song lore*

Other song genres preserved and inherited within the families are lullabies and nursery rhymes, which as a rule also belong to the women's (mothers' and grandmothers') repertoire. However, in Kihnu as well as in other Estonian islands, older men (grandfathers) who no longer go to sea and spend most of their time at home, also take care of children and sing nursery rhymes to them. Special songs are sung by costumed gift beggars (usually girls) in St Catherine's Day traditions. There is little data about men's runo songs (alliterative songs).

The more recent folk song style – rhymed songs of strophic form of the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century – are mostly men's songs (sailor songs, humorous village songs, etc.). Later such songs survived in women's repertoire.

Up to the middle of the 20th century, instrumental music was only made by men. Nowadays instruments are often by girls or women. Women have also taken over other roles that traditionally belonged to men.

In the 2nd half of the 20th century the culture of Kihnu underwent great changes. Old songs were performed mainly during wedding ceremonies but the arrangement of traditional weddings became rare. New popular songs that spread via school, amateur groups, radio and TV became widespread and assumed a part in the cultural identity of Kihnu women. Traditional culture had to be consciously preserved in new forms.

### *Folklore groups Kihnu Leelu and Kihnumua*

The first folklore ensemble in Kihnu was founded in the 1950ies. The initiator of it was Theodor Saar (1906–1984), the principal of the school and director of civic centre, a bearer and collector of folklore, correspondent of the Estonian Folklore Archive, Estonian National Museum, etc. The leader of the group became his sister Sinaida Saar (1908–1988). Due to her crippled foot she could not fulfil the entire role of a Kihnu woman. She was appreciated as a tailor and expert in songs and rituals who valued the traditional way of life. The main goal of the group was to preserve and perform old songs. Since many poetic texts were forgotten, Theodor Saar provided the group with copied song lyrics that had been

collected from older singers and preserved in the Estonian Folklore Archive in Tartu. The group performed Kihnu songs and dances mainly on the occasion of various events on the mainland.

Later Katrin Kumpan (born 1947) became the leader of the group as well as all the amateur musical activities on Kihnu. She came to Kihnu from the city of Pärnu in 1965. At first she worked as a teacher and later as a leader of the civic centre. She brought old Kihnu songs, dances and customs to the stage of the civic centre, which was unaccustomed to Kihnu people since formerly these phenomena had been part of their everyday life. Later, schoolchildren joined the group; people got used to seeing their cultural heritage on the stage of the civic centre and started to participate in the group. It involved people of different age. At the same time they fulfilled essential duties in wedding ceremonies and calendar rites. So the same people were (and are) the carriers of traditions as well as performers of an amateur group. The group became very popular and was invited to perform at various festive occasions on Estonian mainland and abroad. In the recent years it has often performed for the tourists on the handicraft farm of Rosaali Karjam (see p).

From time to time, children's folklore groups have been active at school, led by the teachers Anne Buravkova, Lea Jõgusuu and others. So, authentic traditions and amateur forms of art were mixed in Kihnu culture and the latter helped the traditions survive.

### *Leader of religious and cultural life Marina Roosleid (1909–1997)*

The Kihnu islanders belong among the Greek Orthodox since the middle of the 19th century. In Soviet times there was no priest on the island. A priest from the mainland visited the island occasionally. So it happened that for many years an old woman Marina Roosleid acted as the formal priest assistant and in many cases she actually supplemented the priest. She carried out the church services, buried the deceased and even baptized children. It is noteworthy that men do not habitually attend church services; they come to church only for certain family rites (baptizing, wedding ceremony, funerals).

Marina started her social and church activities during World War II while living in the neighbouring Ruhnu Island. It was formerly populated with Estonian Swedes who moved to Sweden at the beginning of the war, after which new people came to Ruhnu from Kihnu and other places. Marina got married with a local Swede Peeter Roosleid in 1936. In Ruhnu there was a Lutheran church and Marina changed her religion. Peeter did not leave his home island. Marina and Peeter started to organize the economic life of the island along with church and cultural events. Marina became a real community leader. In 1969 Marina and Peeter moved to Kihnu and Marina began her activities in the Kihnu Orthodox church. She was also the leader of a group of women who sang religious songs during church ceremonies, as well as traditional and popular songs during secular events. The same women's group also acted as wedding singers and led wedding ceremonies. Among other things, Marina taught Kihnu dances to young people. Peeter was a fiddle player and silversmith who made traditional brooches for Kihnu women. Marina had a remarkable authority in the Kihnu community.

## *Cultural leader and dance teacher Veera Leas (born 1969)*

Veera Nazarova (later Leas) studied in Viljandi School of Culture in 1985–1988. In her diploma thesis she included descriptions of Kihnu dances learned from Marina Roosleid. Later she has worked as the manager and artistic director of the Kihnu civic centre and taught traditional dances to young people at the centre and at school. She also initiated the revival of St Catherine's Day rituals and has acted as the *iron hand's wife* during wedding ceremonies. At the same time she has organised modern cultural events in Kihnu. All of this makes her a conscious keeper and developer of the culture of Kihnu, for she is simultaneously a bearer of the authentic tradition and a cultural leader with academic background.

## *Reasons of the feminisation of the culture of Kihnu*

During the Soviet period mostly women dominated the entire mental sphere of the culture of Kihnu. They preserved and carried traditional values as at home, in church and in all of the Kihnu society. In addition to homes and farms they rose to fill the vital positions in public life (school, church, civic centre, local museum).

Such feminisation had general historical and cultural background as well as local and special characteristics. Since men spent a lot of time outside home (and outside the island), Kihnu was to a large extent women's community. We should also keep in mind the essential role and high status of woman (especially the old mistress) in the traditional Kihnu family. During the decline of traditional society and traditional values and in the absence of political and economic independence under Soviet law, men appeared to be spiritually weaker and more vulnerable than women. The Kihnu fishermen earned more money than ever before, but the scope of their freedom was restricted. They were not allowed to go to sea as they pleased or invest money in their own enterprises, etc. Later, unemployment held sway in Kihnu. Many men became addicted to alcohol. Women appeared to be mentally stronger; they were the leading members of family, managers of the household, and carried and transmitted traditional values. This was possible due to the collective society where people helped each other and at the same time controlled the course of life very carefully following traditional norms and roles.

## *New trends after the restoration of independence*

Nevertheless, men always were the breadwinners of the family never gave up their leading position in production areas and as formal administrative leaders. During the Soviet period men occupied such positions as chairman of the fishing co-operative, manager of the fishing industry, chief magistrate of rural municipality, chairman of rural municipality council. After the restoration of independence this situation was changed: in 2005 the positions of chief magistrate of rural municipality and chairman of rural municipality council were filled by women. Later men restored their leadership but women continued as the cultural leaders and teachers.

## *Järsumäe Virve (Virve Köster) and her songs*

In Kihnu as in other Estonian islands there existed the tradition of composing songs on topical matters about village life, sailors' adventures, etc. These songs belonged to the newer rhymed and strophic song style and the song makers were usually men. Today the well-known song maker of Kihnu is an elderly woman Virve Köster (born 1928). She has no musical education and composes her songs orally, melody and lyrics together, and later writes the lyrics into her songbook. These are lyrical songs or lyrical narratives about her life, about love and nature, composed in the style of newer popular songs. Her songs were first appreciated by her family: every family member had his or her own song and she used to sing them with her daughters and grand-daughters. She has also made some songs for brides for the ritual of sending the bride off from parental home at during her wedding. Later Virve's songs also became popular among other islanders. One of her songs ("The Feast of the Sea" that was created after she narrowly escaped from an accident at sea) was picked up by a popular folk music group Kukerpillid (which, by the way, consists only of men), and became very popular in the whole Estonia. Later she was invited to perform her songs at events all over the country and in 2009 and 2010 toured very successfully together with her family ensemble and some pop artists.

Virve has been a very caring mother and grandmother, an optimistic and cheerful woman despite poverty and misery and regardless of her incomplete school education unquestionably a very talented person. People are fond of her lyrical songs as well as her open and sincere communication with the audience.

## *Mare Mätas and Kihnu Cultural Space*

The foundation named Kihnu Cultural Space was founded in 2003 when Kihnu culture was included by UNESCO into the list of Oral and Intangible Heritage of the World. Mare Mätas (born 1975) was elected the chairman of the foundation. She has higher education in law and is the mother of four children. Her husband is a master mariner.

Mare has done a huge work in order to preserve the traditional culture and revive the declining cultural phenomena. She initiated the revival of Kihnu wedding ceremonies and celebrating of St Catherine's Day in villages. She has also initiated teaching school children play folk instruments. Virtually all Kihnu students are engaged in this. They learn to play the fiddle, different types of accordion and the guitar. Seminars on Kihnu traditional economy and culture have been arranged and publications issued. The Metsamaa farm is reconstructed into a village centre where children's music camps, village parties and events for tourists are arranged. An online handicraft shop offers its goods throughout the world. In 2010 and 2011 a magnificent festival Kihnu Sea Fest was arranged with an intention to start a tradition. Mare is an excellent guide to Kihnu tourists and the foundation has also supported introducing the culture of Kihnu abroad. Mare has become a true community leader and at the same time she fulfils the traditional role of a Kihnu woman: she manages the farm, is skilled in handicrafts and takes care of her children.

## *Revival of the wedding ceremony*

At the initiative of Mare Mätas and with the support of the foundation of Kihnu Cultural Space and Kihnu State Cultural Programme, traditional wedding ceremony is being revived. In 2007 two weddings were celebrated, and one during each, 2008 and 2009. All ceremonies were videotaped and archived. Today a wedding helps strengthen solidarity and identity, it intensifies co-operation, encourages working on traditional handicrafts and making and wearing traditional women's costumes, and it preserves traditional songs and dances.

## *Christmas held in esteem again*

Since in Soviet times there was no priest in Kihnu, churchgoing became exceedingly rare. Today Christmas has become one of the greatest holidays in Kihnu: church services are popular again, Christmas parties are arranged at school and in the civic centre. Old and new forms of celebration are mixed in a peculiar way.

Changes have occurred in men's and women's roles and ideologies: the church is no longer divided into men's and women's area, and today mixed groups and young girls' gangs move around the villages and spend their time having parties on the farms, while in olden times it was only men's privilege. Moreover, driving cars is becoming more frequent among girls than of walking village streets.

## *Maie Aav and the Kihnu Museum*

Besides the school teachers, Maie Aav (born 1973) was a rare woman with higher education who could get a job in Kihnu. She was appointed the director of local museum. With her soul vested in this work, she was able to breathe new life into the museum. She started when the museum was located in an old schoolhouse which was in an extremely decrepit condition. Maie led the repairs of the building and the entire exposition was renewed. It now displays life in Kihnu during the last hundred years. In every room the traditional exposition is supplemented with film and sound recordings. Apart from the exposition for tourists various events are arranged for the local community.





## *Publications and radio programmes, tourism and handicraft shops*

Teachers of the Kihnu nine-grade school Külli Laos, Reene Leas, Külli Laos and Evi Tõeväli are active in preparing study aids of the native dialect. They composed the Kihnu ABC book and a reader. Külli Laos composed the grammar of Kihnu dialect and Reene Leas compiled the electronic vocabulary. Marju Vesik and Reene Leas have mediated Kihnu news in Kihnu dialect on Estonian radio where these broadcasts are very popular. Mare Mätas composed and published a Kihnu cookery book that introduces traditional foods of Kihnu, and Katrin Kumpan has published several song books and a booklet of instrumental pieces.

Women have also assumed notable role in business: Anneli Akkermann (born 1972) directed a tourist company Kihnurand, acted as a guide, founded an information centre and supplied it with the internet. After successful activities as Kihnu rural municipality mayor, she was nominated the vice mayor of Pärnu city, and was later elected to the Parliament of the Republic of Estonia. As a politician she has broadened the role of Kihnu women more than anyone else.

In recent years, tourism has become an essential means of income in Kihnu and along with that making traditional handicraft items and selling them to tourists has become popular. A new enterprise is the online shop (<http://www.kihnukaubamaja.ee/>).

One of the most famous craftswomen is Rosaali Karjam (Härma Roosi, born 1935). An open and joyful person by nature she has served as an informant for many researchers. Her handicrafts have been introduced in many publications. She is also a good expert in traditions, dances and local legends. She has given many sound and video interviews which are deposited in the Estonian Folklore Archive. She has also acted as a correspondent of the archive and written down a lot of valuable information.

## *Men out of the shade*

In recent years some cultural events were been arranged where men have played essential roles, although women (Mare Mätas, Veera Leas) were the initiators and participated in organisation of them. The Kihnu-Ruhnu Games were started again in 2008 (these had been held in the years 1965–1971 when the two islands took turns in the organisation of the event). In 2010 a new regular event the Feast of the Kihnu Sea was started. Men participate in competitions and other activities of these events. In 2009 the Kihnu Sea Association was founded in order to collect and deposit marine information and revive and develop men's traditional handicrafts.

Kihnu men have also started playing traditional instruments. The vocal and instrumental ensemble Kihnu Poisid (Kihnu Boys) started playing together when the men were still in school; today they are popular all over Estonia. However, only one of them lives in Kihnu at present. Another group is a folk music band Manija Poisid which consists of younger boys from a small neighbouring island. More good musicians will probably become of the students of Kihnu School where music education is nowadays imparted. They are mostly trained to play by ear, without using sheet music as did the traditional musicians.



*Rosaali Karjam. Kärt Summataveti foto*

### *By way of conclusion*

The essence of the miracle of Kihnu culture lies in the fact that different cultural layers have lived here side by side with new ones never fully superseding the older ones. Women have always been the main carriers and mediators of the values of mental culture, while men's role has primarily lied with keeping and developing material culture and bringing innovations.

Despite of the strong traditional mentality of the community, where the community has very carefully controlled the fulfilment of traditional women's roles, some women have nevertheless taken on unprecedented roles. Sometimes they were accepted by the community (as that of Marina Roosleid as the keeper and manager of church traditions, and also those of Sinaida Saar, Veera Leas and other cultural leaders) but in some cases such things were much more appreciated outside the island than at home (Virve Köster and her songs). It must be admitted, though, that her role of a pop star was extremely exceptional.

The prominent public roles of Sinaida Saar, Marina Roosleid and Rosaali Karjam, apart from their natural talents and qualifications, were influenced by the fact that they had no children. Virve Köster was supported by her family and she became famous in the 1970ies when her children and most of her grandchildren had become adults. Sinaida Saar could always rely on her brother Theodor, and Marina Roosleid started as a community leader in partnership with her husband Peeter.

Rosaali Karjam's work as a craftswoman corresponded well with the traditional women's role and ideology. She acquired a new role as an informant to researchers and a guide on her native farm which was reconstructed as a handicraft exhibition site for tourists.

Prominent woman who came to Kihnu from the mainland were the wife of the priest Helena Dubkovskaja at the beginning of the 20th century who founded and directed the first amateur choir in Kihnu, and Katrin Kumpan in the second half of the 20th century whose activities helped to preserve Kihnu traditional culture and who introduced it to large audiences on the mainland and abroad. The role of a teacher, museum manager and founder of children's folklore groups Anne Buravkova was also remarkable. These women all are talented and strong personalities who broadened the traditional roles of Kihnu women.

Veera Leas (born 1969) represents a new generation on Kihnu women. Besides her, a number of younger capable women have emerged who have assumed leading positions in public life, not being limited to culture and education. At the same time, they are all mothers of several children. These are Anneli Akkermann, an entrepreneur and rural municipality mayor, later vice mayor of Pärnu city and a member of Estonian Parliament; Mare Mätas, the manager of the foundation Kihnu Cultural Space; Maie Aav, the director of Kihnu Museum; Külli Laos, Evi Tõeväli, Reene and Ly Leas, schoolteachers and authors of Kihnu dialect teaching aids, etc. Their activities prove that gender roles have been broadened and gender ideologies changed. The main reasons for this are these women's education, openness and involvement with general developments.

Despite of this, old gender roles and ideologies have not lost their vitality. The community watches carefully how the traditional women's roles are fulfilled. Many women are housewives just as before. And those who are active in public life also follow traditional mentalities and ideologies to a great extent, for these constitute an inseparable part of their identity. The knowhow and experience of the ancestors are still indispensable and the concept of *men at sea, women in the hose and yard* is still thriving. One of the cornerstones of the mentality of Kihnu women is the sense of duty and responsibility, the awareness that one should accept all that life brings along. And to all Kihnu women, also those who appreciate the career, children who pass on the seeds of life, are important. It is the children who will shape the future gender roles and ideologies of the Island of Kihnu.

