

## PREFACE

There are materials of the conference of folk belief dedicated to Oskar Loorits in front of you. Oskar Loorits (1900-1961) is the most well-known Estonian folklorist, a man of rare talent and ability to work as well as a prolific author. He has published 36 works and has written nearly 200 scientific articles, around a half hundred book reviews, 200 satirical articles and epigrams. Professor Walter Anderson considered him his most talented pupil. Bela Gunda, Hungarian academician, writes about him: 'He always proceeds from the research of Estonian folk tradition, but he surpasses the narrow limits and finds in the creation of the spirit of Estonians that eternally human essence.'

Estonia is indebted to Oskar Loorits for the existence of the Estonian Folklore Archives. Estonian (as well as of several other peoples) tradition is collected there. Researches and publications concerning Estonian folklore have been based on the material of the archives. His important work was the collection, publication and research of Livonian folklore. Today this ethnos almost does not exist any more, but what has been written down will be preserved for generations to come. Such was his fate that he had to write his overview of Estonian folklore (*Grundzüge des estnischen Aberglaubens* I-III) while staying in exile in Sweden, not having the faintest idea if the nation among whom he was brought up would survive or perish gradually like the Livonians did. About O. Loorits there are two articles - Ülo Tedre "About the life and work of an eccentric" (pp. 457-468) and Bela Gunda "Oskar Loorits und die Ungarische Folklor" (pp. 85-90) in the conference materials.

This was the first conference dedicated to the folk belief in the East Europe because of which a huge number of applications of participation were received. But in 1990 a letter traveled from Estonia to Israel in 78 days and to Moscow and Udmurtia in two months and so contact with several folklorists was lost. At that time Estonia was restoring its independence which caused tensions in the political situation and postal system. Representatives of different cultural areas and of different folkloristic schools met at the conference. There were people from East and West. Scandinavian, Irish, Japanese, etc. and Estonian traditions

were analysed side by side. The mythological school of the Armenians, the descriptive and historical comparative researches of Finno-Ugrians were presented side by side with the analysis of problems of identity and ideology of the Russian school. For the first time contemporary folklore, the attitudes and beliefs of people today, and of the role of individual carriers of folklore was spoken about in Estonia. Besides the contemporary folk belief and folklore the modern interpretations of archaic phenomena are introduced in the collection as well.

All articles that have reached us have been published. Papers of Bela Gunda and Wulfhild Ziel we received in Germany and are published in Germany. The English of several articles was extremely bad and required to be corrected by the help of the copy of the paper in the author's mother tongue. With several of the articles the editors are still not content.

I would like to thank the team that helped to prepare the collection of materials for the publication. We began our work with an IBM PC/XT which didn't have a hard disk and the word processor we used was *Norton Editor*. As our folklorists had only five floppies at the time that contained manuscripts of several books and articles, we often were took by a surprise: bad sectors in the middle of the precious disk, etc. Input of text was done by Leidi Veskis and Õie Sarv. Input of music was done with the kind help of Neeme Kahusk and hard work of Taive Särg. Consultants in Finno-Ugric languages were Aado Lintrop, Ludmila Karpova, Inna Timiryayeva, Anu Nurk, Tõnu Seilenthal, and others. We are thankful to Ume Kelam, Kristin Kuutma, Ergo-Hart Västriik, Tiia Haud, Krista Vogelberg, Ilona Kolberg and Kai Vassiljeva for the translation and arrangement of the texts. Biggest thanks to Sander Vesik, Taive Särg and Kai Vassiljeva with whom we have spent many days and evenings together in the computer room of the Estonian Folklore Archives becoming enthusiastic, hoping, dreaming and despairing. And now all is ready!

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The articles give an overview of the mythological beings, sacrificing rituals and everyday beliefs of many peoples.