

IN MEMORIAM

VAIKE SARV

06.01.1946–27.04.2004

“But where is Vaike?” we asked each other on the midmorning of April 28. The program of the conference of the young folklorists held at the Estonian Literary Museum included five presentations by her students at the Estonian Academy of Music. Vaike Sarv’s students had actively participated in earlier conferences, with her encouragement and support. Some of the students had already arrived at the conference, but not their supervisor. She will be here during the first presentation, we thought – and we were wrong...

During the coffee-break we heard the news. She wasn’t coming to this conference, or to the next meeting, or to the future conferences. Where is Vaike?

Spring has turned into summer and folklorists prepare for field work. But where is Vaike? She had been collecting folklore since student years, mostly in the Setu region, but not only. I became closer acquainted to her on the Muhu Island, for example. This summer she planned to go and listen how the Erzya and Moksha folk songs sound in the natural environment, not on a stage or on records.

Quite a number of publications on the Setu lore have been published recently, but they present only a fragmentary picture, which at times may even seem distorted. This picture has some areas, often marginal, covered, while others still remain to be discovered. We need new academic publications and recordings. Vaike would have been the best choice for the job. But where is she?



Photo 1. Vaike Sarv at the conference of the young scientists in 2002. Photo by Aado Lintrop.

I had made plans with her. We intended to compile a new edition of Setu folktales with songs, and some articles. When Vaike was leaving my cabinet at the literary museum, after we had discussed several things, including an article we had planned to write, she turned around at the door and assured me “We will definitely write this article”. And we should – but where is Vaike?

Vaike finished her studies and received the diploma in musicology in 1976. From then on she had a little over a quarter of a century, scarcely 28 years left, and she made good use of this time. Most of her published works, including her major achievements, have been included in the bibliographies compiled by Karin Ribenis (Karin Maria Rooleid), so there is no point in listing her works here. But even decades from now, anyone interested in the Setu folk songs, will definitely benefit from looking up Vaike Sarv’s works on the subject. I would like to point out her articles in sources other than those enlisted in the Estonian folklore bibliographies – namely, the numerous newspaper articles on folk music as well as professional music. Many of her articles were published in the newspaper of Estonian culture, *Sirp* (formerly known as *Sirp ja Vasar*).

I should also mention her numerous television films and programs and audio material on specific genres and performers, which will be watched and listened for many years to come. Vaike Sarv belonged to the generation that had the chance to witness the alteration of the sound of the Setu folk songs, and the changes in song-learning situations. Figuratively speaking, the baton was passed on from those who had learned the songs by their mother weaving fabric at the loom or while herding the cattle or during festivities of the Setu folk calendar, to those who learned and will learn the songs in folk ensemble groups. Vaike Sarv managed to record these changes and even analyse them in some of her studies, but such a critical turn desperately needs a scholar like Vaike Sarv. And each time the question becomes more painful – But where is Vaike?

We do not know. And we can only say – euphemistically, on the one hand, and realistically from our point of view, on the other, – Vaike has left us.

Kristi Salve