

NEWS IN BRIEF

ALL-ESTONIAN COMPETITION FOR NURSERY SCHOOL LORE COLLECTION

From October 15, 2010, to January 31, 2011, the Department of Folkloristics at the Estonian Literary Museum and the Estonian Folklore Archives organized a collection competition for nursery school (in Estonia up to age 7) lore. On March 14, the Mother Language Day, a festive meeting took place at the Estonian Literary Museum in Tartu, where Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, awarded prizes to the winners of the 2010 folklore collection competition. The best contributors to the Folklore Archives and the most efficient nursery school lore collectors were recognized with thank-you letters and souvenirs.

Children have been in the sphere of interest of Estonian folklorists also earlier; already in the 1920s our first folklore professor Walter Anderson initiated the collection of children's songs. On several occasions all-Estonian school lore collection competitions have been organized, the most recent of which took place in 1992 and 2007. Random, thematic and special-purpose collection actions at nursery schools have been carried out also before, but such a broad-based campaign covering the whole country was the first of the kind.

Approximately 80 nursery school teachers and educators from all over Estonia provided answers to the open-ended questions of the detailed questionnaire. The 67 submitted contributions included 62 individual answers and 5 ones created by teamwork. All the Estonian counties except for Läänemaa and Viljandimaa were represented. The majority of the participants were currently working nursery school teachers; yet, there were also some who had quitted the job. The shortest answer was a letter including only one riddle, whereas the longest ones amounted to half a hundred pages and were remarkable for their good narratives and copious photographic and video materials.

The questionnaire proceeded from the fact that children today spend most of their weekdays at a nursery school. While intercommunicating with their peers and adults, they share and gain knowledge of their traditional national culture. On the one hand, children's lore is something that spreads among them and of which adults sometimes do not have the faintest idea. On the other, it is the lore that adults present to and with children for various (educational, entertainment and other) purposes. In order to get a comprehensive overview of children's and nursery school traditions, we turned for help to teachers, as their role in shaping children's lore is significant and invaluable. In our questionnaire we expected answers within three topics: 1. festivities and parties, 2. games, and 3. stories and sayings.

At each topic, our primary interest was to find out how tradition is used in nursery school programmed activities, as it is common knowledge that nursery school curriculum envisages the cherishing and maintaining of traditions. Secondly, we recommended that the teachers observe children in order to learn more about their own lore.

Under the first topic **festivities and parties** at nursery schools were described. We received a substantial overview of how traditional calendar events are celebrated, such as

St Catherine's Day, St Martin's Day, All Souls' Day, Christmas, Shrove Tuesday, Easter, Walpurgis Night, etc., as well as what is done to mark, for example, the anniversary of the Republic of Estonia, Valentine's Day, Mother Language Day, Boys' and Girls' Days. In addition to Mother's and Father's Days, grandparents' days have also started to be celebrated. Birthdays are certainly considered to be very important. Hello Kitty and pirates' parties are a sign of the era. The events organized are very creative and many nursery schools have established their own traditions, also continuously coming up with new ideas. These ideas are often influenced by public life, which is acted out at the nursery school. The topic of festivities clearly revealed to what extent families are included in nursery school traditions.

Playing is an agreeable joint activity, an inseparable companion and serious work for this target group. While school lore collection has shown that in the era of the computer and techno culture, the virtual world and the Internet comprise a great part of the child's entertaining play world, then at nursery school children are attracted to the games of the real world. We received descriptions of many traditional games, which are played both inside and outside, as well as counting-out rhymes, which have been passed on from one generation to another. Within this topic there was material about role-plays that have been popular throughout times, such as policeman and bum, doctor, home, etc., but also games that characterize a certain period of time. Some of the games played by children relate to boom toys, such as Bakugan, Hello Kitty, Spiderman and others, TV-shows (Estonian version of Search for a Superstar, etc.) as well as commercials.

Children's play-world is definitely influenced by the surrounding reality, the things that they hear and see; so we discovered how after the storm that demolished the church tower in Väike-Maarja last summer, children started to act out the fall of church tower.

The third bigger sub-topic was dedicated to **stories and sayings**. We were interested in the usage of proverbs at nursery school; due to their didactic nature teachers often employ them for educational and pedagogical purposes. In all, the teachers wrote down about 300 different proverbs, most of them are archaic and also find representation in the academic publication of Estonian proverbs. The most popular proverbs that are used by nursery school teachers are the following:

- 1.-2. *Pill tuleb pika ilu peale.* ('Excessive joy ends with tears.')
- 1.-2. *Töö kiidab tegijat.* ('Work praises the doer.')
- 3.-4. *Tee tööd töö ajal, räägi juttu jutu ajal.* ('Do work at work's time, talk at talk's time.')
- 3.-4. *Enne mõtle, siis ütle.* ('First think, then say.')
- 5.-9. *Harjutamine teeb meistriks.* ('Practice makes perfect.')
- 5.-9. *Kes kannatab, see kaua elab.* ('He who suffers, lives long.')
- 5.-9. *Kus viga näed laita, seal tule ja aita.* ('If something is wrong, come and fix it.')
- 5.-9. *Targem annab järele.* ('The wiser one gives in.')
- 5.-9. *Valel on lühikesed jalad.* ('Lie has short legs.')
- 10.-11. *Kes ees, see mees.* ('The first one wins.')
- 10.-11. *Kui midagi teed, tee hästi!* ('If you do something, do it well!')

It is clear that through proverbs positive values are being taught and therefore they are well suited for educational purposes. Besides proverbs and riddles, nursery school teach-



At the festive meeting on March 14, the Mother Language Day, where Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, awarded prizes to the winners of the 2010 folklore collection competition, the best nursery school lore collectors were also recognized. Photo by Alar Madisson 2011.

ers wrote down children's funny sayings and expressions, which constitute a voluminous text corpus. This kind of lore, through which we can follow language acquisition and development as well as children's understanding of things, could also be of interest to the representatives of neighbouring disciplines, for instance, linguists and psychologists.

Within this topic questions were also asked about children's fears. The answers revealed that their emotions were largely influenced by the media and movie characters as well as Santa Clause.

In conclusion we can say that today's nursery school is a reflection of our time – diverse and many-sided, full of possibilities, childishly bright, although sometimes also troubled and anxious, yet intertwined with enduring traditions and open to innovations. Children's lore is in constant communication with the adults' world, constituting its miniature model, which clearly expresses adults' values, whether they depend on each individual home separately or society on a wider scale.

Hopefully, answering this questionnaire helped both the teachers and children perceive themselves as tradition carriers and understand even better that tradition and folklore – this is not something grey and old, but it continues to live daily in and next to us.

The assessment process was quite tough. The first criterion to be taken into account was how comprehensive the material was and how well it was presented. Some teachers had used a very creative approach, had interviewed children, analysed their own writing, and elicited the changes that had occurred in traditions during their career. In case answers were equal contentwise, we considered the volume and additional materials,

photographs, video recordings, and party programmes. So the award-winning writings were both substantial and voluminous.

In several answers we found the indication that Estonian nursery school children are in the habit of saying after a meal, “*Aitäh, kõht on täis, mutionu külas käis!*” (Thank you, I’ve had enough, Uncle Mole came to visit!). Thanks to the nursery school teachers who answered our lengthy questionnaire, the folklore archives have had enough for this time as well. All the answers are really valuable to us and will be preserved in the archives for the future generations. The more thorough elaboration and analysis of the material is a future issue.

The organizers are especially grateful to the supporters of the competition: the Cultural Endowment of Estonia, bookshops Apollo and *Rahva Raamat*, publishing houses *Ajakirjade Kirjastus* and *Koolibri*, café *Anna Edasi*, Aura Centre, Du Nord, Helina Tilk, *Piletilevi*, newspaper *Postimees*, and theatre *Vanemuine*.

You can find nursery school lore homepage at the address <http://www.folklore.ee/kp/lp>.

Piret Voolaid

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE *TRADITION AND CULTURAL HERITAGE: CHALLENGES FOR CREATIVITY AND PERFORMANCE*

The Last of the Six Decades: The Institute of Slovenian Ethnology ZRC SAZU (1951/2001–2011)

Intro

Today the Institute of Slovenian Ethnology (ISE) at the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (ZRC SAZU) is one of the central ethnological institutions in Slovenia. It was established in 1951, and its beginnings reach back to 1947, when the Commission for Slovenian Ethnography was founded at the Academy of Sciences and Arts.

The foundation agenda of the Commission/Institute was in its greater extent heir of the disciplinary tradition: *narodopisje* (ethnology) was classified among historical disciplines, its “scientific” status was grounded on positivism, the definition of the subject matter (folk culture) derived mostly from classical bipolar or two-layered typologies of culture, for the definition of folk culture community, ethnic group/nation and tradition were *sine qua non*. Researchers’ activities were related primarily to ‘rescuing material’, and the empirical style of research predominated. From the methodological point of view other disciplines (esp. philology, historiography, geography, art history, archaeology) impacted the approaches and methods in folk culture research (Slavec Gradišnik 2008a).

Setting the plan for the Commission’s agenda, Niko Kuret and Ivan Grafenauer were mindful of the role of academic institutions: the institute should provide for the