

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### PRESIDENT'S FOLKLORE AWARD AND THE YEAR 2011 IN THE COLLECTION WORK OF THE ESTONIAN FOLKLORE ARCHIVES

On March 13, the eve of the Mother Language Day, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, presented prizes for collecting folklore at the Estonian Literary Museum. In the same event the Estonian Folklore Archives summarised the collection work of 2011 and recognised the best volunteer collectors. The Folklore Award of the President of the Republic of Estonia is a monetary award to recognise the voluntary contributors to the folklore archives, and its predecessor dates back to the years 1935–1940, when the head of the state rewarded the best folklore collectors.

The keywords for the past year's collection work were the multiplicity of cultures and different facets of culture, and the laureates of the President's Award in 2011 recorded material relating particularly to these issues.

**Leelo Kund** and **Margit Korotkova** from the non-profit organisation Cooperation and Development Chamber Võhandu handed over to the Estonian Folklore Archives 277 pages of text, 217 digital photos, 61 sound files with interviews and 6 video files, which were collected during fieldwork in Setumaa (2008–2010) within the framework of the project "Orthodox and Folk Tradition in Setumaa and its Neighbouring Areas". The project was supported by the PRIA (Estonian Agricultural Registers and Information Board) Leader programme. Territorially fieldwork covered two communes in Setumaa, and both Setus and Russians were interviewed, focussing on religion and customs – church and congregations, folk beliefs, celebration of holidays – as well as heritage and biographical background.

**Age-Kristel Kartau** recorded the biographies of the people engaged in Thai massages in Estonia and interviewed both those practising it and those running courses. During the years 2010 and 2011 Kartau handed over to the archives 48 hours of sound recordings and 300 pages of written material. The material is extremely interesting and provides an overview of the evolution of one of the trends in alternative medicine. However, as is customary for biographical material, it is intertwined with social issues, this way also discussing Estonian life in a more general key. As this is a specific field of lore of a small group of people, we would have to emphasise here the necessity for collaborators from the archives, as this kind of interviews cannot be conducted without preliminary knowledge and contacts.

**Triin Kusmin** has done a remarkably good job in recording and preserving heritage culture by collecting place lore while exploring and mapping lore in the recreational areas and nature centres of the State Forest Management Centre. Besides mapping, the researcher has also been interested in biographical and ethnographical material as well as folklore on a larger scale. On the basis of the collected material, she has compiled an overview of the place lore of several Estonian counties, in all 23 hours of recorded material.



*Laureates of the Folklore Award of the President of the Republic of Estonia together with the President: (sitting from the left) Leelo Kund and Triin Kusmin, standing Margit Korotkova, Toomas Hendrik Ilves and Age Kristel Kartau. Photo by Alar Madisson.*

During the past year the collections of the Estonian Folklore Archives were supplemented as a result of voluntary collectors' contribution, the work of schoolchildren and university students as well as the collecting action relating to a dancing event called *TeateTants* (Relay Dance). In all, over 8000 pages of material was added, and in addition to that numerous sound and video recordings as well as photos both on old-fashioned and more modern carriers.

The event called *TeateTants* was organised in August 2011 on the initiative of the Estonian Folkdance and Folk Music Association, and it covered the whole Estonia, lasting for eight days. Different groups participated with 6000 people altogether, who passed the baton in an uninterrupted show, dancing through fifteen counties (1000 kilometres).

As part of the relay dance, an action for collecting dance lore was organised, and the baton was exchanged for a memory stick onto which the groups recorded their group lore, embellishing it with photos, videos and other materials. In all, the event yielded 189 memory sticks (77 GB) full of material.

Diverse high-quality lore material has been collected from all regions of Estonia. Kaie Humal and Vello Kütt continued collecting the lore, history and cultural history of the villages near Lake Võrtsjärv, and Arvi Liiva recorded tradition in Palamuse parish.

The Rebala Foundation under the leadership of Triin Äärismaa, curator of the Rebala Heritage Reserve Museum, conducted fieldwork in Jõelähtme parish from July to November 2011. The project was targeted at the culturally minded local youth, in order to generate and maintain interest in lore and its collection. The project was supported by the PRIA Leader programme. Seven young collectors participated in fieldwork and

seventeen local inhabitants were interviewed and recorded. The topics focussed primarily on the important places in Jõelähtme parish as well as subject matter related to village and personal stories. The material amounting to 277 pages has by today reached the digital manuscript collection of the Estonian Folklore Archives.

Anni Oraveer contributed 180 pages of blind people's lore and dialect stories, and Kaleph Jõul handed over 102 pages of material. Arvi Liiva sent anecdotes and digital photos from Palamuse parish, Anna Rinne – her contribution about theatre, Maret Lehto – songs from Muhu Island and reminiscences about local people. Ellen Randoja recorded stories, songs, wedding descriptions, etc., Anu Soon – contemporary wedding customs, sayings and beliefs, and Jaan Malin – web jokes.

Voluminous substantial contribution is the manuscripts of Oskar Raudmets (1914–2003), who studied local lore (249 pages of folklorist writings on Harjumaa County), and Vassili Kolga's legacy – songs, material on the history of Simiste village, self-creation, etc., which was handed over to the museum by his daughter Esperinda Meikar.

Eda Kalmre mediated the writings from children's story-writing competition "It Happened on Toome Hill".

The collections of the folklore archives are continuously supplemented by the materials from different cultures and ethnic groups, for example, the Estonian diaspora. Igor Tõnurist handed over recorded materials from Siberian Setus and Estonians from the 1980s, Aivar Jürgenson – materials related to Siberian Estonians and Setus in 1999–2000, and the tapes and sound files recorded from Estonians in Brazil and Argentina in the years 2007 and 2009.

This year university students also contributed to the archives. Eleene Sammler donated the letters that children had written to Santa Clause in 2009–2010 and posted in a special mailbox in Tartu. The letters were full of sentiment and spoke about children's and also adults' hopes, wishes and dreams.

Students of the Department of Choreography of the Institute of Fine Arts of Tallinn University led by Sille Kapper filmed and described in their collection diaries the spontaneous dancing activities at the Viljandi Folk Music Festival. The students of the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre under the supervision of Janika Oras carried out fieldwork in Kihnu Island and Setumaa and handed over to the archives film material on various festivities as well as interviews and other fieldwork materials.

The Estonian Literary Museum has completed a major job, which is definitely of interest also for the general public: all the 162 volumes with the total of 115,000 pages of Jakob Hurt's folklore collections have been digitised and made available on the Internet. The file repository created within the framework of the same project (<http://kivike.kirmus.ee> – the Virtual Cellar of the Literary Museum) enables the safe preservation of the gradually increasing digital collections of the museum according to today's requirements and significantly improves the online accessibility of the collections. The project leader is Kadri Tüür, and the IT-solutions come from AS Piksel.

However, the digitising of materials does not free us from responsibility to follow the rules for the preservation of those in paper form. Recently, there was a leak into the museum depositories and a number of publications and manuscripts in the Archival Library and the Estonian Cultural History Archives were damaged by water. Yet, this unfortunate incident proved that people cared and appreciated voluntary work. The museum's appeal for help was answered actively by many, and people from different

spheres of life – former employees of the museum, pensioners, university students and alumni, schoolchildren with their teachers, as well as many others came to render help with the damaged materials. The Literary Museum is grateful to all the former and future voluntary assistants and its own staff members.

Astrid Tuisk

## **JAPANESE CULTURAL INFLUENCE AND YOUTH SOLIDARITIES IN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION**

### **Higher School of Economics – St. Petersburg, December 5–6, 2011**

In today's world no culture remains isolated and only within the borders of its original country. It is especially obvious in the case of popular culture. At the beginning of December a group of scholars gathered in the Higher School of Economics to discuss different aspects and features of Japanese culture in post-Soviet space. The conference was organized by Dr. John Schoeberlein, Program on Central Asia and Caucasus, Davis Center, Harvard University, Dr. Elena L. Omelchenko, Head of the Department of Sociology HSE - St. Petersburg, Director, Center for Youth Studies, and Guzel A. Sabirova, Deputy Director, Center for Youth Studies, HSE - St. Petersburg, with participants from the HSE but also from Estonia, Belarus and Ukraine.

It appeared that Japanese culture is strongly present in the post-Soviet space, sometimes even in forms we do not see anymore as distinctively Japanese, for example ikebana or Japanese martial arts. Sushi and some elements of Japanese religion have also been incorporated into various forms of everyday or popular culture in Eastern Europe. This and many other aspects of the movement of Japanese culture into former Soviet space were highlighted by one of the organisers – John Scheberlein – in his opening keynote speech. The majority of the presentations on the first day discussed the anime culture, which is extremely popular in Russia, especially in St. Petersburg. Several talks dealt with different features of this culture, from festivals to anime clubs. As nearly all presenters introduced their current MA research projects, their talks were sometimes not very theoretical, yet, full of interesting details. To sum up, anime culture in Russia seems to be quite paradoxical. While Japanese fans stress through this culture their relation with Japanese culture and traditions, then Russian fans learn the Japanese language and traditions to become “real” anime fans.

The second day of the conference was dedicated to different elements and features of Japanese culture and their meanings in post-Soviet countries. Aimar Ventsel started the day with his analysis of the wide spread of the Japanese youth fashion among Asian people in Russia, especially in Eastern Siberia, arguing that this way young people emphasise their Asianness. The following discussion was very intensive and the participants agreed that the Japanese youth fashion is a hip and elitist way of showing the race identity spread from Kazakhstan to St. Petersburg. Vadim Stetsyuk, Senior Lecturer

of the Kamenets-Podolsky National University named after Ivan Ogienko (Ukraine), presented an interesting talk about the samurai clubs and their activities in Ukraine, discussing also their controversial position within the Ukrainian reconstructionist club movement. We heard that samurais constitute a minority among the clubs that focus on reconstructing historical events and army uniforms. In the following discussion several participants also argued that such clubs greatly reflect the situation in society where rich people join clubs where one has to spend much money on clothes, while their not so wealthy fellow citizens prefer cheaper clubs and can make a political statement out of their preference. Some less spectacular features of Japanese culture were discussed by Alina Zakirov from the HSE and Sergei Sakuma from the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. Healing, ikebana and other elements of Japanese traditional culture have long been adapted into Eastern European everyday culture and live “their own life” in a new cultural context.

The conference proved to be very fruitful and gave many inspiring ideas to the participants who agreed that Japanese cultural forms in the post-Soviet setting should be studied on a larger scale. In order to do that, they created an interest group “Japanese Eurasia” in Facebook to maintain and develop contacts and cooperation. Everyone interested is free to join this group.

Aimar Ventsel