

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### MAGIC IN THE RITUAL YEAR

On September 25–27, 2014, the 10th annual international conference of the Société Internationale d’Ethnologie et de Folklore (SIEF) Working Group on The Ritual Year took place in Innsbruck, Austria. It was organised by the University of Innsbruck and the Institute for History and European Ethnology with the Organising Committee consisting of Leander Petzold (chair), Tatiana Minniyahmetova, and Kamila Velkoborská.

The fascinating topic of the conference, “Magic in Ritual and Ritual in Magic”, the hard work of the organisers and, probably, the magic of the location (Innsbruck in the Alps) resulted in 120 paper proposals. For a variety of reasons, not everybody who had submitted a topic were able to participate, but still 72 people from 28 countries came to the conference and delivered their papers. Many of the participants were taking part in the series of annual conferences of the Ritual Year Working Group for the first time. For example, 15 first-time Russian scholars came from different cities of the Russian Federation and spoke on various ethnic traditions, including the archaic traditions of the Russian North. Actually, dozens of traditions were discussed in the conference papers including European, Latin American, North American, Asian, and African ones. The development of magic was also traced from prehistoric times through early Christianity up to the present day.

After the ceremonial opening of the conference and the greetings by the organisers and the hosts, the plenary session started. The first five presenters initiated discussions on various aspects of magic in the ritual year and on magic as such. The first speaker, with a paper titled “The Cosmic Connections of the Eight Key Points in the Indo-European Ritual Year”, was the President of the Ritual Year Working Group, Emily Lyle (Scotland), who shared her views on the division of the year as connected to cosmic structure and reflecting divine and heroic myths, life circle events, and colour semiotics. Marlene Mifsud-Chircop (Msida, Malta) delivered a paper on Good Friday rituals in contemporary Malta, in which she covered the history of religious processions and performances in the capital and other cities, emphasising the changes in the scenario of Maltese Good Friday during the last decades, which she has witnessed herself and studied as a folklorist and ethnologist.

Terry Gunnell (Iceland) introduced the theme of Neo-Pagan and New-Age movements, which have spread widely in recent times. His presentation, “The Background and Nature of the Annual and Occasional Rituals of the Ásatrúarfélag in Iceland”, showed the origin, history, and modern ritual and social activity of a very popular Icelandic group, worshipping ancient Norse gods. Interviews with the priests and analysis of the prayers and activities raised questions regarding the source of decisions: who actually prescribe the magic acts and to what extent they can be regarded as designed by the priesthood and the members of the group. Éva Pócs (Budapest, Hungary) in her lecture “The Living and the Dead at the Time of the Winter Solstice in Central Eastern European Beliefs” analysed the functions of food and fasting during the most sacred periods of the year. According to this scholar, the archaic pre-Christian semantics of restraint from eating is actually an offering to the gods. Finally, the paper by another prominent Hungarian

folklorist, Vilmos Voigt (Budapest), “Rebus – Charms – Evil Force – Magic”, stressed the importance of studying verbal magic acts and their connection with evil spirits.

After the plenary session, parallel panels started. Some of them did not deal with the ritual year, which is at the core of the activity of the Working Group, but concentrated on magic itself and its distinctive features. The following presentations can be listed as examples of classical complex studies of magic in the ritual year: Evy Johanne Håland’s (Greece) “Magical Ceremonies during the Ritual Year of the Greek farmer”; Betea Raluca’s (Germany) “Magic Practices for Stealing the Milk of Animals: A Case Study on the Romanian Villages in Transylvania (18th–19th Centuries)”; Katya Mihaylova’s (Bulgaria) “Andrzejki and Katarzynki in Polish Ritual Year”; Yulia Krashennikova’s (Russia) “Magic of Holy Thursday in the Modern Tradition of Peasant Population of the Russian North”; Ekaterina Iagafova and Valeria Bondareva’s (Russia) “Traditional Rituals in Modern Festive Ceremonial Culture of the Chuvash”. The papers were based on unique personal field material, collected in archaic Slavic and south-east European zones, which show excellent preservation of the rituals. All these papers dealt with reconstructions of old magic acts aimed at fertility, the health of cattle and rich crops, as well as at driving away evil spirits and witches.

Another group of papers followed the initial theoretical guidelines of the Working Group – to study parallelism between calendar and life circle rituals. Iryna Koval-Fuchylo (Ukraine) in her lecture “Ukrainian Calendar Cry: Magic Value and Functional Features of the Tradition” analysed lamentations for the dead carried out on certain calendrical dates, especially on the Saturday before Whitsun. Similar parallelism, but on the basis of other traditions was studied by Rasa Paukštytė-Šaknienė (Lithuania). In her lecture “Ritual Year of Godparents and Godchildren in Contemporary Society in Lithuania” she showed how the traditional roles of the godparents in the calendrical festivals, organised for their godchildren, are growing today and starting to spread to almost all the bigger feasts, not just Easter, as it used to be before. Nadezhda Rychkova (Russia) in her paper “Magic of Communications in Family Rituals of Russians” shed light on the communicative aspects of magic acts in the life cycle and their newest transformations.

Similar parallels between the life cycle and the calendar, but in another direction, were discussed in a panel dedicated to calendrical divinations. Certain periods in the ritual year are filled in with mantic magic acts, which are aimed at revealing the future life of a person. Such rituals in Lithuania, Greece and Russia were explored by Žilvytis Šaknys (Lithuania) in his presentation “Magic or Entertainment? Marital Divinations and Ritual Year in Lithuania”, by Ksenia Klimova (Russia) in “Fortune-Telling in Modern Greek Ritual Year”, and Nina Vlaskina (Russia) in “The Types of Divination Used by the Don Cossacks: Highlighting Areas of Distribution”. The presenters showed a mixture of magic and entertainment in all the modern divination acts, with the domination of love mantic rituals. The magic for love, as was argued by Oksana Mykytenko (Ukraine) in her paper “Padlock and Key as Attributes of the Wedding Ceremony: Traditional Symbolism and Contemporary Magic (on the Material of the Slavic Tradition)”, is still present and even developing in quantity and quality in Slavic wedding customs.

Other panels scrutinised various details and components of magic in the ritual year and beyond its frame. Sacrifice or offering as a powerful magic act was investigated in the paper by Aida Rancane on the motifs of sacrifice in the context of present-day search for spiritual experience, in light of traditions and innovations, and in the presentation by Billy Fhloinn (Ireland) on sacrificial magic and the twofold division of the Irish ritual year.

Basic elements, such as water, air, fire and earth are used for magic techniques and were at the core of the investigation of many scholars. A special session was dedicated to fire, which, together with water, dominates in many rituals. Irina Sedakova (Russia) in her paper “Magico-Religious Symbolism of a Candle in the Slavic Calendar Rituals” showed the polysemy and multiple functions of a candle in church and domestic services. She showed the development of a candle into a universal visual symbol of a tragedy, death and commemoration as a result of commemorative acts and performances with the lighting of candles all over the world. Tatiana Minniyakhmetova (Austria) delivered a paper on ritual fire in the annual cycle of Udmurtian calendric customs, in which she provided an in-depth analysis of the magic functions of fire in this tradition, its usage for contacting the gods, cooking the ritual meals, divinations, etc. Urszula Wilk (Poland), who studies Spanish festive culture, devoted her presentation titled “The Valencian Festival of *Las Fallas* as an Example of Symbolic Violence” to an iconic local festival in Valencia, which is performed annually on March 19 and is based primarily on huge fire effects. Georgi Mishev (Bulgaria) provided an interesting lecture titled “Where do you come from, ashes? – I come from a clean place. Healing Magical Practices from the Region of Thracian Cult Centre Starosel, Plovdiv Province, Bulgaria”, which gave the audience insights into the Thracian roots of modern Bulgarian folk medicine based on the magic of fire and its products.

This conference demonstrated the growing interest of scholars of the ritual year in Neo-Paganism, new cults and occult groups. Seasonal magic is at the centre of Neo-Pagan activity and theory. Joanna Malita (Poland) in the paper “Magic in Everyday Life of a Polish Wiccan: Field Study” shared her festive and routine magic experience. Kathrin Fischer (Switzerland) in her lecture “Wicca – Cycle of the Season and Life: Pre-Christian Traditions?” offered a survey of the pre-Christian basis of Wicca. Morgana Sythove (Netherlands), as a practising Wicca witch, in her lecture “The Wheel of the Year – Seasonal Rituals in Wicca” analysed and documented her own and her group’s magical activity aimed at global and individual prosperity.

Arūnas Vaicekauskas (Lithuania) in his presentation “Religion and Imagination: Magic in the Neo-Pagans’ Activity” argued that the creative element is a must in any occult movement. The theme of creativity and religious-cultural issues was continued by Fehlmann Meret (Switzerland) in her presentation “‘The Earth’s Unseen Powers of Growth Need to Be Nourished’: On Images of Seasonal Pagan Rituals in Popular Culture”. Regional forms of Neo-Paganism with archaic forms of animistic and zoonymic magic were investigated by Graf Franz (Austria) in “Magic Revisited? Contemporary Animistic Rituals within British Neo-Paganisms from an Anthropological Perspective”, and Kamila Velkoborská (Czech Republic) in “Magic as Practiced by the Brotherhood of Wolves”.

Many of the papers alluded to modern innovations in traditional magic practice or were concentrated on the development of new festivals. Mácsai Boglárka (Hungary) in her presentation “I Am a Tractorist – This Is My Feast!?: Sabantuy as Post-Soviet Political Calendar Ritual” analysed the revival and modification of a traditional Muslim holiday in Bashkortostan after the atheistic decades in this former Soviet autonomous republic. Dalia Senvaityte (Lithuania) in her paper “Annual Holidays in Lithuania: Discourse in Press and the Reality of the Daily Life” compared the festive topics which are discussed in families and in the public mass media discourse. The internet as an important source and tool for a survey of modern magic in various Russian regions was the topic of Evgeniya Litvin (Russia) in her paper “The Ways and Conceptions of Internet-Magic Representation”.

The magic of food and eating was the object of several presentations. Katarina Ek-Nilsson (Sweden) spoke on the folk belief and rituals related to bread in Sweden in the past. She was concerned with the historical transformation of sacred food, especially bread, in the Swedish folk tradition. Elena Popova (Russia) dealt with the topic “The Role of Ritual Meals in Modern Christmastide Customs of the Besermyans”. Her investigation showed that the culinary and entertainment inspirations remain the most significant parts of Christmastide and other celebrations, even if the magic function has waned away. Apart from eating, drinking has also manifold magic functions. Sergey Rychkov (Russia) dwelt on the magic of toast, a verbal festive genre, which has not been investigated fully, neither in Russian, nor in other traditions. Mojca Ramšak (Slovenia) in her colourful presentation “Wine Queens’ Rituals in the Service of Wine Marketing” demonstrated the transformation of magic activity into commercialism.

Masking and ritual dresses, theatrical performance and figurines also have magical purposes, as the scholars Konrad Kuhn (Switzerland) (“Wooden Carnival Masks between Magic Objects and Collective Representations”), Alessandro Testa (Czech Republic) (“The Re-Enchantment of Europe: Traditional Carnivals and the Belief in Propitiatory Magic (Two Ethnographic Cases from Italy and the Czech Republic)”) and Celia Sánchez Natalías (Spain) (“Magical Puppets in the Western Roman Empire”) showed in their papers. Laurent Sébastien Fournier (France) investigated another important component of festive life in his presentation “The Magic of Traditional Games: From Anthropological Theory to Contemporary Case Studies”.

Different parameters of the magic acts and rituals, such as space, have also been central to the interests of scholars. Nadezhda Shutova (Russia) discussed ritual as a way of organising the sacred space in the Kama-Viatka region at the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries on the example of Udmurts. Cozette Griffin-Kremer (France) in her lecture “Is Doing Things Right, and the Right Number of Times, Magical? May Day and Maying Customs” reflected on the direction of movement as a magic technique in festive and everyday contexts. Andrey Khudyaev (Russia) (“Magic Ritual and Its Spatial Structure in Archaic Cultures of the North”) and Jurij Fikfak (Slovenia) (“Magic – Sacred Chronotopes of Ritual Practices”) touched upon theoretical issues of sacred space and its magic semantic.

Magic acts and a search for miracles based on folk religion were analysed in the paper by Irina Stahl (Romania) (“The Nine Miraculous Graves: Seeking Help from Beyond”), while Aigars Lielbārdis (Latvia) was concerned with the topic “Catholic Saints in the Latvian Calendar”.

Folk astrology was investigated in the papers by Mare Kõiva and Andres Kuperjanov (Estonia), titled “The Moon, Astronomic Objects and Symbolic Rites in 20th-Century Healing Strategies”, and Oksana Tchoekha’s (Russia) presentation “Lunar Folk Magic in the Balkan Region”.

A special panel was dedicated to plant lore and herbal magic. Aleksandra Ippolitova (Moscow, Russia) described rituals for picking plants in Russian herbal manuscripts of the 17th–20th centuries, and Svetlana Sidneva (Moscow) spoke on the magic herbs in modern Greek and Italian calendar customs.

The conference gave the floor to many scholars, including those who did not touch upon the ritual year and calendrical magic. History, folklore texts, literature, arts, and theology have all been investigated from the point of view of magic acts, reflecting and implementing pre-Christian pagan beliefs. Scholars dwelt on the image of the sorcerer



*Conference participants at Lake Achensee. Photograph by Andres Kuperjanov 2014.*

and the witch, on Shamanic traditions, on gender aspects of magic, and many other academic issues.

The Innsbruck conference celebrated the tenth jubilee of the Working Group on The Ritual Year. The founder and president of the group, Emily Lyle, asked to step down and retire from her position. The members of the group voted to apply to the SIEF administration for permission to grant to this outstanding scholar the title of honorary president of the Working Group on The Ritual Year. In accordance with the new SIEF bylaws, for the next two years the Working Group on The Ritual Year has elected two co-chairs (Irina Sedakova, Russia, and Terry Gunnell, Iceland), a secretary (Irina Stahl, Romania) and a liaison person with the SIEF administration (Laurent Sébastien Fournier, France).

The next (11th) conference of the Working Group on The Ritual Year will be held in Kazan, Russia, on June 4–7, 2015, and will be dedicated to the general topic “Traditions and Transformation”. At the 12th SIEF Congress (Zagreb, June 21–25, 2015) the group will be represented by two panels, convened by Nina Vlaskina and Irina Sedakova (<http://www.nomadit.co.uk/sief/sief2015/panels.php5?PanelID=3462>) and Irina Stahl (<http://www.nomadit.co.uk/sief/sief2015/panels.php5?PanelID=3409>).

Irina Sedakova

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## NATALIA ERMAKOV DEFENDED A DOCTORAL THESIS ON ERZYA LAMENTATIONS

On October 15, 2014, Natalia Ermakov from the Estonian Institute of Humanities at Tallinn University defended her doctoral thesis titled *Erzianskie prichitaniia: traditsii bytovaniia i sovremennoe sostoianie* (Erzya Lamentations: Traditions and Current Status).

This dissertation is the first comprehensive survey of the history and role of the lamentation genre in Erzya traditional culture conducted on the basis of the lore of a concrete region – Ardatovsky district in the Republic of Mordovia. As the author of the thesis has grown up amidst this tradition, she is the right person to collect and interpret the material. She presents interesting observations about the religious taboos concerned with recording lamentations and describes the differences between lamentations in an authentic situation and those used separately from rituals.

Natalia Ermakov's research is based on material interpretation and context analysis, and proceeds from different research methodologies. She has used genre, semantic and thematic analyses of lamentations. This research is especially topical as Mordvinian written culture is still young and oral heritage constitutes an essential part of culture, whereas the lamentation tradition is gradually fading. 49 of her informants are Erzyans and 5 are Mokshans, predominantly older women, but also 5 men. Part of them reside in Estonia. In addition, the researcher has obtained material from periodicals, literary sources, archives and the Internet.

The author gives an overview of the historical research of Mordvinian lamentations, pointing to the features common with the tradition of other Finno-Ugric peoples. Both funerals and weddings are rites of passage; therefore the respective rituals and lamentations of different nations are largely similar.

The author emphasises that each lamentation is unique, and every time each lamenter, by using traditional elements, creates something unique. Lamentations have magic, psychological, social, ritual and artistic functions. Artistic imagery plays an important role in the structure of lamentations. Poetic imagery involves epithets, personification, alliteration, and synonymic repetitions. Part of the formal features of lamentations, such as alliteration and synonymic parallelism, are inherent also in Balto-Finnic lamentations and runo songs. A more general feature of lamentations is the monologue.

The chapter titled *Archaic Components of Erzya Lamentations as a Source of Mordvinian Ritual Culture Research* analyses early historic features that have survived especially in ritual funeral customs. Here the author of the thesis describes interesting funeral customs, which imitate the unrealised weddings of the untimely dead, using a "replacement", as well as the international custom of passing on the bridal chaplet to the next potential bride.

A separate chapter analyses traditional elements and changes in lamentation tradition on the basis of the material obtained from the villages of Ardatovsky district. The author states that today old funeral customs have been replaced by new ones; yet, people still believe that the deceased for whom funeral rituals have not been performed, can turn into the "dangerous dead".

Mourning motifs in lamentations are intertwined with religious motifs, which in turn mix pre-Christian with Christian and old funeral customs with church rituals.

A separate chapter is dedicated to ancestral cult (incl. the 40-day commemoration period), which is based on the belief in afterlife and ancestors' ability to influence the fate of the living. The cult features special prayers and sacrifices.

Ermakov also refers to Mordvins and Mari's peculiar coffin with one or several openings, through which the spirit of the deceased could ascend to the ground. This must be a pre-Christian common feature of Finno-Ugrians, as it can also be observed in Carelians, Setos, etc.

A separate mention is made of wedding rituals and lamentations; the latter were performed, besides the bride, also by her mother, friends and other relatives. In case the bride was not able to lament herself, she was replaced by someone else.

The dissertation describes individual stages of the wedding (proposing, preparations, bridal sauna), and the respective bridal lamentations. The sauna ritual was related to the belief in the cleansing power of water and the magic influence of the sauna. The Mordvinian bride expressed her gratitude to the sauna fairy with her lamentation; she also lamented to next of kin when she had to leave home. In Mordvinian bridal lamentations pagan gods are also thanked for their expected help in future life.

In conclusion, the author observes that in the course of time changes occurred in wedding rituals, whereas part of them were preserved in their old form, along with respective beliefs, whereas some others lost their original meaning but were preserved as ritual elements, and yet others turned into wedding jokes.

A separate mention is made of draftee and soldier lamentations, which are said to have emerged already before Peter I enacted the conscription law in Russia in 1699. These lamentations are largely similar to death lamentations; they reflect social and political circumstances and feature Russian influences. The tradition of lamentations was revived with each subsequent war, in which Mordvinian young men had to participate.

Side by side with ritual lamentations, non-ritual ones also spread. These reflected people's personal destinies and hardships of life, and integrated pagan customs and beliefs, orthodox influences, reflections of the surrounding reality, language specifics and continuity of generations. Here we could agree with the author's opinion that they only emerged in the cultures in which ritual lamentations occurred.

In the conclusion the author maintains that lamentations constitute an essential part of Mordvinian culture, and, in addition, they also carry ethnic identity and unite the community and the nation. While death lamentations have survived until today, draftee lamentations have re-emerged in critical periods, and wedding lamentations are no longer used. The reason why old traditions fade away lies in the influence of neighbouring peoples and Orthodoxy, social and economic development, as well as increasing urbanisation and overall globalisation.

Natalia Ermakov specifies three tendencies in changing rituals: reverting to old traditions (death lamentations), modernisation (using lamentations in new forms outside rituals, which used to be a taboo), and fading away (wedding lamentations have nearly disappeared even in villages). In order to foster the preservation of folk culture, the mother tongue and folk culture are taught at kindergartens and schools, and old traditions are kept alive by amateur groups as well as in professional culture – theatre, concerts, etc.

The dissertation is highly interesting due to the abundance of authentic empiric material, which is described, interpreted and construed. The author's conclusions are reliable as she is part of the studied community. However, she has also been able to distance herself as a researcher, combined empirical sources with theoretical works, and presented parallels with the cultures of other nations.

The dissertation offers novel, interesting, and valuable information both for folklorists and representatives of neighbouring sciences, especially for researchers of folk belief, rituals and lamentations. It is also an inestimable source of information and valuation of Mordvinian culture for each representative of this nation.

Ingrid Rütel

## **SEMINAR ON DIGITAL HUMANITIES AT THE ESTONIAN LITERARY MUSEUM: INFOTECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION IN HUMANITIES AND EDUCATION**

A seminar titled *Digital Humanities in Estonia: Infotechnological Innovation in Humanities and Education* took place on October 27 and 28, 2014, at the Estonian Literary Museum. A year before, a seminar on digital humanities had taken place for the first time, and now a tradition is about to be created. The two-day event featured both presentations and workshops and aimed to give an opportunity for humanities researchers to share their competence and experience in digital methods and learn from the others.

On the first day, October 27, presentations about various topics were given. The seminar began with the presentation of the webpage and publication based on the papers given a year before. Both of these are available in Estonian and in English at [http://www.folklore.ee/dh/en/dhe\\_2013/](http://www.folklore.ee/dh/en/dhe_2013/). One of the main topics was concerned with various databases and research opportunities created by them. Anu Lepp from the University of Tartu introduced the water mark research and gave an overview of how to use the database of early Estonian prints (<http://paber.ut.ee/EN/vesimargid/>), which is connected with *Bernstein: The Memory of Paper* watermark database that displays watermarks from different regions of Europe. Marin Laak from the Estonian Literary Museum introduced the digitisation project of Estonian literary classics, through which 87 books will become freely available as e-books. The choice of books is determined by the compulsory reading lists of schools as well as copyright issues. Ülo Treikelder from the Tartu Public Library spoke about the database *Tartu in Fiction* (<http://teele.luts.ee>), which contains excerpts of poetry and fiction that describe Tartu. In this database data can be searched by names, locations, time-related or general keywords. Maps and photographs are being added as well. Interest in place-related texts has also spread in other disciplines. Kaisa Kulasalü from the Estonian Literary Museum gave an overview of how folklore texts and multimedia related to places in Estonian national parks have



led to an online map application on the web map server of the Estonian Land Board. The difficulties with academic open access web journals and the publishing process in such journals were mapped by Mare Kõiva and Andres Kuperjanov from the Estonian Literary Museum. The discussions about databases and websites showed that displaying digital content online has brought new sets of problems, but, at the same time, also opened new paths for research.

One of the new possibilities created by massive amounts of digital content is crowdsourcing: people can work with archive collections online, adding information in a way that is interesting for them and useful for the memory institutions. Maive Mürk from the National Archives of Estonia introduced the new crowdsourcing portal that gives an opportunity to work with materials about the First World War. Another crowdsourcing platform called Timepatch (in Estonian: *Ajapaik* (<http://ajapaik.ee/>)), however, is not created by a particular memory institution; instead, the site uses photos from different institutions, users can geotag and rephotograph them. In creating a site like that, good standards for digitising and data exchange across memory institutions are essential.

In addition to discussing the existing projects and platforms, some papers pondered upon new research perspectives. Mari Sarv from the Estonian Literary Museum introduced the methods of social network analysis and showed the benefit thereof in analysing Estonian folk songs. Raivo Kelomees from the Estonian Academy of Arts described the artist multimedia projects from the 1990s. Big changes in both hard- and software mean that it is very difficult to display these pieces of art. Therefore, a good archiving solution is definitely needed.

The day ended with a discussion about the current state and developments in Estonian digital humanities. The seminars and workshops could take place more often and in different locations. The dialogue between humanitarians and programmers should be seen more in events like this, although attracting the interest of programmers needs different means of communication. There is also a need for further collaboration in the field of education. Especially in this regard, questions of functionality, design, and user experience should not be neglected.

Tuesday, October 28, was filled with workshops. The day began with the workshop “Text corpora: Analysing tools and possibilities”. Kadri Muischnek displayed a simple analysis of texts using the Linux operating system. This was followed by Liina Lindström and Kristel Uiboed, who showed the tools they had used for analysing Estonian dialects. Software can be of considerable help in formalising, visualising and analysing various kinds of humanities data. In the afternoon, Hembo Pagi held a workshop about RTI (Reflectance Transformation Imaging) photography. This is a computational photographic method that is excellent for studying cultural heritage materials; the surface shape and colour are seen in detail through interactive re-lighting of the object from any direction. The object should be lit from different angles, and the equipment for this includes a camera, a separate flash, a small sphere, and a piece of string.

The seminar about digital humanities helped to form a community and learn from each other. The tradition of analysing research in the framework of digital humanities is rather new in Estonia, but the network is gradually forming. Among other disciplines, folkloristics definitely benefits from this.

Kaisa Kulasalu

## **ESTONIAN FOLKLORE, CULTURAL HISTORY AND LITERATURE IN A DIGITAL FORM: THE FILE REPOSITORY AND ARCHIVAL INFORMATION SYSTEM *KIVIKE***

In the past years, Open Data, Open Access and Open Government have become buzzwords in media and in the discussions about the information systems of various institutions of Estonia. From the beginning of 2015, the sets of open data in Estonia have been gathered to a web portal <https://opendata.riik.ee/>.

Among other datasets, the user can find the collections of the Estonian Literary Museum. The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) has been financing the project "Open Data at the Estonian Literary Museum", which has made a huge amount of data about folklore, literature and cultural history available for wide audiences. As of 2012, the file repository and archival information system Kivike (<http://kivike.kirmus.ee>) has enabled those interested to use the digital collections of the Estonian Literary Museum. The goal of the museum and its departments (the Archival Library, Estonian Cultural History Archives, Estonian Folklore Archives, Department of Folkloristics, Department of Ethnomusicology) is to preserve and study materials related to Estonian culture. The online repository and information system Kivike is essential for preserving digitalised and born-digital materials and making them available for wider audiences.

The metadata of the collections of the Estonian Literary Museum have been described in different indexing systems. Card catalogues are still widely used, but in the 1990s the practice of describing data in digital format evolved. The metadata of folklore collections were described in different formats, and so were the transcriptions. Folklore collections were made available to wider audiences in their home computers via a variety of online databases. The new materials were described in different formats. With the help of the ERDF funded project, Kivike as the archival information system gathers all this information in one environment and makes it possible to search all the sets of digital metadata related to a certain area or person. For specific genre-related searches, the specialised databases offer better options, but the general overview of all of the materials is better in Kivike. There are different search options: from a very simple one-field-search to advanced queries. By now, there are more metadata descriptions than files in the repository. The amount of descriptions makes it possible to place orders for the files that are not yet digitised.

The language of the repository is Estonian, as well as the majority of the data; yet, there are exceptions: for instance, in folklore collections there are materials in other Finno-Ugric languages, as well as in German and Russian. Music, photographs and videos may possibly be interesting for international audiences. Already now, Kivike has been used in 52 countries, Germany, Finland and the United States, being among the top three. The users are likely to be part of Estonian diaspora. For the future, usage possibilities in English and Russian are being planned, as well as the representation of the collections in Europeana.

Kaisa Kulasalu

## **INTERNATIONAL WINTER SCHOOL “CIRCULATION AND COLLABORATION: PERSPECTIVES FOR/IN INTERDISCIPLINARITY”**

One of the factors in establishing the position of the humanities in the research landscape is interdisciplinarity, i.e., purposeful perception and application of diverse possibilities and search for new cooperation forms and opportunities. Cooperation requires both learning and teaching, but also a pragmatic basis in the form of economic and institutional leverage. The Estonian Graduate School of Culture Studies and Arts (GSCSA), established in the autumn of 2009, is supported by the European Union Structural Funds and integrates graduate students of the humanities and their supervisors from the University of Tartu, Tallinn University, the Estonian Academy of Arts, and the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre. The graduate school covers more than a dozen curricula and organises over twenty interdisciplinary scientific events annually. Institutionally, the graduate school cooperates with the Estonian Literary Museum, the Under and Tuglas Literature Centre of the Estonian Academy of Sciences, the Estonian Arnold Schönberg Society, the Center of Modern Humanities (Zentrum für Theorie und Methodik der Kulturwissenschaften) at the University of Göttingen, and the Centre of Excellence in Cultural Theory in Estonia. In addition to smaller and more specifically oriented intensive seminars, the majority of graduate school members get together for the annual winter school, which is alternately organised by Tartu and Tallinn Universities. Different fields of research are integrated in view of a diverse selection of courses on cultural analysis and involvement of foreign competence; yet, bearing in mind similar theoretical and methodological problems.

The 5th International Winter School organised jointly with the Centre of Excellence in Cultural Theory, under the heading “Circulation and Collaboration: Perspectives for/ in Interdisciplinarity” took place in Tartu on February 2–6, 2015, and attracted more than a hundred researchers and graduate students. The winter school focused on the keywords ‘circulation’ and ‘collaboration’, as well as cooperation opportunities between different disciplines, and issues concerned with the visibility of research results. We witness today a growth of networks, new infrastructures and channels, which circulate knowledge and in which information moves with previously unthinkable speed. A critical consideration of the processes of circulation and cooperation, as well as cross-disciplinary theorising and methodological discussions on the issues involved provides us with innovative analytical space for both synchronic and diachronic research. The seminars and workshops of the winter school discussed the advantages and benefits of interdisciplinary cooperation, but also pointed out possible obstacles; for example, it was stated that taking over theories, methodologies or terminology of another discipline may suggest innovative symbioses but also pose problems in understanding, for which we should be prepared.

The winter school programme included lectures by Estonian and foreign academics, targeted at a wider audience, as well as workshops in smaller groups, with in-depth discussion of the topics presented in lectures. One of the days was dedicated to practical group work, with a choice between four topical themes. A workshop led by anthropologist Laura Siragusa (University of Tartu / University of Aberdeen) discussed publishing opportunities for early career researchers; the participants were able to test different



*Collaboration in a workshop. Photograph by Aivo Põlluäär.*

ways of interdisciplinary research involvement while being also prepped by editors-in-chief of two journals, *Journal of American Folklore* (Thomas DuBois) and *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics* (Ergo-Hart Västriik), who gave an overview of the editing process of scholarly articles. The workshop participants came to the conclusion that both in the framework of one or in cooperation between several disciplines one of the most challenging and unpredictable aspects is the compatibility of concrete researchers.

The workshop “Digital Humanities: Data and Metadata from a Semiotic Perspective” demonstrated points of intersection between semiotic data models and digital approaches. Indrek Ibrus (Tallinn University) spoke, in a Skype presentation, about the digitisation plans of Estonian film heritage in the context of similar developments in Europe and analysed the addition of metadata from a semiotic viewpoint. The groups led by Katre Pärn (University of Tartu) discussed the metadata sought by different user groups and possibilities for their mediation. The ever-significant issues of ethics and morality in the context of interdisciplinary research were taken up in the workshop run by Stavroula Pipyrou (St. Andrews University) and Daniel M. Knight (Durham University). Among other things the participants discussed ethic dilemmas that are confronted when conducting anthropological research among controversial social groups, such as right extremists or imprisoned criminals. The workshop led by Monika Tasa (Centre of Excellence in Cultural Theory) dealt with the issues concerned with making qualitative research visible, understandable and available.

All the lectures with their following discussions, as well as seminars, offered an inspiring range of ideas and approaches. Matti Sintonen, Professor of Philosophy

at Helsinki University, delivered a more general theoretical lecture on interdisciplinarity in the humanities. The lecturer noted that arguments arise already when defining the research discipline, as new disciplines and discipline conglomerates keep emerging due to professional, institutional and financial reasons. Sintonen suggested that we should speak about research fields rather than disciplines. Also, the lecturer maintained that interdisciplinary cooperation is understood in different ways: either by continuing everyday work under the umbrella of a collaboration project or by formulating new common objectives and gaining scientific added value with the help of newly elaborated theoretical and analytical framework. Regina Bendix, Professor of European Ethnology from Göttingen University, also pointed out the primary challenge of finding consensus during the process of interdisciplinary collaboration. She contended that although the funding policy usually favours innovative forms of cooperation between different research fields, in the case of malfunctioning collaboration the project partners have to cope with arising problems on their own. On the other hand, the complex cultural and communication networks of the globalising world feature an increasing number of research issues, which require the contribution of more than one discipline. In order for researchers to better understand the expectations and resources of their cooperation partners, distinguishing between different ways of cooperation (e.g. multidisciplinary, transdisciplinary) is needed from the very beginning.

The presentation of Penelope Harvey, Professor of Anthropology from Manchester University, focused on the 'political economy' of materials and material agency, as well as their potent vitality, including animistic attitudes related to them. Harvey suggested that here we can speak about collaboration between material and its shapers, as the communicative aspect is mutual in such interaction. Using the example of stone and concrete, she showed how the same material conveyed different messages in different eras; for instance, symbolising strength, power and perpetuity, but also corruption and decline.

Alexei Yurchak, Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of California-Berkeley, gave an intriguing lecture on the 'bodies' of Lenin, which, to a certain extent, touched upon similar issues. He provided a captivating visual demonstration of how depictions of Lenin and metaphors used in political rhetoric (e.g. the rhetoric of the utmost truth) were in correlation with social changes. Notions of Lenin as the embodiment of wisdom and morality started to crumble only as late as during perestroika, when facts about his sexual orientation, illnesses, nationality, and financial sources were gradually disclosed. Yurchak proposed an ultimate deconstruction of Lenin's cult to have occurred in a TV show which linked Lenin's fondness of mushrooming to consuming their psychedelic properties, with a conclusion that thus the entire October Revolution and the subsequent Soviet regime had been based on perceptual anomalies. The post-lecture discussions drew parallels between the cults of political dictators and religious leaders on the example of the motif of rebirth and resurrection and the widely spread religious custom to honour, instead of the physical relics of spiritual leaders, the texts authored by them. The following seminar continuing on this topic ran an hour longer than scheduled, with endless questions about current political issues. It was debated whether Russia, an enormous country from remote villages to huge metropolises, should be treated as a uniform research object. Yurchak considered it feasible because the juridical framework and economic opportunities or restrictions are nevertheless the same.



Pärtel Piirimäe, Associate Professor of History at the University of Tartu, spoke about the historical evolution of the perception of 'own' and 'alien' in nations and ethnic groups, discussing civilisation and barbarism in early modern international law. Piirimäe maintained that international law well reflects the attitudes and ideals of the era. Since the very beginning, international law has been an interdisciplinary sphere, as in its early days, in the 16th century, it was thought to be the domain of theologians, and later on that of philosophers; by advocating the idea of the superiority of civilised people natural sciences were also referred to. Piirimäe emphasised that the labelling of non-European peoples as 'barbarian' did not necessarily present justification for their colonisation but could rather have been the way they were subjectively perceived by their colonisers. Examples of depicting the adversaries as barbaric and incapable of development were also presented from present-day military conflicts.

Similar mechanisms have also determined attitudes towards minorities more recently and, as was shown in the presentation by Thomas A. DuBois, folklorist and Professor of Scandinavian Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, on the example of the North-American Chippewa/Ojibwe/Anishinaabe or the Scandinavian Sami, representatives of these peoples contest but also argue about the prevailing stereotypes and representations. For instance, they disagree about whether the use of modern electrical tools in making traditional artefacts marks the decline of old culture or, vice versa, its vitality and capability to evolve. In his following seminar DuBois introduced the use of the new media (e.g. Internet forums, social media communities, digital gaming) for the purposes of preservation and revitalisation of the identity and culture of ethnic minorities, illustrating it with colourful examples.

Lars Elleström, Professor of Comparative Literature from Linnæus University, discussed old and new communication forms from the point of view of intermediality. The lecturer interrogated why certain communication forms are flexible and easily transmitted to other media, yet some others are not. Elleström suggested theoretical means for studying different communicative situations and phenomena.

Martin Stokes, Professor of Musicology at King's College London, contemplated about music as a creative form carrying a communicative message, or, more specifically, expressive ways of sentimentality in the music of different cultures. Often the medium for expressing feelings in a concrete culture is an instrument of iconic significance (e.g. the accordion in tango music), manner of performance, or body language (e.g. in Portuguese *fado*). Among other things, Stokes highlighted era-specific changes in expressing sentimentality. For instance, in the 1950s singers were reproved for using the microphone because it distorted the voice and authentic expression of feelings, whereas today electronic distortion and artificiality are characteristic of certain popular music trends and artificial sound is in turn a means to express the moods inherent in the style.

In addition to lectures and seminars, the winter school offered opportunities for socialising and establishing new contacts, hopefully forming a basis for some future interdisciplinary collaboration projects.

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